

University of Alabama

PSC 202: Political Science Methods

Fall 2022, MW 3:00-4:15pm

107 ten Hoor Hall

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Office hours: M 8-9am or by appt

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What do superheroes communicate about political violence? How does money affect women's underrepresentation in politics? Do policymakers listen to experts? What effects do television campaign advertisements have on election results? How does self-governance for indigenous communities affect national unity? These are real research questions found in the *American Political Science Review*, a top academic journal in political science.

Political scientists ask a lot of questions, and we employ various research methods to answer them. We use qualitative and quantitative evidence, sometimes both at the same time! This course provides an introduction to the conduct of political inquiry and political science research methods. Some of the information we cover will sound familiar, especially if you paid attention in elementary school science class. Other things will be new because they are particular to how political scientists view the world.

We cannot possibly cover everything in one semester, but you should leave with a broad overview of how political science happens and some basic skills to start conducting your own research.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs):

1. Generate empirical questions for political science research
2. Develop theories and hypotheses to answer empirical political science questions
3. Conduct and write effective literature reviews
4. Distinguish between qualitative and quantitative research as types of analysis in political science research

Course Requirements

1. **Textbook:** *Empirical Research and Writing: A Political Science Student's Practical Guide* by Leanne C. Powner (2015). Available on Blackboard with Access Granted and through the SupeStore.
2. **Technology:** A computer and the internet to access the course website and complete online activities; a smartphone, tablet, or laptop computer to complete in-class attendance polls through Google Forms.
3. **Attendance:** This is a face-to-face class. You will get the most out of it by attending regularly and participating in class discussions and activities. We will track attendance using Google Forms. Please bring a smartphone, tablet, or computer to class so that you can complete the attendance poll.
4. **Tests/Exams:** We will have two Tests and a Final Exam based on the material we cover in the textbook, other readings, and in class. Students who pass both tests are exempt from taking the final exam. All tests and the final exam are in-person, closed-note, and closed-book.
5. **Research Notebooks:** We will have in-class and at-home activities to help you learn how to develop your own research design for political science. I encourage you to have a physical notebook to use “offline” for notes and random scribbles as we work through these activities. On Blackboard, you will also find a “virtual” notebook with nine assignments to track your progress throughout the semester. These assignments are designated as “RN” in the course schedule below. You should submit your first attempt at these assignments before the deadline specified on Blackboard.
6. **Poster/Presentation:** As your final project for this class, you will have the opportunity to create a digital poster of your research design. Research posters are a common way for political scientists to present their work. Digital posters are becoming more common because they are environmentally friendly and cost-effective. More details on the specifics of this assignment will be available later in the semester.
7. **Surveys:** Your voice matters! At the midterm and the end of the semester, you will have the opportunity to provide feedback on the course. The midterm survey will be available through Blackboard. The final survey is administered through the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) as the official Student Opinions of Instruction (SOI). You should receive confirmation from OIRA after you complete the SOI, which you can upload to Blackboard to get credit for completing the survey.

Grading Policies

Below is an explanation of how grades will be reported. All submitted work in this class will be evaluated as either “Meets standards” (i.e., passing) or “Not there yet” (i.e., needs revisions). Letter grades at the midterm and final will reflect whether the student has met the minimum standards for the “grade bin”.

Grade Bin	Midterm Requirements	Final Requirements
A Excellent.	Meets standards on Test 1 and RN activities 1-6. (+) Completed the midterm survey	Meets standards on Tests 1 & 2 or the Final Exam, all 8 RN activities, and the Research Poster. (+) Completed SOI
B Exceeds Expectations.	Meets standards on Test 1 and RN activities 1-4 & 6. (+) Completed the midterm survey	Meets standards on Tests 1 & 2 or the Final Exam and all 8 RN activities. (+) Completed SOI
C Satisfactory.	Meets standards on Test 1. (+) Completed the midterm survey	Meets standards on Tests 1 & 2 or the Final Exam. (+) Completed SOI
D Not there yet.	Not there yet on Test 1. (+) Completed the midterm survey	Not there yet on Tests 1 or 2 and the Final Exam (+) Completed SOI
F* Incomplete.	Did not meet the requirements for D or higher.	

* Note: “F” grades are reported as either earned, stopped attending, or never attended. The last attendance date is based on the last date the student was physically present in class, visited office hours, or turned in an assignment.

Missed/Late work: Each assignment in this class builds on itself, and some activities require peer input. Therefore, you are expected to meet all deadlines outlined here and on Blackboard. You can submit revised work after the deadline, but only in exceptional cases will you be allowed to make up missed assignments. If extraordinary circumstances prevent you from making one of the deadlines, please contact me as soon as possible to arrange reasonable accommodations.

Grading disputes: Mistakes happen. If you think I have made an error, contact me during office hours or schedule an appointment within one week of receiving the grade. I will not discuss grades via email out of respect for your right to privacy under the University’s Confidentiality of Student Records policy and the Family Rights and Privacy Act of 1974.

