

**POLS 3310-001: Research Methods and Political Analysis**  
**(Cross-listed with POLS 5310-001)**  
**Fall 2018**

**Time and Place of Class Meetings:** Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:00am-12:20pm; UH25  
**Section Information:** POLS 3310-001 (Cross-listed with POLS 5310-001)

**Instructor:** Dr. Herschel Thomas

**Office Location:** 404 University Hall

**Office Hours:** T 1:00-3:30pm and by appointment

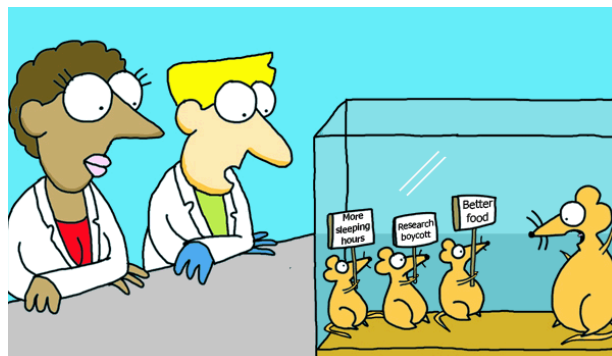
**Phone:** 817-272-2991 (Political Science Dept. Main Office)

**Email:** [herschel.thomas@uta.edu](mailto:herschel.thomas@uta.edu)

**Faculty Profile:** <https://www.uta.edu/profiles/herschel%20-thomas>

**Teaching Assistant:** Josué Rodriguez (3310 only, [josuero2009@mavs.uta.edu](mailto:josuero2009@mavs.uta.edu))

**Description of Course Content:** This course introduces students to the methods of research in political science and the practice of political analysis. We begin by building a foundation in research design, covering topics such as how to develop testable hypotheses and measure concepts. Next, we study a range of quantitative and qualitative methods used by political scientists to answer major questions in our discipline—to include field experiments, surveys, elite interviews, non-participant observation, content analysis/text-as-data, and the study of networks. We then cover how and when to utilize the various tools of statistical inference to understand and explain political phenomena.



“Our mistake.  
We introduced a politician’s genes in that one!”

**Student Learning Outcomes:** At the end of this semester, the successful student should be able to:

- Understand the components of effective research in political science
- Evaluate the usefulness and appropriateness of various research designs
- Collect, compile, and thoughtfully analyze data about politics
- Properly apply analytical tools to questions of causality
- Understand and assess academic research articles

**Required Textbook and Other Course Materials:** There are two required textbook for this course:

- Johnson, Reynold and Mycoff. 2015. *Political Science Research Methods*, 8<sup>th</sup> Ed.: CQ Press. (ISBN: 978-1506307824).
  - Note: The accompanying problem/exercise workbook of the textbook is *not* required and no passcodes are needed.
- Levitin, Daniel. 2017. *Weaponized Lies: How to Think Critically in the Post-Truth Era*. Dutton. (ISBN: 978-1101983829).
  - Note: this book was previously published as *A Field Guide to Lies and Statistics: A Neuroscientist on How to Make Sense of a Complex World*; either version is acceptable.
- Additional readings will be made available on Blackboard or are freely available from online sources.

**Blackboard:** This course will make extensive use of our course page in Blackboard. It is available at:  
<http://www.uta.edu/blackboard/students/index.php>

**Descriptions of Major Assignments and Examinations:** Students are required to complete two exams, take three online reading quizzes, write a research design paper (including a topic summary/annotated bibliography, proposal, and paper), write one short paper, complete two lab notebooks, and regularly participate in class exercises.

