

**Political Science 300**  
**Analyzing Politics**  
**Fall 2019**  
**Tuesday, Thursday 11-12:15**  
**CCC 234**

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CCC 484

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This course is a broad introduction to some of the primary methods of research in political science and public policy. The course is designed to develop the critical thinking, research, and communication skills of students, as well provide introductory skills in political and policy analysis. Unlike other political science courses, this is primarily a skills-building course rather than a course in which you gain substantive knowledge of specific areas of political science. That is, this course focuses on how to think about problems and issues of political and social phenomena from a political science perspective and how to use political science methodologies to define appropriate research strategies to address those problems. Thus, the assigned readings are selected because they illustrate *how* a specific research method or methodology is used.

We will learn about various qualitative and quantitative approaches to political science and public policy. The course assumes that you have some very basic math and computer skills, but this is not a statistics course or a computer-intensive course.

Finally, the course fulfills the Communication in the Major requirement. To that end we will spend time at the start of the course focusing on public policy writing skills, and then apply those skills to public policy and political issues.

**Learning outcomes for Communication in the Major:**

Communication in the Major courses provide students with systematic opportunities to develop oral and written communication skills in the context of their chosen fields, beginning the process of learning to communicate effectively in discipline-specific formats and styles.

Upon completing this requirement, students will be able to:

\*Apply discipline-specific standards of oral and written communication to compose an articulate, grammatically correct, and organized presentation/piece of writing with properly documented and supported ideas, evidence, and information suitable to the topic, purpose, and audience.

\*Critique their own and others' writing/oral presentations to provide effective and useful feedback to improve their communication.

## Other learning outcomes associated with this course:

- \*students will learn discipline specific standards that can be applied in subsequent courses;
- \*students will learn how to properly collect and analyze data pursuant to political science methodologies; and
- \*students will learn how to appropriately communicate their results.

## Required Readings

Text Rental: The Fundamentals of Political Science Research, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., by Paul Kellstedt and Guy Whitten.

Purchase: The CQ Press Writing Guide for Public Policy, by Andrew Pennock, and Little Bites of Big Data for Public Policy, by Donald Kettl. This is a bundle by CQ Press.

Other required readings are in CANVAS. The CANVAS course site is:  
<https://uwstp.instructure.com/courses/223344>

All readings listed in the syllabus are **required**. Students are expected to do the readings prior to class.

**CANVAS and Computer Usage: students must have regular and reliable access to a computer. Many course readings and assignments are in CANVAS. Also, students will have to access certain internet websites in order to conduct some basic political analysis.**

## Grading

Participation	20%	Paper #1	15%
Presentation	20%	Paper #2	15%
Short Writing Assignments	10%	Final Paper	20%

## Grade distribution:

A	94-100%	A-	90-93%		
B+	87-89%	B	84-86%	B-	80-83%
C+	77-79%	C	74-76%	C-	70-73%
D+	66-69%	D	60-65%	F	<60%

Graded Components:

**Participation:** Your participation grade is based on your active and consistent participation in class discussions. The participation rubric is at the end of this syllabus.

**Presentation:** You will present a basic research project at the end of the semester. The presentation schedule will be define at a later day, but generally students will proceed in alphabetical order. A presentation template will be discuss in class and will be available in Canvas.

**Short Writing Assignments:** There are four short writing assignments throughout the semester. In these assignments you will respond to an assigned reading or other prompt in a short paper of 2-3 paragraphs. The assignment deadlines are in the syllabus. Your paper must be uploaded to Canvas.

**Papers #1, #2, #3 (Final Paper):** There are 3 longer writing assignments required throughout the semester. In these assignments you will define a research project that focuses on a public policy issue or political question, apply basic qualitative and quantitative methods to that topic, and present your basic findings at the end of the semester.

## September

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- 3 Introduction to the course
- 5 What kind of thinker are you? Lecture on Hedgehogs, Foxes, and Thinking about Politics  
Reading:  
Don Kettl, Little Bites of Big Data, chapter 1

### Section I: Writing about Public Policy and Political Science

This section of the course is an intensive introduction to public policy writing. After this section students should have a basic understanding of some of the mechanics and styles of public policy writing.

- 10 CQ Press Writing Guide for Public Policy  
Chapter 1: Audiences and Audience Centered Writing in Public Policy  
Chapter 2: Generating and Organizing your Argument
- 12 CQ Press Writing Guide  
Chapter 3: Improving Your Writing: Sentences and Words  
Chapter 4: Writing Well: Paragraphs and Sections

**Short paper #1 due September 13, 11:59pm.**

- 17 CQ Press Writing Guide  
Chapter 8: The Issue Brief  
Chapter 9: The Decision Memo

19 Wrap up section I

## Section II: Thinking about Politics and Policy: Theories, Causality, Inferences, Measurement

This section will cover the core building blocks of political science research: identifying topics, formulating research questions, thinking theoretically and scientifically, developing theoretical explanations and testable hypotheses, understanding the current state of knowledge on an issue, and establishing causality.

