

POLS 251
Politics and Political Inquiry II

Fall 2008

Tuesday/Thursday 10:50-12:05

Education 108

Instructor: Kendra Stewart, Ph.D.

Phone: (843) 953-6691

Email: stewartk@cofc.edu

Office: 14 Coming Street, Room 101

Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday 9:00-10:30 am,

Thursday 4:30-5:30 or by appointment

Course Description

This course is the second in a six credit hour sequence that is required of all Political Science majors. The first half of the sequence provided an introduction to the conceptual and historical development of normative political thought. POLS 251 is designed as an introduction to the nature and practice of empirical inquiry in contemporary Political Science. We will pay careful attention to how normative and empirical analysis differ and complement one another in the study of politics and throughout the discipline of political science. The course is intended to help you develop the habits of mind of a social scientist. Most essential to this endeavor is the capacity to make reasoned judgments based on systematic inquiry and the appropriate application of evidence.

The course will include an overview of what political scientists study and will examine the various approaches to inquiry that we employ. In surveying the scope of political science we will address the important concepts, areas of specialization, and controversies in the field. Since we cannot cover all of the significant questions political scientists raise, those selected will address the primary objective of this course: *to better understand the complexity and ambiguity of the systematic study of politics*. Our aim is *to develop the ability to read, analyze and discuss political science research* that you will likely encounter in upper division course work in political science and other social science fields. A secondary goal is *to prepare you to undertake independent research and analysis*.

We will work towards 1) learning how to ask questions and 2) exploring the various methods to appropriately answer these questions through both qualitative and quantitative approaches. This is not a statistics class, but we will be using the statistical software SPSS to experiment with some data analysis.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of the course students should be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the basic vocabulary of social science research;
- Critically evaluate basic social science research;
- Demonstrate the basic steps in developing a research proposal;

- Apply the basic principles of social science inquiry to a research question;
- Conduct basic data analysis using SPSS.

Required Course Materials

Manheim, Rich, Willnat, and Brians. 2008. *Empirical Political Analysis: Quantitative and Qualitative Research Methods* (7th Edition). New York: Pearson Longman Publishers.

Best, J. 2004. *More Damned Lies and Statistics: How Numbers Confuse Public Issues*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Sobel, D. 2005. *Longitude*. New York: Penguin Books.

Other readings will be placed on electronic reserve through the library – instructions given in class.

Attendance and Participation: **Regular class attendance is absolutely necessary** in any course, but is critical in this class because skills are cumulatively developed over the semester. This course is NOT that difficult, but will challenge you to think in ways that may be new to you. You must keep up with the reading, in-class assignments, and homework in order to be successful in this course. Please feel free to ask questions in class – I will do everything I can to help you succeed so do not hesitate to come see me if you are struggling or falling behind.

Assignments and Grading

Students are expected to read all assignments prior to class and participate in discussions. Your final grade will be based on the following components of the course:

Homework/Class Assignments:

There will be regular homework as well as in-class assignments. You will be able to drop your lowest homework/in-class grades and count your 15 highest for your final grade. If you are not in class, your homework/in class grade for that day will be zero unless you have a University sanctioned excuse. I will not accept homework outside of class. We will be working on SPSS on the classroom computers and you will need this package out of class as well to complete the homework and paper assignments. SPSS 13 (or 15) is available at various computer labs on campus (such as the Addlestone Library) or can be purchased if you are unable to work in the labs. SPSS for Windows Student Version runs approximately \$93.00 from online vendors. The ISBN for the latest edition is 0131867563. Once you learn how to operate SPSS you will find it a very useful skill you can list on your resume. **Homework grade total: 150 points**

Midterm Exam:

Knowledge of the course readings and discussions will be tested on an in-class midterm exam that is listed on the course schedule. You will receive a study guide one week prior to this exam. I encourage you to study in groups for this exam. Make-up exams will not be given unless permission is received prior to the exam, or there is a documented

medical emergency. The midterm exam will be taken in class on **Tuesday, October 7th** – please ensure that you will be in class that day and do not risk receiving a zero for such a large part of your grade. ***Midterm Exam total: 150 points***

Research Question & Annotated Bibliography:

You will develop a research question relative to an area of political science that interests you. In support of that research question, you will produce a substantial annotated bibliography. Instructions on this will be given separately. This assignment is due **September 25th** at the beginning of class. ***Research Question & Annotated Bibliography total: 100 points***

Literature Review:

Based on the topic you've chosen and the research question you've posed, you will write and integrated review of the literature in this area. You should start with the sources you have identified in the annotated bibliography – and you may go beyond these as well. Instructions on this assignment will be given separately. This assignment is due in class on **October 21st**. ***Literature Review total: 100 points***

FINAL PROJECT: Research Design, Peer Review Exercise & Revised Design:

Research Design

In place of a cumulative final exam, you will produce a comprehensive research design of about 10 pages in length based on a topic and research question of your choice. I recommend using the same topic as you selected for the bibliography and literature review, but that is up to you. Detailed instructions on how to produce a research design will be distributed separately. You will complete this project in stages. First, you will produce a draft of the research design and submit two copies to me by **November 18th**. I will grade one copy and a classmate will critically review the other (see assignment below). You will receive my comments as well as the classmate's review to use in making revisions to your final paper. ***Research Design Draft total: 75 points***

Peer Review Exercise

You will receive a copy of a classmate's research design to critically review based on the concepts you have learned throughout the course. Your review will take the form of a 3-5 page paper. You will submit two copies – one for the author of the paper and one for me to grade. You will receive a separate handout with more information on this assignment and it will be due in class on **November 25th**. ***Peer Review Exercise total: 75 points***

Final Research Design and Revision Statement

Upon receipt of the graded draft and a peer's review, you will undertake revisions to your research design and produce a final paper. Your paper will include a statement of the revisions you undertook, making reference to your draft and the comments you received on your draft. You will receive a separate handout with more information on this assignment. Your final paper is due by **Saturday, December 13th** by 11:00 am (the time of our regularly scheduled exam). ***Final Research Design and Statement total: 100 points***

All late assignments will be marked down one letter grade for each day they are late. Assignments that are more than 5 days past due will not be accepted.

The course grade will break down as follows:

| | |
|--|-----|
| Homework/In-class Assignments | 150 |
| Midterm Exam | 150 |
| Research Question/Annotated Bibliography | 100 |
| Literature Review | 100 |
| Research Design Draft | 75 |
| Peer Review | 75 |
| Final Research Design | 100 |
| <hr/> | |
| TOTAL | 750 |

The following grading scale will be used:

| | | |
|------------|-----------------|------------|
| | A 697-750 | A- 675-696 |
| B+ 660-674 | B 622-659 | B- 600-621 |
| C+ 585-599 | C 547-584 | C- 525-546 |
| D+ 510-524 | D 472-509 | D- 450-471 |
| | F 449 and below | |

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism, or presenting another's works or ideas as one's own, is a form of stealing. The instructor reserves the right to examine any source used by the student before giving a grade on an assignment, and to give an "incomplete" in the course if necessary, to allow time to obtain sources. Students should be prepared to show source material to the instructor for the purpose of verifying information. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and students will receive an F on any assignment or exam the instructor determines is in violation of the academic honesty policy. Academic dishonesty includes the following offenses:

- 1) Claiming as your own work a paper written by another student.
- 2) Turning in a paper that contains paraphrases of someone else's ideas but does not give proper credit to that person for those ideas.
- 3) Turning in a paper that is largely a restatement in your own words of a paper written by someone else, even if you give credit to that person for those ideas. The thesis and organizing principles of a paper must be your own.
- 4) Turning in a paper that uses the exact words of another author without using quotation marks, even if proper credit is given in a citation, or that changes the words only slightly and claims them to be paraphrases.
- 5) Turning in the same paper, even in a different version, for two different courses without the permission of both professors involved.
- 6) Using any external source (notes, books, other students, etc.) for assistance during an in-class exam, unless given permission to do so by the professor.

College of Charleston Honor Code and Academic Integrity

Lying, cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism are violations of the College's Honor Code that, when identified, are investigated. Each incident will be examined to determine the degree of deception involved.