- **Exams:** Two exams will cover all course material through each exam date.
- **Lab Notebooks:** Students will maintain written notebooks (in two separate blue books) to include *all* work related to in-class exercises. Notebooks will be collected and graded twice, and they must *always* be brought to class.
- **Research Design Paper – Topic and Annotated Bibliography:** Students will describe in 2-3 sentences a chosen topic for their research design papers. Students will then compile an annotated bibliography that lists the full bibliographic references for at least 5 political science research articles or books that are related to this topic. Below each entry, students will write a 2-3 sentence summary that describes the main findings of the article or book that are relevant for your research design paper.
- **Research Design Paper – Proposal:** Students will craft a ~1 page proposal for their research design paper. The proposal may be in outline form and must explicitly describe the planned research topic, research question, hypothesis, variables, and type/outline of data collection approach.
- **Research Design Paper – Final Document:** Students will write a paper of 4-5 pages (single-spaced) that describes the design of a potential research project on a political science topic of their choosing. It should: discuss an important research question (including a literature review with appropriate full references, including 8-10 political science sources), describe and justify one testable hypothesis, detail the operationalization of an independent variable and dependent variable, specify data collection methods and/or identify possible data sources.
- **Reading Quizzes:** Students will complete 3 online, open-book reading quizzes on Blackboard. These quizzes are intended to help students familiarize themselves with the type of questions asked on exams as well as ensure students are staying current with course readings.
- **Data Analysis Paper:** Students will write one short paper, of 2-3 pages in length (single-spaced and *not* including figures), that addresses instructor-provided data analysis tasks.
- **Attendance/Participation:** At The University of Texas at Arlington, taking attendance is not required but attendance is a critical indicator in student success. Each faculty member is free to develop his or her own methods of evaluating students' academic performance, which includes establishing course-specific policies on attendance. As the instructor of this section, daily attendance may be recorded and I expect you to attend all classes. Students should come to class having read and thought about course material. Communicating your thoughts to others is an important component of learning and thus participation is an important part of this course. Participation involves not only responding to or asking questions, but also regularly engaging in class discussion and actively contributing to in-class lab exercises with teammates. Should you find occasion to be absent, I will be happy to discuss missed material during my office hours once you have obtained class notes from another student. Students miss class at their own risk. In addition, while UT Arlington does not require instructors to take attendance in their courses, the U.S. Department of Education requires that the University have a mechanism in place to mark when Federal Student Aid recipients "begin attendance in a course." UT Arlington instructors will report when students begin attendance in a course as part of the final grading process. Specifically, when assigning a student a grade of F, faculty report the last date a student attended their class based on evidence such as a test, participation in a class project or presentation, or an engagement online via Blackboard. This date is reported to the Department of Education for federal financial aid recipients.
- **Extra credit (3310 Only):** I do not offer extra credit in this course beyond the opportunity described below. Due by Nov 27 at 11am: complete the first (free) DataCamp course, "Introduction to R" located here: <https://www.datacamp.com/courses/free-introduction-to-r>. After completion, Email Josue (TA) a .pdf of

your DataCamp profile page (it must show your username, total XP points, and course completed). Worth up to +3% overall.

- **Students enrolled in POLS 5310 (only) will also:**
  - Present their research design papers to the class (~5 minutes in length)
  - Extend research design papers to include preliminary analysis (e.g. descriptive tables and figures) drawn from secondary data sources
  - Include a half-page summary/response for *each* additional “5310 only” reading in lab notebooks
  - Maintain a high level of in-class participation and attendance typical of an MA-level course
  - In lieu of online reading quizzes, 5310 students will complete the first (free) DataCamp course, “Introduction to R” located here: <https://www.datacamp.com/courses/free-introduction-to-r> as well as at least 1 other free module such as “Data Visualization with ggplot2” (Introduction only) located here: <https://campus.datacamp.com/courses/data-visualization-with-ggplot2-1/>. After completion, Email Dr. Thomas a .pdf of your DataCamp profile page (it must show your username, total XP points, and course/modules completed). Due by Dec 4 at 11am.

### **Grading:**

Student grades will be calculated as follows\*:

Reading Quizzes: 6% (2% each)  
Annotated Bibliography: 4%  
Research Design Paper Proposal: 4%  
Research Design Paper: 15%  
Exam 1: 23%  
Exam 2: 23%  
Data Analysis Short Paper: 10%  
Lab Notebooks: 10% (5% each)  
In-class Participation: 5%

Letter grades will be assigned as follows:

90+ %: A  
80-89.999 %: B  
70-79.999 %: C  
60-69.999 %: D  
Below 60 %: F

Students are expected to keep track of their performance throughout the semester and seek guidance from available sources (including the instructor) if their performance drops below satisfactory levels; see “Student Support Services,” below.