Course Schedule

Unit 1. Topics, Questions, Theories, and Hypotheses

Date(s)	Topic	Reading	Assignments
W 17 August	Introduction	Syllabus	
M 22 August	From topic to question	Powner, 1-19	
W 24 August	From topic to question	Powner, 1-19	RN 01
M 29 August	What is a theory?	Powner, 21-28	
W 31 August	From question to theory	Powner, 28-44	RN 02
M 05 September	Labor Day. No class.		
W 07 September	From theory to hypothesis	Powner, 44-54	RN 03
M 12 September	Unit Review	Powner, 1-54	
W 14 September	Assessment	Powner, 1-54	Test #1

Unit 2. Pre-research and Literature Reviews

Date(s)	Topic	Reading	Assignments
M 19 September	What is a literature review?	Powner, 55-80	
W 21 September	Finding and organizing literature	Powner, 55-68	RN 04
M 26 September	Reading & citing academic literature	See Blackboard	
W 28 September	Practicing peer review	Powner, 223-244	RN 05
M 03 October	Peer review discussions	Powner, 234-244	RN 06
W 05 October	Unit Review	Powner, 55-80; 223-244	Midterm Survey

Unit 3. Research Design

Date(s)	Topic	Reading	Assignments
M 10 October	Levels of measurement	Powner, 81-86	
W 12 October	Probabilistic vs. deterministic hypotheses	Powner, 82-95	
M 17 October	Types of analysis	Powner, 95-108	RN 07
W 19 October	Qualitative research	Powner, 109-133	
M 24 October	Qualitative research	Powner, 135-156	
W 26 October	Wellness break – no class		Self-care
M 31 October	Quantitative research	Powner, 157-167	
W 02 November	Quantitative research	Powner, 168-179	
M 07 November	“Translating” research	See Blackboard	RN 08
W 09 November	Unit Review	Powner, 81-179	
M 14 November	Assessment	Powner, 81-179	Test #2
W 16 November	Wellness break		Self-care
M 21 November	No class - Thanksgiving		
W 23 November	No class - Thanksgiving		
M 28 November	Posters, presentations, & publishing	Powner, 245-268	
W 30 November	Posters, presentations, & publishing	Powner, 245-268	SOI survey
Tuesday 06 December 1:30-3:30pm	Assessment	Powner, 1-179; 223-268	Final Exam; Posters

Additional Resources

UA Libraries: The university offers various resources related to political science (and any other discipline) through its physical and online collections. This guide created by the UA Political Science librarian is an excellent place to start: <https://guides.lib.ua.edu/politicalscience>.

Capstone Center for Student Success: Offers a range of services to support student academic success, including coaching, tutoring, reading and study skills sessions, computer labs, study spaces, preparation for graduate school, and a program for first-generation college students (aka Student Support Services TRIO or SSS). Visit: <https://success.ua.edu>

UA Writing Center: Provides free one-on-one consultations for UA students and a range of online resources to help improve your writing. Visit: <https://writingcenter.ua.edu>

University Recreation: Provides state-of-the-art recreation facilities for UA students, faculty, staff, and the community. This includes two excellent gyms on campus with a range of activities from strength training, basketball, racquetball, rock climbing, and cardio equipment. UREC also offers a range of guided classes, personal training, and outdoor recreation equipment. For more information, visit <https://urec.sa.ua.edu>.

Counseling Center: Offers free counseling services to UA students, faculty, and staff. For more information: <https://counseling.sa.ua.edu>.

Women and Gender Resource Center: Provides free, confidential, and voluntary counseling and advocacy services alongside programming to promote social justice and address gender disparities. Visit: <https://wgrc.sa.ua.edu>.

Student Care and Wellbeing: BamaCares provides assistance and case management for students in crisis and outreach to families and friends. This includes a range of services from food assistance to technology. Website: <https://bamacares.sa.ua.edu>

Collegiate Recovery and Intervention Services (CRIS): Offers a comprehensive continuum of care for students with substance use concerns. Their services include prevention, awareness, and exploration of consequences in a safe and supportive space. Visit: <https://cris.sa.ua.edu>.

Student Health Center: Provides high-quality health care services to UA students, including routine check-ups, travel immunizations, Women's health visits, and much more. Visit: <https://shc.sa.ua.edu/about/>

Student Rights and Responsibilities

Respectful dialogue: The classroom should be a welcoming and safe environment for everyone to learn from our diverse views and experiences. You are expected to respect others' opinions and to refrain from personal attacks or demeaning comments.

Names and pronouns: UA provides instructors with a roster listing each student's legal name. However, I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me accordingly early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. You can also designate your pronouns in Banner.

