

POL379, Section 02
Research and Writing in Political Science
Spring 2008: MWF 11:00-11:50 AM, AB1 306

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Office: AB1 315M (enter room 315K, then turn right)
Office Hours: MWF 10:00 – 10:50 AM, MW 12:00 – 2:00 PM,
M 5:00-5:50 PM, and by appointment everyday

Course Description

This course has two primary objectives. First, students will gain knowledge of basic research methods and design in the social sciences. Particular attention will be given to survey research. Second, students will learn research and writing skills including: how to locate, evaluate, and cite electronic and printed sources; how to conduct a literature review; how to write proposals, reports, and research papers; and how to edit proposals, reports, and papers. Prerequisite: POL 261.

Course Objectives

Specific course objectives include:

- Learning how to find and use resources for answering questions or solving problems.
- Learning to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view.
- Developing skills in expressing oneself in writing.

Textbooks & Required Materials

Johnson, Janet Buttolph and H.T. Reynolds. 2008. *Political Science Research Methods*. 6th Edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Baglione, Lisa A. 2007. *Writing a Research Paper in Political Science: A Practical Guide to Inquiry, Structure, and Methods*. Belmont, CA: Thomson-Wadsworth.

Additional reading materials may be handed out in class, posted on the course Blackboard website, or placed on reserve in Newton Gresham Library.

Exams, Assignments, and Grading

Your grade in this course will be determined by your performance on a course term paper, two exams, and in-class/take home activities as follows:

Term Paper

First Drafts of Term Paper Sections (5 @ 20 points each)	
Research Question & Literature Review (Due February 11 th)	20 points
Theory & Hypothesis (Due February 18 th)	20 points
Concepts & Variables (Due February 27 th)	20 points
Research Design (Due March 31 st)	20 points
Analysis (Due April 21 st)	20 points
Final Draft of Term Paper (Due May 5 th)	100 points

Exams

Mid-Term Exam (March 3 rd)	100 points
Final Exam (May 14 th)	100 points

In-Class/Take Home Activities

In-Class/Take Home Exercises (15 @ 5 points each)	75 points
Class Attendance and Participation	25 points

The *term paper* you are creating is an academic manuscript, and must conform to the standards of the Political Science profession. Sections of the paper are due over the course of the semester and the final draft of the whole paper is due near the end of the semester. **IMPORTANT NOTE:** Failure to turn in any first draft section(s) will earn a grade of zero (0), and all points for that portion of the final draft will be forfeited as well. Details on each section, as well as the final paper, will be handed out as the semester progresses.

The *mid-term and final exams* may include multiple choice, matching, fill-in-the-blank, short answer, and/or essay questions. More details about each exam will be given as the semester progresses.

The *in-class/take-home exercises* will be handed out in class and/or posted on the course Blackboard website. These exercises will involve application of class material and creative thinking. You must be present in class (or have a documented excused absence) to turn in an assignment for credit. A grade of zero (0) will be recorded for all missed assignments.

Course grades will be calculated according to the following scale: A = 450 or more points; B = 400 - 449.999; C= 350 - 399.999; D = 300 - 349.999; F = less than 300 points. Please note that there is no rounding on overall course grades (students asking me to calculate their grade for them will be penalized 50 points on their overall course grade).

Instructor Evaluations

Students will be given the opportunity to complete a course/instructor evaluation form near the end of the semester.

Attendance Policy

Regular and punctual class attendance is expected of each student at Sam Houston State University. Because class attendance and course grade are demonstrably and positively related, I expect students to attend all class sessions of this course. Regular attendance is important because we will cover information in class that is not found in the texts. Attendance will be taken in every class meeting. If you are absent for any reason, it is your responsibility to become informed on what was covered in class. Please get class notes from a fellow student. It is not my policy to give out my lecture notes.

Academic Dishonesty

All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials. For a complete listing of the university policy, see: <http://www.shsu.edu/administrative/faculty/sectionb.html#dishonesty>.

Americans with Disabilities Act

SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a disability that may affect adversely your work in this class, then I encourage you to register with the SHSU Counseling Center and to talk with me about how I can best help you. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. *NOTE:* No accommodation can be made until you register with the Counseling Center . For a complete listing of the university policy, see: http://www.shsu.edu/~vaf_www/aps/811006.pdf.

Religious Holidays

Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence. "Religious holy day" means a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20, Tax Code. For a complete listing of the university policy, see: http://www.shsu.edu/~vaf_www/aps/documents/861001.pdf.

Classroom Rules of Conduct

Students are expected to abide by the Classroom Rules of Conduct as outlined by the Dean of Students: <http://www.shsu.edu/students/guide/dean/codeofconduct.html>.

CLASS SCHEDULE & READING ASSIGNMENT

Note: This schedule and the reading assignments are tentative. Changes will be announced in class.