**Office Hours:** Students are encouraged to visit my office hours with questions related to course content and assessments. Coming to office hours is the best way to receive to an answer to an in-depth question. I am typically available to schedule appointments during university business hours as needed.

**Electronic Devices:** Laptops and tablets are permitted in class for the purpose of taking notes and completing exercises. I expect that you will refrain from using your smartphone during class time—any new Snapchats will still be there after class!

**In-class Discussion:** On occasion, we may discuss political issues and current events related to course content. Civility and professionalism in all discussions is expected and all opinions will be respected. Though I may present follow-up questions or ask for counter-arguments related to any particular discussion, I have no interest in swaying your views and I encourage the respectful exchange of ideas.

**Grading Questions:** All questions regarding grades or exam questions must be submitted in writing and include reasonable explanation for consideration.

**Grade Grievances:** Any appeal of a grade in this course must follow the procedures and deadlines for grade-related grievances as published in the current University Catalog.

**Makeup Exams:** No makeups will be scheduled for the in-class exams except under extraordinary circumstances. Students must notify me in advance of the exam to schedule such a make-up. Written documentation of the extraordinary circumstance may be required and students should expect documentation to be verified.

**Recording:** Recording of audio/video during class is not permitted except under special circumstances.

**Bad Weather:** Any bad weather cancellations made by the University will result in the scheduled topic or exam being held on the next class day.

**Incompletes:** Incompletes will be given only in extraordinary circumstances and at the discretion of the instructor.

**Late Work Policy:** I expect you to complete and turn in all assignments on time and as specified in this syllabus. All work is subject to increasing penalties for lateness (always a 10% deduction per day unless under extraordinary circumstances).

**Drop Policy:** Students may drop or swap (adding and dropping a class concurrently) classes through self-service in MyMav from the beginning of the registration period through the late registration period. After the late registration period, students must see their academic advisor to drop a class or withdraw. Undeclared students must see an advisor in the University Advising Center. Drops can continue through a point two-thirds of the way through the term or session. It is the student's responsibility to officially withdraw if they do not plan to attend after registering. **Students will not be automatically dropped for non-attendance.** Repayment of certain types of financial aid administered through the University may be required as the result of dropping classes or withdrawing. For more information, contact the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships (<http://www.uta.edu/aao/fao/>).

**Disability Accommodations:** UT Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of all federal equal opportunity legislation, including *The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)*, *The Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (ADAAA)*, and *Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act*. All instructors at UT Arlington are required by law to provide “reasonable accommodations” to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of disability. Students are responsible for providing the instructor with official notification in the form of a letter certified by the **Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD)**. Students experiencing a range of conditions (Physical, Learning, Chronic Health, Mental Health, and Sensory) that may cause diminished academic performance or other barriers to learning may seek services and/or accommodations by contacting:

**The Office for Students with Disabilities, (OSD)** [www.uta.edu/disability](http://www.uta.edu/disability) or calling 817-272-3364.  
**Counseling and Psychological Services, (CAPS)** [www.uta.edu/caps/](http://www.uta.edu/caps/) or calling 817-272-3671.

Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored. Information regarding diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining disability-based academic accommodations can be found at [www.uta.edu/disability](http://www.uta.edu/disability) or by calling the Office for Students with Disabilities at (817) 272-3364.

**Title IX Policy:** The University of Texas at Arlington (“University”) is committed to maintaining a learning and working environment that is free from discrimination based on sex in accordance with Title IX of the Higher Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in educational programs or activities; Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VII), which prohibits sex discrimination

in employment; and the Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act (SaVE Act). Sexual misconduct is a form of sex discrimination and will not be tolerated. *For information regarding Title IX, visit [www.uta.edu/titleIX](http://www.uta.edu/titleIX) or contact Ms. Jean Hood, Vice President and Title IX Coordinator at (817) 272-7091 or [jmhood@uta.edu](mailto:jmhood@uta.edu).*

**Academic Integrity:** Students enrolled in all UT Arlington courses are expected to adhere to the UT Arlington Honor Code:

I pledge, on my honor, to uphold UT Arlington's tradition of academic integrity, a tradition that values hard work and honest effort in the pursuit of academic excellence.