24 Fundamentals of Political Science Research

Chapter 1: The Scientific Study of Politics

Chapter 2: The Art of Theory Building

26 As above.

Possible in-class assignment of hands-on theory building using large data sets, such as the World Values Survey or the START Global Terrorism dataset. Assignments to be determined.

**Paper #1 due September 27, 5pm.**

30 Fundamentals of Political Science Research

Chapter 3: Evaluating Causal Relationships

Little Bites of Big Data, Chapter 2: Get the Story, Get it Right

## October

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1 As above

3 Fundamentals of Political Science Research

Chapter 4: Research Design

8 Readings for discussion. Both readings are in CANVAS.

David Skarbek, ‘Governance and Prison Gangs.’

Jens Hainmueller and Dominik Hangartner, ‘Who Gets a Swiss Passport? A Natural Experiment in Immigrant Discrimination.’

**Short Paper #2 due October 9, 11:59pm.**

10 Fundamentals of Political Science Research

Chapter 5: Measuring Concepts of Interest

## Chapter 6: Getting to Know Your Data

- 15 World Values Survey and START Global Terrorism Database

### Section III: Methods of Political Research

This section will survey several prominent methods of research in political science such as case studies, interviews and surveys, and quantitative statistics. These represent different approaches to understanding, making causal arguments about, and generating knowledge on important questions in public policy and political science. We will discuss what each approach is, how it is used to generate evidence and address policy and political questions, each methods strengths and weaknesses are, and how you can apply the methods to your research topic.

- 17 Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches: Large-N and Small-N Research Designs

Readings to be assigned on Large N and Small N studies

Also read Kettl, Little Bites of Big Data, chapter 5: “Tell the Story”

### Qualitative Methods

#### Case Studies and the Comparative Method

- 22 Readings in CANVAS:  
Seawright and Gerring, “Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research.”  
Gerring, “What is a Case Study and What is it Good For?”  
Geddes, “How the Cases you Choose Affects the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics”
- 24 Make a comparison across datasets: WVS and START

#### Surveys, Polls, and Focus Groups

- 29 Johnson and Reynolds, “Survey Research and Interviewing.”  
Leech, “Asking Questions: Techniques for Semi-Structured Interviews.”

**Short paper #3 due October 30 11:59pm.**

- 31 Discussion  
Katherine Cramer Walsh, "Putting Inequality in its Place: Rural Consciousness and the Power of Perspective."  
Richard Fenno, "Observation, Context, and Sequence."

## November

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### **Paper #2 due November 8, 5pm.**

#### **Documentary Analysis**

- 5 Documentary Analysis  
Reading to be determined

#### **Quantitative Methods**

- 7 Fundamentals of Political Science Research  
Chapter 7: Probability and Statistical Inference
- 12 Fundamentals of Political Science Research  
Chapter 8: Bivariate Hypothesis Testing
- 14 In class exercise to be determined

### **Short Paper #4 due November 22, 11:59pm.**

- 19 Fundamentals of Political Science Research  
Chapter 9: Two-Variable Regression Models
- 21 As above
- 26 Wrap up: Kettl, Little Bites of Big Data, chapters 4 and 5
- 28 THANKSGIVING Break

# December

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3	Student Presentations
5	Student Presentations
10	Student Presentations
12	Student Presentations

**Final Paper/Paper #3 due NO LATER THAN Friday,  
December 13, at 5pm.**

## ASSIGNMENTS

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### Paper Assignment #1

Due Date: September 27, 5pm.

1000 words. This will be approximately 5 pages, but your paper is graded based on word count.

For Assignment #1, you will:

- identify a public policy question or political science research question;
- explain why you are interested in the question;
- identify the policy audiences involved in your issue area or question, and the concrete individuals and/or groups that are interested in your topic and how you identified them;
- assess what your audience already knows about the policy or political issue;
- determine what crucial knowledge they might be missing; and
- explain why your audience cares about your topic.

You must describe carefully and clearly how you compiled the information above. For instance, to determine your policy audience, did you search specific websites? If so, which ones? How did you identify your policy audience and its state of knowledge?

### Paper Assignment #2

Due Date: November 8, 5pm.

Word Count: 1500 words

For this assignment, you will:

- take your identified public policy or political science question;
- refine the question for clarity, based on the readings in class;

- identify at least one hypothesis that can be measured to help answer your policy or political question;
  - identify a dependent variable to be measured;
  - present a theory that clearly links independent variables to your dependent variable;
- AND
- apply *qualitative* research methods to your policy question.

In this assignment, you will collect and analyze primary qualitative data as a preliminary investigation into your research topic. You may use a case study (or case studies), or appropriate survey data and in-depth interviews. The approach you use, and the cases you select, should help you answer your research question. You must explicitly justify the strategy and cases/subjects you choose. The in-depth examination based on qualitative research design allows you to observe many facets of a small number of units of analysis, and develop a somewhat complete understanding of a set of events. Discuss whether the set of events that is the subject of your analysis provides evidence to confirm or refute your theory. Identify how the qualitative data suggests causality (the causal mechanism).

