

Syllabus for Political Science 30: Political Inquiry

Summer Session I 2006, University of California San Diego

<http://dss.ucsd.edu/~lwimberl/PS30.htm>

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 1:30 – 2:30 in Solís 105

Why do political scientists call themselves scientists? What can we learn about the world of politics using the tools of scientific inquiry? This course is intended to introduce students majoring or minoring in political science to the basic principles of research design, and to show you how they are applied to real data by real researchers in the real world to answer really important questions.

We will discuss a range of methods, including experiments, qualitative case studies, and statistical analysis of large data sets. Through a set of homework assignments, you will be asked to conduct your own analysis of a question of your choosing, using a dataset that we will provide. In order to work with the data, you will learn how to operate a statistics program (SPSS) that is used by scholars and practitioners in both the social and natural sciences. The two primary goals of the course are:

1. To provide you with analytic tools that will help you understand how political scientists do research.
2. To improve your ability to pose and answer research questions on your own.

Classes will be a mixture of lecture, group work, short films, and computer lab work. All lecture notes will be posted on the course website (at <http://dss.ucsd.edu/~lwimberl/PS30lectures.htm>) the night before each class, so that you can print out the slides and add your in class notes to them. The films, from the *Against All Odds* series, are on reserve in Geisel Library.

Textbooks and Software

Required Textbooks: *The Essentials of Political Analysis*, 2nd Ed., and *An SPSS Companion to Political Analysis*, 2nd Ed., both by Philip H. Pollock III. All students are required to have the disc of datasets that is included with the *Companion* book.

Recommended: SPSS statistical software (student version). If you have your own Windows computer, I recommend that you purchase and install the SPSS program on it. The program is not available for Mac or Linux, so if you have a Mac or Linux computer, or if you do not own a computer, you should not buy the software. You will be able to do your work in the computer lab in Solís 105.

All of these are for sale in the bookstore in the Price Center. If you plan on buying the SPSS software, your best bet is to buy the bundle that includes the software and both books; if you are not buying the software, there are a number of high-quality used copies

of the books available separately. If the Price Center bookstore is sold out, you can order either bundle at www.cqpress.com.

Coursework and Grades

3 quizzes – 5% each – 15%

Homework #1 – 10%

Homework #2 – 15%

Homework #3 – 30%

Final Exam – 30%

The quizzes and exam will be short-answer format. They will not require any computation that calls for a calculator, so calculators will not be permitted. The final examination will be cumulative, covering the whole course.

Course Schedule

Class 1: Thursday, July 6

Class 2: Tuesday, July 11 – Concepts and Measurement

Readings to do before class: *Essentials*: pages 1-27 (Introduction and Chapter 1)

Class 3: Thursday, July 13 – Explanations and Hypotheses

Quiz #1 at the beginning of class

Readings to do before class: *Essentials*: pages 28-50 (Chapter 2)

Class 4: Tuesday, July 18 – Describing Variables and Making Comparisons

Homework Assignment #1 due in class

Readings to do before class: *Essentials*: pages 51-76 (Chapter 3)

Companion: pages 15-30 (Chapter 2)

Class 5: Thursday, July 20 – Making Controlled Comparisons

Quiz #2 at the beginning of class

Readings to do before class: *Essentials*: pages 77-101 (Chapter 4)

Companion: pages 31-58 & 75-102 (Chapters 3 & 5)

Class 6: Tuesday, July 25 – Sampling and Inference

Homework Assignment #2 due in class

Readings to do before class: *Essentials*: pages 102-129 (Chapter 5)

Companion: pages 103-118 (Chapter 6)

Class 7: Thursday, July 27 – Association and Significance

Quiz #3 at the beginning of class

Readings to do before class: *Essentials*: pages 130-153 (Chapter 6)

Companion: pages 119-132 (Chapter 7)

Class 8: Tuesday, August 1 – Correlation and Regression

Readings to do before class: *Essentials*: pages 154-178 (Chapter 3)
Companion: pages 133-170 (Chapters 8-9)

**Class 9: Thursday, August 3 – Understanding Research in Political Science
Homework Assignment #3 due in class**

Readings to do before class: *Essentials*: pages 204-208 (Chapter 9)
Companion: pages 201-203 (end of Chapter 11)

Final Exam: Saturday, August 5, 8:00AM – 11:00AM, Center Hall 203

Class Policies

I will be happy to accommodate any student with a documented physical or learning disability. Please contact me as soon as possible to make arrangements that meet your needs. For more information, visit the UCSD Office for Students with Disabilities (<http://osd.ucsd.edu/>).

No homework assignments are accepted by e-mail.

Late homework assignments will be accepted, but will be marked down one full letter grade for each day late, unless you can document an emergency that prevented you from turning in the homework on time. All late homework assignments must be taken to the main office of the Political Science department, in room 301 of the Social Sciences Building, Monday through Friday, between 8:00AM and noon or between 1:00PM and 4:30PM, where you can ask the receptionist to date-stamp it and put it in my mailbox.

No make-up quizzes or examinations will be permitted without documentation of an emergency. If you have an emergency, you must email me as soon as possible about making up the quiz or exam. No homework assignments or make-up quizzes or examinations will be accepted after 4:30PM on Monday, August 7 unless a documented, ongoing emergency leads to a grade of Incomplete for the course.