

POLS 251  
Politics and Political Inquiry II

ECTR # 108  
Fall '08

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**Description:** "An introduction to the contemporary nature and practice of political science, this course includes an overview of what political scientists study as well as an examination of the various approaches to inquiry which they utilize. Pre-requisite: POLS 250." This semester we will spend over half the time studying political and social concepts in a laboratory setting appropriate to social science. We will analyze real social science data sets using the PC, formulate hypotheses and test them empirically. A background in statistics (such as Math 104) is helpful but not necessary to grasp the underlying concepts and tools we will come to know and love.

**Texts:**

Johnson & Reynolds. Political Science Research Methods. 6<sup>th</sup> Ed. CQ Press, 2008.  
Le Roy. Research Methods in Political Science. 7<sup>th</sup> Ed. Thomson. 2008.  
Watson. The Double Helix.

Some reserve readings, on electronic reserve, will also be required: "Mann: POLS 251". These readings serve three purposes: first, you will need them for some of your homework assignments; second, learning how to access electronic materials is an empirical skill to which we will be destined to pay tribute in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century; third, they provide illustrations of current research in the various subfields of political science. An article critique guide appears on page six below. The password for electronic reserve access will be provided in class.

**Other Prerequisites:** The instructor believes that a well-educated undergraduate should have an equally well-rounded college education. Therefore, the following are highly recommended: four years of astrophysics, three years of petroleum geology, two years of biochemistry, one year of health food diets, a six month intensive study of some exotic foreign language such as Chinese or Arabic, one week of dulcimer lessons, or one hour of work on a rowing machine.

**Requirements:**

1. There will be no in-term class exams in this course.
2. From time to time there will be homework assignments taken from the Le Roy workbook and the JR text. These assignments will be worth 30% of the course grade. Their due dates will be announced in class.
3. Performance on a research project will be worth 30% of the course grade. See page seven.
4. Final Exam: This will be an open book/open notes exam and will be worth 30% of the course grade.

**\*On all work, identify yourselves by the last five digits of your new student number (e.g: 00-000) only.**

5. Due dates: All assignments, the project, and the final exam are due at the beginning of the specified class period in the class room unless otherwise instructed. Do not leave papers under my office door. No late assignments, papers, homework, projects, and final exams will be accepted for any reason.

**No electronic submissions.**

**\*The instructor reserves the right to generate a pop quiz or other assignment if it is deemed that students are not coming to class prepared to discuss the relevant reading material.**

6. Grading scheme: The assignments described in #2 above will be graded pass/fail. This is to encourage you to learn and think clearly about the material. Any assignments that are deemed to be less than adequate may be resubmitted for credit as announced in class. The research project and the final exam will be assessed using a conventional grade assignment via points:

A = 93+

A-=90-92.9

B+=87.5-89.9

B =83-87.4

B-=80-82.9

C+=77.5-79.9

C =73-77.4

C-=70-72.9

D+=67.5-69.9

D =63-67.4

D-=60-62.9

7. Attendance: roll call will be taken during some class periods and will accumulate toward 10% of the course grade.

8. Alternative meeting site: If for any reason we are locked out of our normal classroom or building, we will rendezvous at Long Building at St. Phillip Street and meet there or elsewhere. This includes all due dates.

9. All hand-held electronic devices, cell phones, pagers, i-Pod and progeny, and alarms shall be turned off during all class periods. Those who violate this rule may be asked to leave and attendance for that date will be deducted.

10. Do not call the David Mann whose name is in the phone book. It isn't me. Contact me during regular business hours via e-mail, voice mail, snail mail, written messages left in my department mailbox at 114 Wentworth, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor # 201, attending office hours, or by appointment. I do not have access to e-mail at home, so assume that overnight and weekend messages will be read near the beginning of the next business day.