January 18 (Friday): Overview of the Scientific Study of Politics

Johnson & Reynolds, Chapter 1 (read pp. 1-3, skim 4-26)
Johnson & Reynolds, Chapter 2 (pp. 27-35, 40-42, 45-59)
Baglione, Chapter 1:

January 21 (Monday): MLK DAY HOLIDAY – NO CLASS MEETING

I. THE RESEARCH QUESTION

January 23 (Wednesday): The Basics

Johnson & Reynolds, Chapter 3 (pp. 60-65)
Johnson & Reynolds, Chapter 6 (pp. 183-187)
Baglione, Chapter 2

January 25 (Friday): Identifying Research Questions

****No Class Meeting****

Assignment #1: Due via e-mail (Ulbig@shsu.edu) by 5:00 PM

January 28 (Monday): Developing Your Own Research Questions

Assignment #2: Due at beginning of class

II. THE LITERATURE REVIEW

January 30 (Wednesday): Locating Resources

Johnson & Reynolds, Chapter 6 (pp. 182-183, 187-200)

February 1 (Friday): Conducting Library Research

****Meet in Library****

February 4 (Monday): Constructing a Literature Review, Part 1

Johnson & Reynolds, Chapter 6 (pp. 200-208)
Baglione, Chapter 3
Assignment #3: Due at beginning of class

February 6 (Wednesday): Constructing a Literature Review, Part 2

Assignment #4: Due at beginning of class

February 8 (Friday): Constructing a Literature Review, Part 3

In-class Help Session on Literature Review Section of Term Paper

III. THEORIES AND HYPOTHESES

February 11 (Monday): The Basics

Johnson & Reynolds, Chapter 3 (pp. 65-81)
Johnson & Reynolds, Chapter 2 (pp. 35-40)
Baglione, Chapter 4

LITERATURE REVIEW SECTION – FIRST DRAFT DUE

February 13 (Wednesday): Examples of Theories and Hypotheses

Assignment #5: Due at beginning of class

February 15 (Friday): Developing Theory and Hypothesis

In-class Help Session on Theory and Hypothesis Section of Research Paper

IV. CONCEPTS AND VARIABLES

February 18 (Monday): The Basics

Johnson & Reynolds, Chapter 3 (pp. 81-85)
Johnson & Reynolds, Chapter 4
Baglione, Chapter 6 (pp. 89-99)

THEORY AND HYPOTHESIS SECTION – FIRST DRAFT DUE

February 20 (Wednesday): Examples of Concepts and Variables

Assignment #6: Due at beginning of class

February 22 (Friday): Term Paper Work Day

****No Class Meeting****

February 25 (Monday): Developing Concepts and Variables

In-class Help Session on Concepts and Variables Section of Term Paper

V. RESEARCH DESIGNS

February 27 (Wednesday): The Basics

Johnson & Reynolds, Chapter 5 (pp. 122-165)
Baglione, Chapter 6 (pp. 99-117)

CONCEPTS AND VARIABLES SECTION – FIRST DRAFT DUE

February 29 (Friday): Examples of Research Designs

Assignment #7: Due at beginning of class

March 3 (Monday): *MID-TERM EXAM*****

March 5 (Wednesday): Post-Mortem of Mid-Term Exam

March 7 (Friday): Term Paper Work Day

****No Class Meeting****

March 10 – March 14: SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS MEETINGS

March 17 (Monday): Sampling

Johnson & Reynolds, Chapter 7
Assignment #8: In-Class Exercise

March 19 (Wednesday): Data Collection Methods: Empirical Observations

Johnson & Reynolds, Chapter 8
Assignment #9: In-class exercise

March 21 (Friday): Good Friday Holiday – No Class Meeting

March 24 (Monday): Data Collection Methods: Document Analysis

Johnson & Reynolds, Chapter 9
Assignment #10: In-class exercise

March 26 (Wednesday): Data Collection Methods: Survey Research and Interviewing

Johnson & Reynolds, Chapter 10
Assignment #11: In-class exercise

March 28 (Friday): Designing Your Own Research Design

In-class Help Session on Research Design Section of Term Paper

March 31 (Monday): Analysis and Assessment

Baglione, Chapter 7

RESEARCH DESIGN SECTION – FIRST DRAFT DUE

VI. ANALYSIS AND ASSESSMENT

April 2 (Wednesday): Introduction to Statistics

Johnson & Reynolds, Chapter 11

April 4 (Friday): Term Paper Work Day

****No Class Meeting****

April 7 (Monday): Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis – Examples

Assignment #12: Due at beginning of class

April 9 (Wednesday): Bivariate Data Analysis – The Basics

Johnson & Reynolds, Chapter 12

April 11 (Friday): Multivariate Data Analysis – The Basics

Johnson & Reynolds, Chapter 13

April 14 (Monday): Bivariate & Multivariate Data Analysis – Examples

Assignment # 13: Due at beginning of class

April 16 (Wednesday):

In-class Help Session on Analysis Section of Term Paper

April 18 (Friday): Term Paper Work Day

****No Class Meeting****

VII. PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

April 21 (Monday): Writing the Conclusion

Baglione, Chapter 8

ANALYSIS SECTION – FIRST DRAFT DUE

April 23 (Wednesday): Writing the Introduction & Creating a Title

Baglione, Chapter 5

April 25 (Friday): Ethics in Social Science Research

VIDEO: “The Milgram Experiments”

Assignment #14: In-class assignment

April 28 (Monday): Ethics in Social Science Research

VIDEO: “Evolving Concern: Protection for Human Subjects”

April 30 (Wednesday): Ethics in Social Science Research

VIDEO: “Balancing Society’s Mandates: Criteria for Protocol Review”

May 2 (Friday): Ethics in Social Science Research

VIDEO: “The Belmont Report: Basic Ethical Principles and their Application”

May 5 (Monday): Putting it All Together

In-class Help Session on Final Draft of Term Paper

FINAL DRAFT OF TERM PAPER DUE BY 11:59 PM

May 7 (Wednesday): Ethical Concerns

Assignment #15: Due at beginning of class

May 14 (Wednesday): FINAL EXAM, 11:00AM – 1:00 PM