

GVPT 100
Scope and Methods for Political Science Research

Professor	Office	Voice	e-mail
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Time and Location: Mondays and Wednesdays 9-9:50am in SKN (Skinner) 0200
And
Mondays and Wednesdays 10-10:50am in TYD (Tydings) 0130

Office hrs: Tuesdays 1:30-3:30 (and by appointment)

About the course:

This course teaches you how to think scientifically about politics. It will provide an introduction to **research design** and the use of **quantitative methods** in political science. In other words, you will learn how to formulate questions and theories about politics and then test them in a rigorous manner. *A central element to this is statistics.* This course will combine teaching the principles of statistics as used in political science with hands-on data analysis—that is, it will involve both theory and practice.

The class has two principal aims. The first is preparation for other political science classes. To this end we will discuss a large number of examples from contemporary political science research done by professors in the department of Government and Politics at the University of Maryland and other Universities. The second and larger purpose is preparation for life. In virtually every domain of professional life, the ability to evaluate causal arguments and use statistics to analyze data is helpful for doing a good job. The research methods you learn in this course will help you understand the world (political and otherwise), and become a more informed participant in political debate and discussion.

The Books:

Philip H. Pollock III. 2012. *The Essentials of Political Analysis*. Fourth Edition. Washington D.C. CQ Press. (Required)

Philip H. Pollock III. 2012. *An SPSS Companion to Political Analysis*. Fourth Edition. Washington D.C. CQ Press. (Required)

Student version of SPSS (Highly recommended).

You can buy the books and software separately (or use University labs to conduct your analysis) but the bookstore sells the package bundled.

Recommended: A number of scholarly articles used as examples in lectures will also be posted on ELMS.

Requirements and Grading:

Final grades are determined by homework assignments, two midterms, a final paper and participation in section. Note that the Homework, Midterms, and Final are designated as Major Scheduled Grading Events. If you are going to miss class on a day that homework is due or on exam day and would like your absence to be excused, you are required to email me regarding your absence in advance of the class and bring documentation to support your excused absence on the day you return. The new absence policy (one sick absence without a health center note) does not apply to days where we have scheduled homework, midterms or the final.

The weight of each component is as follows:

Homework: 20%,
Midterm 1: 25%,
Midterm 2: 25%,
Final paper: 20%,
Section Attendance and Participation: 10%.

Homework:

- a) The textbook by Philip H. Pollock III. 2012. *The Essentials of Political Analysis*. Fourth Edition. Washington D.C. CQ Press., is divided into chapters by statistical topic. Lectures roughly follow the topical outline of the book as indicated on the syllabus and students are expected to read before coming to lecture.
- b) In addition to reading the textbook students are expected to hand in homework assignments in section. The topics of the workbook assignments correspond to the topics covered in textbook and lecture but allows for some lag so that students have time to master the material. The due date of each homework assignment from the workbook is noted in the syllabus. All homework assignments are in the workbook. Philip H. Pollock III. 2012. *An SPSS Companion to Political Analysis*. Fourth Edition. Washington D.C. CQ Press. The book comes with a CD-rom that contains all the data students will use in the class. Each chapter ends with an assignment. Students must read the appropriate chapter and complete the assignment at home using the statistical package SPSS (or in one of the computer labs on campus that have an SPSS license¹). Students should tear the appropriate pages out of the workbook and *print 1 sample output page* when requested. *Copies will not be accepted.* These assignments will be collected in section and graded. Staple the pages together and write name and student ID number at the top of the first page. The due date of each assignment is noted in the syllabus. Late homework will not be accepted – no exceptions. After each session students should save their work because the workbook assignments build cumulative skills. ***Note that***

¹ For information regarding which labs have an SPSS license contact OIT.

the homework chapters are not equal in length. For example, homework chapter 4 is 16 pages while chapter 6 homework is 4 pages long. Do not wait until the last minute to complete the homework – the exercises are involved and take time. Because of variance in length homework 4 weighs 2 times as much in your grade as each of the other homework.

Midterms: Midterms are based on material covered in the books, lecture and sections. Note that regular attendance at lectures is required. Lectures often do not overlap directly with the readings and many key concepts and cases will be discussed in lectures only. Exams will draw on materials from readings and from materials presented in lectures and section. Strictly speaking the midterms are not cumulative (i.e. the first midterm emphasizes material covered from the beginning of the class up to the first midterm and the second midterm covers material covered after the first midterm but before the second). However, the nature of the material is cumulative. Therefore, there may be some overlap between the two tests.

Final paper: 10 page, double spaced (including tables) analytical paper on a dataset provided with the workbook. Final papers should be submitted in hard copy to the appropriate teaching assistant on the day of the final. Students may send their TA an electronic copy of the paper only if they have first received approval from their TA. In the weeks prior to submission the professor and Teaching Assistants will be available for students who have questions about the research paper, but we will not review drafts. Students are expected to keep the papers within assigned length. Grades will be based on consistency of the analytical argument, demonstration of cumulative mastery of the material from the course, and clarity of writing.