**General Course Outline, Reading and Homework Assignments:**

I. Introduction to Methodology

A. The Science of Science

Watson: entire book

B. The Science of Social Science

JR: Chs. 1 & 2

Le Roy: Ch. 1

(given out in class)

II. Building Blocks

A. Theories, Hypotheses, and Concepts

JR: Ch. 3

Le Roy: Ch. 2

Le Roy: Ch. 4

Le Roy: Ch. 5

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B. Measurement: Testing Theories and Hypotheses

JR: Ch. 4

Le Roy: Ch. 3

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C. Research Designs

JR, Ch. 5

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1. A priori literature search

JR, Ch. 6

tba

2. Observation as method

JR, Ch. 8

tba

3. Document Analysis

JR, Ch. 9

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4. Survey Research and Sampling

JR: Chs. 7 & 10

tba

Le Roy: Ch. 6

5. Personal Interview Method

JR: Ch. 10

tba

C. Empirical Methods

homework from Le Roy  
will be announced for the below:

1. Basic descriptive statistics

JR, Ch. 11 for overview  
Le Roy, Ch. 8

2. Basic crosstabs

Le Roy, Ch. 9

3. Tests of significance and measures of association

Le Roy, Ch. 10  
JR, Ch. 12 for overview

4. ANOVA

Le Roy, Ch. 11

5. Crosstabs with controls

Le Roy, Ch. 12

6. Correlation and Simple Regression

Le Roy, Ch. 13

7. Multiple Regression

Le Roy, Ch. 13  
JR, Ch. 13 for overview

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E. Writing The Results

JR: Ch. 14

Le Roy: Ch. 14

III. Course Summary: The Science of Social Science for the 21st Century

One Last Look at the Reserve Readings

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For electronic reserves, for literature review sections of research projects, and for final exams in this course, students will find the following general guide to be useful. For further details, consult JR Ch. 14, pp. 567-72, from which this guide is taken.

5. Do the researchers clearly specify the main research question? What is the "why" question?
6. How do research findings contribute to scientific knowledge about the topic?
7. Are there clear explanations for the political phenomena under study? Are there alternative explanations?
8. What is the hypothesis? Is the hypothesis empirical, general, and plausible?
9. Are the independent, dependent, and any control or alternative variables identified? Did they miss any?
10. Are concepts, operational definitions, and levels of measurement defined, valid, and reasonable?
11. What is the method of data collection? Are the observations reliable and valid?
12. Are empirical observations specified in the hypothesis?
13. If the data gathered are results of a sample: what type of sample is it?; does the type of sample affect the findings? Do the researchers discuss this?
14. What type of research design is used? Is it adequate?
15. Are the statistics employed appropriate for the level of measurement of the variables?
16. Are the research findings presented and discussed clearly? Is there clear evidence to support or refute the hypothesis?
17. What is the next step in researching this topic? Is replication warranted? Where would you go from here?

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Words to omit from student vocabulary in this course:

--prove

--cause

--feel

\*\*the word "data" is a plural word; write: "the data show" or "the data are", for example.

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Spelling and grammar are important in this course. Clear and concise writing is also important. You may wish to consult Strunk and White: The Elements of Style.

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### Research Project Instructions

The instruction is simple:

From any Microcase data set: formulate a hypothesis and test it. Write the results. Use as your method the framework of work for the course, including but not limited to:

1. literature search (no fewer than five scholarly/refereed journal articles about your hypothesis)
2. the hypothesis (a multivariate data analysis); include a model
3. why the hypothesis is interesting to study beyond the reasons explicated in your review of the literature
4. test the hypothesis: develop a research design and use the statistical techniques discussed throughout the course which are relevant to your hypothesis
5. display the results of your test
6. discuss the results
7. "where do we go from here"
  - were you to do this study over again, what would you do differently, if anything
  - what should the next researcher investigate, should there be one who is interested in your work
8. bibliography (use the Political Science Department Guide to Referencing for format)

### Format

1. Typed, double-spaced
2. See: The Department of Political Science Guide to Referencing at the Dept. Home Page
3. no min/max page constraint
4. 75% based on analytical excellence; 25% based on literary coherence--grammar counts
5. Due date for hypothesis/research design component with results from literature search:

Friday, Oct. 17<sup>th</sup>

( summary of #s 1-3 under "instructions" above and minimum bibliography)

6. Due date for research project: tba.