I promise that I will submit only work that I personally create or contribute to group collaborations, and I will appropriately reference any work from other sources. I will follow the highest standards of integrity and uphold the spirit of the Honor Code.

UT Arlington faculty members may employ the Honor Code as they see fit in their courses, including (but not limited to) having students acknowledge the honor code as part of an examination or requiring students to incorporate the honor code into any work submitted. Per UT System *Regents' Rule* 50101, §2.2, suspected violations of university's standards for academic integrity (including the Honor Code) will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. Violators will be disciplined in accordance with University policy, which may result in the student's suspension or expulsion from the University. *Any student violating the UT Arlington honor code will receive a grade of 0 on the corresponding assignment(s) and be referred to the OSC.*

**Campus Carry:** Effective August 1, 2016, the Campus Carry law (Senate Bill 11) allows those licensed individuals to carry a concealed handgun in buildings on public university campuses, except in locations the University establishes as prohibited. Under the new law, openly carrying handguns is not allowed on college campuses. For more information, visit <http://www.uta.edu/news/info/campus-carry/>.

**Electronic Communication:** UT Arlington has adopted MavMail as its official means to communicate with students about important deadlines and events, as well as to transact university-related business regarding financial aid, tuition, grades, graduation, etc. All students are assigned a MavMail account and are responsible for checking the inbox regularly. There is no additional charge to students for using this account, which remains active even after graduation. Information about activating and using MavMail is available at <http://www.uta.edu/oit/cs/email/mavmail.php>.

**Student Feedback Survey:** At the end of each term, students enrolled in classes categorized as "lecture," "seminar," or "laboratory" shall be directed to complete an online Student Feedback Survey (SFS). Instructions on how to access the SFS for this course will be sent directly to each student through MavMail approximately 10 days before the end of the term. Each student's feedback enters the SFS database anonymously and is aggregated with that of other students enrolled in the course. UT Arlington's effort to solicit, gather, tabulate, and publish student feedback is required by state law; students are strongly urged to participate. For more information, visit <http://www.uta.edu/sfs>.

**Final Review Week:** A period of five class days prior to the first day of final examinations in the long sessions shall be designated as Final Review Week. The purpose of this week is to allow students sufficient time to prepare for final examinations. During this week, there shall be no scheduled activities such as required field trips or performances; and no instructor shall assign any themes, research problems or exercises of similar scope that have a completion date during or following this week *unless specified in the class syllabus*. During Final Review Week, an instructor shall not give any examinations constituting 10% or more of the final grade, except makeup tests and laboratory examinations. In addition, no instructor shall give any portion of the final examination during Final Review Week. During this week, classes are held as scheduled. In addition, instructors are not required to limit content to topics that have been previously covered; they may introduce new concepts as appropriate.



**Emergency Exit Procedures:** Should we experience an emergency event that requires us to vacate the building, students should exit the room and move toward the nearest exit. When exiting the building during an emergency, one should never take an elevator but should use the stairwells. Faculty members and instructional staff will assist students in selecting the safest route for evacuation and will make arrangements to assist individuals with disabilities. Students are encouraged to subscribe to the MavAlert system that will send information in case of an emergency to their cell phones or email accounts. Anyone can subscribe at <https://mavalert.uta.edu/> or <https://mavalert.uta.edu/register.php>

**Student Support Services:** UT Arlington provides a variety of resources and programs designed to help students develop academic skills, deal with personal situations, and better understand concepts and information related to their courses. Resources include [tutoring](#), [major-based learning centers](#), developmental education, [advising and mentoring](#), personal counseling, and [federally funded programs](#). For individualized referrals, students may visit the reception desk at University College (Ransom Hall), call the Maverick Resource Hotline at 817-272-6107, send a message to [resources@uta.edu](mailto:resources@uta.edu), or view the information at <http://www.uta.edu/universitycollege/resources/index.php>.

**IDEAS Center (2<sup>nd</sup> Floor of Central Library):** Offers free tutoring to all students with a focus on transfer students, sophomores, veterans and others undergoing a transition to UT Arlington. To schedule an appointment with a peer tutor or mentor email [IDEAS@uta.edu](mailto:IDEAS@uta.edu) or call (817) 272-6593.

