

Sam Houston State University
Pol 379.03 Research and Writing; Fall 2007
AB1, Room 306; 8:00-9:20

Professor: Dr. Rhonda Callaway

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Office: AB1 Room 319E

Office Hours: T/Th 11:00 – 12:00; 2:00 – 3:00 and by appointment

Course Description and Objectives:

The purpose of this course is two-fold: first, to provide an opportunity for students to learn the research process as it is conducted in the field of political science and second, to learn and practice research and writing skills.

- In addressing the research aspect of the course, we will strive to accomplish the following objectives:
 - Understand theories and hypotheses, the construction of valid inferences, sampling, how to operationalize concepts into variables, and basic statistical knowledge.
- In completing the second objective, students will :
 - Learn to use electronic sources and properly cite sources, to write a literature review and other types of academic writing, present logical arguments and develop effective editing skills.

In general, the student will

- learn specific terminology and fundamental principles as they pertain to political science research
- learn how to locate and use resources for problem-solving
- develop and/or enhance analytical and critical thinking skills

Required Texts:

- Stark, Rodney and Lynne Roberts, *Contemporary Social Research Methods*, 3rd edition. Wadsworth/Thomson Learning
- Corbett, Michael and Lynne Roberts, *A Microcase Workbook for Social Research*, Wadsworth/Thomson Learning
 - Refer to the download instructions on blackboard under course information.

Classroom Rules of Conduct: Students are expected to assist in maintaining a classroom environment that is conducive to learning. Students are to treat faculty and students with respect. **Students are to turn off all cell phones and other electronic devices while in the classroom. Under no circumstances are cell phones or any electronic devices to be used or seen during times of examination.** Students may tape record lectures provided that this does not disturb other students.

The university has set clear guidelines regarding academic dishonesty, religious holidays, students with disabilities and visitors in the classroom. These can be accessed at <https://www.shsu.edu/syllabus/> but will also be posted in Blackboard under course information.

Course Requirements:

- Midterm exam 25%
 - Multiple choice and short answer
- Workbook Exercises/In-Class Assignments/Quizzes 25%
- Position Paper 10%
 - Instructions on blackboard
- Research Project 20%
 - Instructions on blackboard
- Final Exam 20%
 - Multiple choice and short answer

Grading:

Course grades of 90 – 100 will be scored an A; a B is 80 to 89; 70 to 79 is a C; 60 to 69 is a D; below 60 is an F.

- If you think that an error has been made in calculating your grade, it is *your responsibility* to provide me with all of your work. To that end, it would be prudent to save anything that is handed back to you until you get your final grade report. Any students caught cheating on an exam will receive a minimum punishment of a failing grade for the class.
- Anyone having problems in this course is strongly encouraged to contact the instructor as early as possible. I will be happy to meet you and help you in anyway possible. I may be able to help you study more effectively or recommend other assistance. **Remember – I want you to do well in this course.**

Grades will be posted to Blackboard and it is the student's responsibility to calculate your own average during the semester. **Please note that there is no extra credit available for this course.**

Attendance Policy:

Anyone who misses a scheduled exam or assignment will receive a zero. Make up exams and other assignments will be given only if you have unavoidable circumstances (with documentation) and only if you **contact the instructor in advance.**

In order to do well in the course, it is required that you attend class regularly. Please note that I do not give repeat performances. Please be on time to class and plan to stay, as entering a class late or leaving early is always disruptive. Such a disruption is unfair to the rest of the class and will undoubtedly make you known to the instructor for all the wrong reasons. The following outlines the attendance policy for this class:

- **Perfect attendance will be rewarded. Those with perfect attendance will receive 3 additional points added to the final average.**
 - **NOTE: Perfect attendance means perfect...no absences for any reasons. Also note: being tardy is not perfect. If you are tardy, you will not receive any additional points. So...to receive full credit, you must be in class at 8:00am! No exceptions.**

Participation:

Participation in class discussions is strongly encouraged. As students, you will get the most out of this class if you engage in the discussions. Every student in this class has an opinion, and each of those opinions is valued in this class. I ask that you respect the diverse backgrounds and views of your fellow students, and employ common courtesies during class.

Reading:

In order to get the most out of this class you should read assigned materials before the classroom discussion on that topic. It is your job to keep up with the reading and come to class prepared to discuss the material. It may be helpful to take notes when reading the material and bring any questions to class.

Course Evaluation: Please be aware that you will be asked to complete a course evaluation at the end of the semester.

COURSE SCHEDULE (Note: This syllabus should be seen as a rough guide of the coming semester. I reserve the right to make changes to this syllabus throughout the semester. Readings should be completed prior to class.)

Week 1

- 8/21 Introduction to the course; Pet Peeves and Common Writing Problems
Plagiarism discussion and contract
- 8/23 What is political science? Overview of the discipline
- **Introduction: The Discipline of Political Science** by Gregory Scott– electronic reserve. To access, the password is “research”
 - Read: Six Evil Geniuses of Essay Writing
 - http://www.georgetown.edu/faculty/kingch/Six_Evil_Geniuses.htm

Week 2

- 8/28 In Class Computer Program Demonstration
- Using Research Engines
 - Workbook - Introductory Exercise – In-class
 - Homework – Introductory Exercises (page 13 – 17)
 - Discuss **Position Paper Reading by Scott** and essay assignment – electronic reserve
- 8/30 No Class – APSA Conference
- Position paper assignment must be completed using the **assignment** function on blackboard 5:00pm.