Incidents where the instructor determines the student's actions are clearly related more to a misunderstanding will be handled by the instructor. A written intervention designed to help prevent the student from repeating the error will be given to the student. The intervention, submitted by form and signed by both the instructor and the student, will be forwarded to the Dean of Students and placed in the student's file.

Cases of suspected academic dishonesty will be reported directly by the instructor and/or others having knowledge of the incident to the Dean of Students. A student found responsible by the Honor Board for academic dishonesty will receive a XF in the course, indicating failure of the course due to academic dishonesty. This grade will appear on the student's transcript for two years after which the student may petition for the X to be expunged. The student may also be placed on disciplinary probation, suspended (temporary removal) or expelled (permanent removal) from the College by the Honor Board.

Students should be aware that unauthorized collaboration--working together without permission-- is a form of cheating. Unless the instructor specifies that students can work together on an assignment, quiz and/or test, no collaboration during the completion of the assignment is permitted. Other forms of cheating include possessing or using an unauthorized study aid (which could include accessing information stored on a cell phone), copying from others' exams, fabricating data, and giving unauthorized assistance.

Students can find the complete Honor Code and all related processes in the *Student Handbook* at http://www.cofc.edu/studentaffairs/general_info/studenthandbook.html.

Disability Statement

If you are in need of accommodations for this course due to a disability, please contact the Center for Disability Services at SNAP@cofc.edu or (843) 953-1431. The instructor is very willing to make any adjustments necessary to address all student needs.

Course Schedule

The instructor reserves the right to make necessary adjustments to this schedule.

Date

August 26

Assignment

Introduction & Syllabus Review

In class reading: "Are Men Smarter than Women?"

August 28

The Research Process

Manheim Chapters 1, 22, 23

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| <i>September 2-9</i> | <i>Inquiry, Scientific Discovery & Theory Building</i> Manheim Chp. 2; <i>Longitude</i> (entire book) |
| <i>September 11</i> | <i>Setting the Foundation: How We Find Information</i> Manheim Chapters 3 & 4 |
| <i>September 16</i> | <i>Library Information Session</i> Will meet in regular classroom |
| <i>September 18</i> | <i>Thinking Critically and Selecting a Topic</i> Readings on Electronic Reserve: “Critical Thinking about Politics” “Topic Selection” |
| <i>September 23-25</i> | <i>Operationalization and Measurement</i> Manheim Chapter 5 |

Research Question & Annotated Bibliography due September 25th

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| <i>September 30</i> | <i>Considerations for Research Design</i> Manheim Chapter 6 |
| <i>October 2</i> | <i>Sampling</i> Manheim Chapter 7 Review for Midterm Exam |
| <i>October 7</i> | <i>Midterm Exam in Class</i> |
| <i>October 9-16</i> | <i>Qualitative Research: Observation, Focus Groups & Interviews</i> Manheim pp. 322-331, Chps. 19-21 |

No class on October 14 for Fall Break

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| <i>October 21-23</i> | <i>Quantitative Methods: Survey Research & Scaling</i> Manheim Chapters 8 & 9 |
|----------------------|--|

Literature Review due October 21st

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| <i>October 28-30</i> | <i>Quantitative Methods: Content Analysis & Aggregate Data</i> Manheim Chapters 10 & 11 |
| <i>November 4</i> | <i>Quantitative Methods: Comparative Research</i> |

Manheim Chapter 12

November 6-13

*Quantitative Analysis: Data Preparation,
Processing, and Presentation*
Manheim Chapters 14 & 15
Best Chapters Preface, 1, 2 & 3
Electronic reserve: "The Visual Display of
Quantitative Information"

November 18

Quantitative Analysis: Univariate Statistics
Manheim Chapter 16
Best Chapters 4 & 5
Two copies of Research Design First Draft due

November 20-25

Quantitative Analysis: Bivariate Analysis
Manheim Chapters 17 & 18
Best Chapters 6 & 7

Two copies of Research Design Peer Review due November 25th

November 27

No Class – Thanksgiving Holiday

December 2

Peer Reviews Returned & Discussed
Workshop on Revisions
Review Manheim Chps. 22 & 23

December 4

Wrap-Up
Final Steps for Revising & Completing
Research Design – do not miss class!

December 13

Final Research Design due by 11:00 am