**The English Writing Center (411LIBR):** The Writing Center Offers free tutoring in 20-, 40-, or 60-minute face-to-face and online sessions to all UTA students on any phase of their UTA coursework. Our hours are 9 am to 8 pm Mon.-Thurs., 9 am-3 pm Fri. and Noon-6 pm Sat. and Sun. Register and make appointments online at <http://uta.mywconline.com>. Classroom Visits, workshops, and specialized services for graduate students are also available. Please see [www.uta.edu/owl](http://www.uta.edu/owl) for detailed information on all our programs and services.

**Library's 2<sup>nd</sup> floor Academic Plaza:** Offers students a central hub of support services, including IDEAS Center, University Advising Services, Transfer UTA and various college/school advising hours. Services are available during the library's hours of operation. <http://library.uta.edu/academic-plaza>

### Course Schedule

Every attempt will be made to keep to the plan below. As the instructor for this course, I reserve the ability to adjust this schedule in any way that serves the educational needs of the students enrolled in this course. Any adjustments will be announced in class and an updated syllabus posted to Blackboard.

Date	Topic(s)	Readings
Aug 23 (R)	Introduction to the course	
Aug 28 (T)	How scientific is political science? What is the <i>value</i> of political science research?	BB: Wearing (2010); Lane (2012); Reilly (2013)  [5310 only – BB: Stratford (2014)]
Aug 30 (R)	<b>No class, professor at APSA annual conference</b>	BB: Nachlis, Sledge, and Thomas (2018); Read ahead for next week!

Sept 4 (T) / Sept 6 (R)	<p>Fundamentals of empirical research</p> <p>Identifying topics, developing research questions</p> <p>Lab exercise: from topics to questions</p>	<p>L: “Introduction” &amp; “How Science Works”</p> <p>JRM Ch. 1 and Ch. 2</p>
Sept 11 (T) / Sept 13 (R)	<p>Developing testable hypotheses</p> <p>Lab exercise: from questions to hypotheses</p> <p>The basics of conceptualization and measurement</p> <p><b>*Reading Quiz #1 on Blackboard due by 11am on Sept 13*</b></p>	<p>L: “Plausibility” and “Logical Fallacies”</p> <p>JRM Ch. 3 and Ch. 4</p> <p>[5310 ONLY] BB: Lovett et al. (2012, 22-29 only)</p>
Sept 18 (T) / 20 (R)	<p>Measurement and operationalization of variables</p> <p>Lab exercise: operationalizing variables</p> <p><b>*Topic description and annotated bibliography due Sept 20 by 11:00am (submit on BB <i>and</i> bring printed/stapled copy to class)*</b></p>	<p>JRM Ch. 5</p> <p>[5310 only – BB: Deen and Shelton (2015) &amp; Boydston et al. (2014)]</p>
Sept 25 (T) / 27 (R)	<p>Correlation vs. causation</p> <p>The art of research design</p> <p>Lab exercise: same question, different research designs?</p>	<p>L: “Overlooked, Undervalued...”</p> <p>JRM Ch. 6 and Ch. 15 (584-596 only)</p>
Oct 2 (T) / Oct 4 (R)	<p>How to read an academic research article</p> <p>Experiments and ethics</p>	<p>BB: Examples of experiments: Markoff (2012); Drezner (2016); Willis (2014)</p> <p>Optional: read the experimental design sections of Ansolabehere et al. (1994); Bond et al. (2012); Vicente and Wantchekon (2008)</p> <p>Browse through the UTA IRB website <a href="#">here</a>.</p> <p>[5310 only – BB: McDermott (2002) &amp; Vicente and Wantchekon (2008)]</p>