Section Attendance and Participation: Students are expected to have completed all of the assigned readings and homework for each section and be prepared to discuss them. Teaching Assistants take attendance in section and section grades will be based on a demonstrated ability to discuss topics covered in lectures and section.

Interactive lecture participation:

Students are required to actively participate in lectures. To this end students must come to class with Clickers (required). For complete information on clickers see:

http://www.clickers.umd.edu/students/index_students.html

Students may use appropriate personal devices (iphones etc) instead of university clickers but have to register those devices prior to class as per the instructions on the above website.

Blackboard:

Important communication regarding the class is conducted via ELMS. This includes posting of the syllabus, announcements, and grades. Students are required to be proficient users of ELMS and to ensure that their emails registered with ELMS are up to date and checked regularly.

Religious Observance

By the end of September students must provide in writing a request for a make up of exams and other required assignments if the syllabus indicates a date when you are unable to attend due to a specific religious observance.

Students with disabilities.

We will make every effort to accommodate students who are registered with the Disability Support Services (DSS) Office. We are not able to accommodate students who are not registered with DSS or who do not provide us with documentation or have not had that documentation reviewed by DSS before October 1.

Absence due to illness.

As per University policy students may submit a self-signed note for a medically necessitated absence from a single lecture or section during the semester. Such documentation is sufficient unless it coincides with a Major Scheduled Grading Event. For a definition of such events see above Requirements section. Any student missing more than one lecture or section or a Major Scheduled Grading Event is required to provide documentation from the Health Center or from an outside health care provider that verifies the dates of treatment and time frame during which the student was unable to meet academic responsibilities.

Code of conduct.

It is assumed that all students are familiar with and adhere to the code of academic integrity see: <http://www.studenthonorcouncil.umd.edu/index.html>

Extra credit and incompletes.

Graded assignments in the class provide students with ample opportunity to demonstrate mastery of the materials. Therefore, **no extra credit assignments** will be assigned in the class. The assigned material is also appropriate in scope for completion within a single semester. Therefore, no incompletes will be given – *no exceptions*.

August 31st First Day of Classes. No class because of the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association.

Sept 2nd (No Section)

Week 1: Logistics

September 5th. Labor Day. No Class.

Sept 7th Introduction. Bring clickers or registered personal devices to substitute for clickers. For instructions regarding clickers see http://www.clickers.umd.edu/students/index_students.html

Sept 9th (First section with TA: Introduction)

Week 2: Chapters 1-5

Sept 12th

Sept 14th

Sept 10th (Section – SPSS)

Week 3 Chapters 1-5

Sept 19th

Sept 21st

Sept 23rd (Section. 1st homework (Chapter 1 Introduction to SPSS) due in section)

Week 4 Chapters 1-5

Sept 26th

Sept 28th

Sept 30th (Section. 2nd homework (Chapter 2 Descriptive statistics) due in section)

Week 5 Chapters 1-5

Oct 3rd

Oct 5th

Oct 7th (Section. 3rd homework (Chapter 3 Transforming Variables) due in section)

Week 6 Chapters 1-5

Oct 10th

Oct 12th

Oct 14th (Section. 4th homework (Chapter 4 Making Comparisons) due in section)

Remember that the homework chapters are not equal in length. For example, homework chapter 4 is 16 pages while chapter 6 homework is 4 pages long. Do not wait until the last minute to complete the homework – the exercises are involved and take time. Because of variance in length homework 4 weighs 2 times as much in your grade as each of the other homework.

Week 7 Chapters 1-5

Oct 17th Wrapping up and Review of Chapters 1-5

Oct 19th Midterm 1 (Including material from lectures and section week 1-6, Reading Chapters 1-5, Homework 1-4)

Oct 21st (Section. Grading. No homework due.)

Week 8 Chapters 6-8

Oct 24th

Oct 26th

Oct 28th (Section. 5th homework (Chapter 5 making Controlled Comparisons) due in section)

Week 9 Chapters 6-8

Oct 31st

Nov 2nd

Nov 4th (Section. 6th homework (Making Inferences about Sample Means) due in section)

Week 10 Chapters 6-8

Nov 7th

Nov 9th

Nov 11th (Section. 7th homework (Chi-square and Measures of Association) due in section)

Week 11

Nov 14th

Nov 16th

Nov 18th (Section. 8th homework (Correlation and Linear Regression) due in section)

Week 12 Chapters 8-10

Nov 21st

Nov 23rd Thanksgiving Recess. No class.

Nov 25th Thanksgiving Recess. No section

Week 13

Nov 28th Wrapping up and Review Chapters 8-10

Nov 30th Midterm 2 (Material from lectures and section weeks 8-12, Readings chapters 6-8, homework 5-8)

Dec 2nd (Section. Grading. No homework due.)

Week 14

Dec 5th

Dec 7th

Dec 9th (Section. 9th homework (Dummy Variables and Interaction Effects) due in section. Also Read 11th homework (Doing your Own Political Analysis))

Week 15

Dec 12th Conclusions

Dec 14th Reading day

Dec 15th -21st Final Paper Due (10 pages double spaced 12 pt font. Including Tables and Data analysis). Hard copy due on exam day.