COVID-19 policies: All university faculty, staff, and students are expected to maintain a commitment to the health and safety of our campus community. In the interest of your health and safety and that of all UA students, faculty, and staff, the university reserves the right to change the mode of instruction or schedule of instruction at any time, based upon prevailing public health and other guidance. Getting vaccinated is the best way to [Protect Our Herd](#). COVID-19 vaccines are being administered by the [Student Health Center](#) and various businesses and healthcare providers.

Students with disabilities: If you have a documented disability (or think you may have a disability) and need to request reasonable accommodations to participate in this class, you should (1) notify ODS so that they can forward me your information and (2) schedule an appointment with me where we will discuss your individualized learning plan. For more information on disability accommodations at UA, visit <http://ods.ua.edu>.

Parents and caregivers: If you have caregiver duties (such as for a child, an older relative, or a family member with disabilities) that limit your ability to pursue your education at UA in the same capacity as your peers, please reach out as soon as possible so that we can make reasonable accommodations. Children are always welcome in the classroom; however, I ask that you sit near the door so that you can step out without disturbing others should that be necessary.

Pregnancy accommodations: Title IX protects against discrimination related to pregnancy or parental status. Protection extends to students who are pregnant or who have either had a false pregnancy, termination of pregnancy, have gone through childbirth, or are recovering from any of those conditions. Title IX regulations also prohibit a school from applying any rule related to a student's parental, family, or marital status that treats students differently based on their sex. If you require accommodations due to pregnancy or pregnancy-related conditions, please reach out as early as possible. For more information on your rights, visit: <https://uact.ua.edu/information/pregnancy>.

Religious observances: Under the Guidelines for Religious Holiday Observances, you should notify me during the first two weeks of the semester if you require accommodation for religious observances. For more information on your rights, visit: www.provost.ua.edu/oaa-guidelines-for-religious-holidays-observance/

UAct: Ethical community: The University of Alabama is committed to an ethical, inclusive community defined by respect and civility. The UAct website (<http://www.ua.edu/uact>) provides extensive information on how to report or obtain assistance with issues related to dating violence, domestic violence, stalking, sexual assault, sexual violence or other Title IX violations, illegal

discrimination, harassment, child abuse or neglect, hazing, threat assessment, retaliation, and ethical violations or fraud.

Mandatory Reporting: As a faculty member at the University of Alabama, I am a mandatory reporter for known or suspected child abuse or neglect. This means that if I become aware of harm or threatened harm, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, or negligent treatment of any person under the age of 18 or under the age of 19 in need of protective services, I must immediately report the suspected abuse to the University of Alabama Police Department. For more information:

<https://uact.ua.edu/information/child-protection>

Responsible Reporting: As a faculty member at the University of Alabama, I am considered a responsible reporting individual for sexual misconduct under Title IX regulations. This means that I am required to immediately report known incidents of sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating/domestic violence, and stalking to the Title IX Coordinator and the Designated Harassment Resource Person under the UAct program. For more information:

<https://uact.ua.edu/information/titleix>

Academic misconduct Students are expected to be familiar with and adhere to the official Academic Misconduct Policy provided in the Online Catalog. Any suspected academic misconduct, including plagiarism, will be referred to the College of Arts & Sciences Dean's Office. For more information: <https://provost.ua.edu/academic-misconduct/>

Turnitin® policy: Students agree that their enrollment in this course allows the instructor the right to use electronic devices to help prevent plagiarism. All course materials are subject to submission to Turnitin.com for the purpose of detecting textual similarities and plagiarism.

Audio-video recordings: For accessibility reasons, I may record the lecture portion of class sessions (audio only, no video) using lecture capture software. Students with documented disabilities requiring access to audio recordings should notify me formally through the ODS portal. You will also need to complete an audio recording agreement. To access lecture recording(s) due to a disability-related absence or remote captioning error, you must email me a written request with the date(s) of the required lectures. All recordings are subject to the following regulations: (1) Only students enrolled in the class section may view the recording; (2) Students may not post or use the recordings in any other setting for any purpose. Students are not allowed to make their own audio or video recordings of class sessions. Any student violating these rules may be referred to the Office of Student Conduct for disciplinary action.

Sharing course materials: All lectures, presentations, and class discussions are for viewing by members of this class section only and may not be posted in any public forum or shared with anyone not enrolled in this class. Any student violating these rules may be referred to the Office of Student Conduct for disciplinary action.

Severe weather protocol: The guiding principle at The University of Alabama is to promote the personal safety of our students, faculty, and staff during severe weather events. Please see the latest severe weather guidelines in the Online Catalog: www.ready.ua.edu/severe-weather-guidelines/. In particular, I recommend downloading the ABC-3340 weather app, following James Spann on social media, and activating emergency alerts on your mobile devices.

Notification of changes: The instructor reserves the right to amend this document as the need arises. In such instances, students will receive notification in class and via email with reasonable time to adjust to any changes.