Oct 9 (T) / Oct 11	<p>Lab exercise: designing an ethical experiment</p> <p>Non-participant observation/ethnography</p> <p><b>*Reading Quiz #2 on Blackboard due by 11am on Oct 11*</b></p>	<p>JRM Ch. 8</p> <p>BB: Bialik (2015); Neyfakh (2015);</p> <p>[5310 ONLY: Hoang (2016)]</p>
Oct 16 (T)	<p>Secondary data analysis</p> <p>Lab exercise: Assessing the reliability and validity of data sources</p> <p>Exam review</p> <p><b>*Lab Notebook Collection #1*</b></p>	<p>L: “How do we know?” &amp; “Identifying Expertise”</p> <p>[5310 ONLY: Boyea (2016)]</p> <p>Browse the ICPSR Data Archive <a href="https://www.icpsr.org/">here</a> and browse <a href="https://www.opensecrets.org/lobby/">https://www.opensecrets.org/lobby/</a></p>
Oct 18 (R)	<b>*Exam 1*</b>	
Oct 23 (T) / Oct 25 (R)	<p>Content analysis and text-as-data</p> <p>Lab exercise: classifying tweets</p>	<p>JRM Ch. 9</p> <p>Browse the Comparative Agendas Project Topics Codebook: <a href="http://www.comparativeagendas.net/pages/master-codebook">http://www.comparativeagendas.net/pages/master-codebook</a></p> <p>[5310 only – Shaffer et al. 2016 &amp; Robinson (2016)]</p>
Oct 30 (T) / Nov 1 (R)	<p>Surveys &amp; Sampling</p> <p>Lab exercise: Understanding UTA students as voters</p> <p><b>*Research design proposal due on Nov 1 by 11:00am (submit on BB and bring printed/stapled copy to class)*</b></p>	<p>JRM Ch. 7 and Ch. 10</p> <p>L: “How Numbers are Collected”</p>
Nov 6 (T) & Nov 8 (R)	<p>Political analysis: description and measures of central tendency / measures of dispersion</p>	<p>L: “Fun with Averages”</p> <p>JRM Ch. 11 &amp; JRM Ch. 12</p>
Nov 13 (T) / Nov 15 (R)	<p>Political analysis: statistical inference and hypothesis testing / relationships between variables &amp; visualizing data</p>	<p>JRM Ch 13</p> <p>L: “Probabilities”</p>



	<p>Lab exercise: statistical inference</p> <p><b>*Research design paper due on Nov 15 by 11:00am (submit on BB <i>and</i> bring printed/stapled copy to class)*</b></p>	
Nov 20 (T)	<p>Political analysis: relationships between variables &amp; visualizing data (cont.)</p>	<p>BB: Mlodinow (“A Drunkard’s Walk,” 2009, Ch. 1)</p> <p>L: “Axis Shenanigans” &amp; “Hijinks with How Numbers are Reported”</p>
Nov 22 (R)	<b>No class, UTA Holiday</b>	
Nov 27 (T) / 29 (R)	<p>Political analysis: Regression</p> <p>Lab exercise: designing a multivariate analysis</p> <p>How to read regression tables</p> <p><b>*Data analysis paper due Nov 29 by 11am (submit on BB <i>and</i> bring printed/stapled copy to class)*</b></p> <p><b>[5310 Only: Presentation of research design paper on Nov 29 (submit Powerpoint file to BB by 11am)]</b></p>	JRM Ch 14 and Ch. 15 (596-)
Dec 4 (T)	<p>Alternative Methods of Analysis: Network Analysis</p> <p>Lab exercise: Constructing a network and identifying central actors</p> <p>Exam Review</p> <p><b>*Reading Quiz #3 on Blackboard due by 11am on Nov Dec 4*</b></p> <p><b>*Lab Notebook Collection #2*</b></p> <p><b>[5310 Only, extended paper due on Dec 4 by 11am (submit on BB <i>and</i> bring printed/stapled copy to class)]</b></p> <p><b>[5310 Only, DataCamp module completion due via email]</b></p>	<p>L: Ward et al. (2011, 245-251; “Power Laws” and “Techniques” sections within 254-255)</p> <p>[5310 only – BB: Adamic and Glance (2005); Andris et al. (2015); LaPira et al. (2014); L: “Bayesian Thinking...” &amp; “Four Case Studies”]</p>

Dec 6 (T) 11:00-12:20	<b>*Exam 2 (held on the UTA-determined final exam day/time)*</b>	

**Emergency Phone Numbers:** In case of an on-campus emergency, call the UT Arlington Police Department at **817-272-3003** (non-campus phone), **2-3003** (campus phone). You may also dial 911. Non-emergency number 817-272-3381