You can locate qualitative data in a variety of sources, including (but not limited to) articles in newspapers or magazines; transcripts of speeches or interviews of important figures; reports generated by international organizations, non-governmental organizations, or interest groups; and videos, photographs, or accounts of events. These (and other) sources will have direct, primary information about current or historical political events. Be sure to use reliable, reputable sources and to cite appropriately and clearly.

### **Paper Assignment #3**

Due Date: December 13, 5pm.

Word Count: 1500 words.

In this assignment, you will collect and analyze primary quantitative data as a preliminary investigation into your policy issue or political research topic. You will use one of the bivariate statistical hypothesis tests discussed in the course: chi-squared, difference of means, or correlation. The approach you use should help you answer your research question, and should be appropriate to the nature of the variables in your data. You must discuss the data you use and the way it is measured, and explicitly justify the appropriateness of the test, keeping in mind our course discussions and readings concerning different approaches to quantitative research. The data exercise should begin reviewing your topic, research question, and theory. Before undertaking statistical analyses, present descriptive information about the data to show what you have collected, what values the variables take on, and how they are distributed. Discuss how the variables should be related according to your theory, and explain the appropriate statistical test you will use to examine whether the predicted relationship exists. Perform the analysis, and interpret your results: explain whether the relationship is statistically significant, and discuss whether (and how confidently) you are able to reject the null hypothesis, and why. The large



sample size of a quantitative design allows you to observe patterns that are present across many cases, even if there is idiosyncratic variation in any given case. Discuss what generally-applicable patterns or conclusions are suggested by your findings.

You are responsible for finding your own quantitative data. In order to perform the analysis, you will need to use units of interest for which you are able to find measures both for your dependent variable and for a key independent variable.

The quantitative data exercise should:

1. Re-introduce a clearly articulated, specific research question, and reflect a theory that links independent variables to your dependent variable.
2. Discuss how your dependent and independent variables are measured, and show (in figures and/or tables) their distributions and/or summary statistics.
3. State a clear hypothesis that argues which values of your independent variable should be associated with which values of your dependent variable.
4. Explain the statistical tests you will use and justify why they are appropriate.
5. Present the results and their statistical significance and discuss preliminary findings.

## Class Presentation

You will present your research and policy findings from your two papers to the class. Class presentations will take place during the last two weeks of class. This means that your presentation deadline *will be separate from your final paper deadline*.

In your presentation, you will present your policy issue or political question to the class and discuss your quantitative and qualitative approaches to the topic.

Your presentation must provide a powerpoint, and include some preliminary analysis. A powerpoint template will be made available in CANVAS, and you must follow the template for this assignment.

## Short Papers

**For ALL writing assignments, proper formatting is required. You must use proper and formal grammar and style as well. Unless otherwise specified, all papers should be approximately 3 paragraphs and no more than two pages.**

**Papers are graded according to the following scale:**

Check-plus (highly rare): outstanding. 95 points.

Check: assignment completed well, core elements correct, or at least clear effort and thought put into it. 88 to 90 points.

Check-minus: assignment completed very shoddily, key elements missing or questions not answered, lack of effort evident. 77 to 83 points.

Zero: assignment not completed. 0 points.

**All Assignments must be uploaded to the CANVAS dropbox by the deadline. No exceptions or extensions.**

### **Short Paper #1**

Due September 13, 11:59 PM.

Identify three questions in public policy or political science that interest you. Address the following:

- why are you interested in them?
- what is the potential audience?
- what theory or theories might explain some of the things you know or observe?
- what outcome would you like to be able to explain?

### **Short Paper #2**

Due October 9, 11:59 PM.

Write about either David Skarbek, “Governance and Prison Gangs,” or Hainmueller and Hangartner, “Who gets a Swiss Passport?”

Address the following:

- What is the policy or political question that the research addresses?
- What is the unit of analysis?
- Can you identify the dependent and independent variables?
- What is the theory upon which the research is based?
- How does the article address causality?

### **Short Paper #3**

Due October 30, 11:59 PM

Write about *either* Walsh, “Putting Inequality in its Place...”, or Fenno, “Observation, Context, and Sequence.”

Address the following, using concise bullet points is possible:

- What is the research question?
- What is the unit of analysis?
- How are survey methods, or similar, used?
- Can you identify the dependent and independent variables?
- What is the theory upon which the research is based?
- How does the article use causality?

### **Short Paper #4**

Due November 22, 11:59 PM

NOTE: this paper will be longer than 2-3 paragraphs, and must include at least one crosstabs analysis and at least two charts or graphs to support your narrative.

Access the World Values Survey online. NOTE: instructions will be given in class on how to do this. Pick at least two countries from Wave 6. Choose at least 3 variables from the survey. Compare the countries across the variables. You must provide at least one crosstabs analysis and appropriate charts and graphs.

Explain clearly the following:

- Why you chose your countries?
- Why you chose your variables?
- A concise theory or theories that might explain the outcomes you observe.
- An interpretation of the outcomes.