Week 3

- 9/4 Types of Political Science Research and Writing
- Discuss Handout – **Position Papers** (you must choose a topic)
 - Read: Writing a Political Science Essay
 - http://www.georgetown.edu/faculty/kingch/Writing_PolSci_Essay.htm
 - **Introductory workbook exercises due**
- 9/5 **12th Class Day – Last day to drop without a Q and receive 100% refund**
- 9/6 The Research Process : Selecting A Topic, Formulating a Research Question and the Literature Review
- Chapter 2 – Read All
 - **Freakonomics– on electronic reserve (Drug Dealers and Criminals are two separate readings under Steven Levitt)**
 - **Conducting a Literature Review – electronic reserve**

Week 4

9/11

Concepts and Theories: What is a theory? What is a hypothesis?

- Chapter 1 – Text (read all)
- Workbook Exercises (read pages 19-22; exercises # 1, #2a, b, c, e, #3, #6, #7)
- **Position Paper topic due: note, this is a formal submission, not an optional assignment – see instructions on blackboard; use assignment function to submit**

9/13

Operationalization of Data

- Read workbook pages 29 – 38; refer back to textbook Ch 2
- Workbook Exercises 2A, #1, #2, #4, #5
- **Discuss research topic and project**

Week 5

9/18

Descriptive Statistics

- Read workbook pages 47 – 53
- Workbook Exercises 2B, #1, #3
- **WEEK 4 Workbook exercises due**

9/20

Measurement

- Read Chapter 3
- **Position Paper Rough Draft Due – submit through turnitin on blackboard by 5:00pm. A hard copy is due in class.**

Week 6

9/25

Measurement Continued

- Workbook Ch 3 read pages 67 – 79
- Workbook exercises Ch 3, #2, #3, #4, #6, #7
- **WEEK 5 Workbook exercises due**

9/27

Census and Sampling

- Textbook Ch 4 – read all
- Workbook (read pages 91 – 99); do exercises Ch 4, #1, #2, #5

Week 7

10/2

Midterm

- **WEEK 6 Workbook exercises due**

10/4

Library Visit

- **Topic for research project due**
- **Discuss literature review (refer to previous reading)**

Week 8

10/9

Causation

- Ch 5 Textbook – read all
- Read Workbook 113 – 122

10/10

Last day to drop without an F

- 10/11 Position Paper Due
- **No Class – finish position paper. Due by 3:00pm in my office – no emails; must also submit through turnitin on blackboard by 5:00pm.**
- Week 9**
- 10/16 Causation and Regression
- Workbook Exercises, 5a #1., #2, #4; 5b, #2, #4, #5
 - **WEEK 8 Workbook Exercises Due**
- 10/18 Basic Research Design
- Ch 6 Textbook – read all
- Week 10**
- 10/23 Ethics in Scholarship
- Readings TBA
 - **WEEK 9 Workbook exercises due**
- 10/25 Literature Review Work Day
- Students will work on literature review; students must submit at least two article titles and abstracts by 5:00 using the **assignment** function on blackboard
- Week 11**
- 10/30 Survey Research
- Textbook Ch 7 – read all
 - Workbook Exercises Ch 7 #1, #3, #5, #7
- 11/1 Using Aggregate Data
- Textbook Ch 8 – read all
 - Workbook Exercises Ch 8 #1, #3, #5, #7, #8, #10
- Week 12**
- 11/6 Resume Writing
- **Bring a resume to class; Writing Center Presentation**
 - **WEEK 11 Workbook exercises due**
- 11/8 Putting it together – assessing research
- Aggregate Data and Time Series Analysis
 - Read Poe, Steven C. and C. Neal Tate. 1994. “Repression of Human Rights to Personal Integrity in the 1980s: A Global Analysis.” *American Political Science Review*. Vol 88, No. 4, 853-872. Available through JSTOR. **YOU MUST BRING ARTICLE TO CLASS**
- Week 13**
- 11/13 Field Research
- Textbook Ch 9 – read all
- 11/15 Experimental Research
- Textbook Ch 10 – read all

Week 14

11/20

Literature Review and Theory Work Day – no class
Students will work on first draft of literature review and theory section of final project; students must submit a list of all 4 articles and a single paragraph outlining the theory for the paper. Due on Tuesday, November 27.

11/22

Thanksgiving break**Week 15**

11/27

Review of the research project

- Literature Review and Theory assignment due; submit through **assignment** function

11/29

No Class – Finish research project assignment

Week 16

12/4

No Class – Finish research project assignment

12/6

Last day of class

- Final Research Paper Due; submit through turnitin (by 5:00pm) and a hard copy in class.
- Review for final

Final Exam December 13 (Thursday) 8:00-10:00