Political Science 300
Analyzing Politics
Fall 2020
Tuesday, Thursday, Friday 9-9:50
DUC Alumni Room

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CCC 484
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Office hours: T,Th, 10:30am-12 noon. All office hours are online through Zoom.
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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.

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: <u>The Fundamentals of Political Science Research</u>, 3rd ed., by Paul Kellstedt and Guy Whitten.
Purchase: <u>The CQ Press Writing Guide for Public Policy</u>, by Andrew Pennock

Other required readings are in CANVAS.

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

Grading

Participation	10%
LinkedIn Learning Modules	30%
Short Paper #1	15%
Short Paper #2	15%
Paper #3/Final Project	30%

<u>Grade distribution:</u>

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%

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.

Papers #1, #2, #3 (**Final Paper**):
Paper #1: Due Date October 2 5pm.
Paper #2: Due Date November 6 5pm.
Paper #3: Due Date December 11 5pm.

Class Meetings: The class will meet in-person on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Fridays are reserved for you to work on your LinkedIn Learning modules.

LinkedIn Learning Modules/Courses: You will complete FOUR LinkedIn Learning Courses as part of this POLI 300. The courses cover data and political science, publicly available databases, and Excel Statistics I and II. For each course you will receive from LinkedIn Learning a certificate of completion that you will upload to Canvas. You should keep a copy for your own records. Uploading a completion certificate for each course is Pass/Fail. If you upload the certificate you'll receive a P (100 points); if you do NOT upload a certificate ON TIME you will receive an F (0 points). You must ensure that you meet the LinkedIn course completion deadlines listed in the syllabus in order to receive a P for all of them, and thus receiving all of the points for the 30% of your course grade.

The LinkedIn Learning courses are FREE to you as a UWSP student. You'll log into LinkedIn Learning website through the UWSP website: https://www.uwsp.edu/Pages/logins.aspx
The specific courses are listed in Canvas and you can access them there.

Why use LinkedIn Learning? First, as your post-UWSP career progresses you will participate in more and more online learning. Getting experience with LinkedIn Learning now will give you vital experience later on in your career. Second, and perhaps more importantly, each LinkedIn course gives you a certificate of completion that you can list on your resume. Potential employers will find that valuable. Third, the LinkedIn courses give you valuable skills that support the objectives of POLI 300.

One final note: if you already have advanced statistical skills and consider that the LinkedIn courses on EXCEL are not beneficial to you I'm willing to work with you to identify substitute courses in LinkedIn. If you have *already* done the LinkedIn courses (which is possible since I've used this assignment in another class) then we will need to find replacement courses for you.

Linked In Learning Course Deadlines:

The Data Science of Government and Political Science; DEADLINE: Friday September 18 5pm.
Learning Public Data Sets; DEADLINE: Friday October 16 5pm.
Excel Statistics Essential Training: 1; DEADLINE: Friday November 13 5pm
Excel Statistics Essential Training: 2; DEADLINE: Friday November 20 5pm

September

3   Introduction to the course

8   What kind of thinker are you? Lecture on Hedgehogs, Foxes, and Thinking about Politics

Section I: Writing about Public Policy and Political Science

September 10, 15, 17, 22:

Reading from the CQ Press Writing Guide for Public Policy

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.

For this section we will cover the following chapters from CQ Press Writing Guide for Public Policy: Chapter 1: Audiences and Audience Centered Writing in Public Policy; Chapter 2: Generating and Organizing your Argument; Chapter 3: Improving Your Writing: Sentences and Words; Chapter 4: Writing Well: Paragraphs and Sections; Chapter 7: Putting It All Together-Creating Professional Quality Work; Chapter 8: The Issue Brief; Chapter 9: The Decision Memo

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.

24/29   Fundamentals of Political Science Research
           Chapter 1: The Scientific Study of Politics
           Chapter 2: The Art of Theory Building

October

1   As above

This section will cover Chapter 3, 4, 5, 6 in Fundamentals of Political Science Research

6/8   Fundamentals of Political Science Research
           Chapter 3: Evaluating Causal Relationships

13/15   Fundamentals of Political Science Research
           Chapter 4: Research Design

20/22/27/29   Fundamentals of Political Science Research
           Chapter 5: Measuring Concepts of Interest
           Chapter 6: Getting to Know Your Data

November

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.

3   Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches: Large-N and Small-N Research Design

5/10   Surveys, Polls, and Focus Groups
           Discussion

Katherine Cramer Walsh, "Putting Inequality in its Place: Rural Consciousness and the Power of Perspective."

Quantitative Methods

12/17/19/24   <u>Fundamentals of Political Science Research</u>
                Chapter 7: Probability and Statistical Inference
                Chapter 8: Bivariate Hypothesis Testing
                Chapter 9: Two-Variable Regression Models

December

1/3   Use ZOOM to meet remotely to finish course materials

8/10   Finish course project: Powerpoint and Paper

ASSIGNMENTS

LinkedIn Learning Modules/Courses

You will complete the LinkedIn Learning courses listed below. Each course requires you to watch a course video and then take a short quiz based on information in the video. You will receive a certificate of completion for each course. You must upload your certificate to the Canvas assignment dropbox in POLI 300. There will be an assignment page for each of the LinkedIn courses.

The Videos
You'll watch the videos listed below. Links are provided in each module in Canvas. You'll also upload your certificates to each module in Canvas.
Log in to LinkedIn Learning through the UWSP HOME webpage, under "Logins." Your UWSP log-in should work, but you may have to set up a LinkedIn Account if you don't already have one.
The videos for this course are listed below. All are available through the CANVAS course website.

The Data Science of Government and Political Science
- By: Barton Poulson
- **DEADLINE: Friday September 18 5pm.**

Learning Public Data Sets
- By: Curt Frye
- **DEADLINE: Friday October 16 5pm.**

Excel Statistics Essential Training: 1
- By: Joseph Schmuller
- **DEADLINE: Friday November 13 5pm**

Excel Statistics Essential Training: 2
- By: Joseph Schmuller
- **DEADLINE: Friday November 20 5pm**

Paper Assignment #1

Due Date: Friday October 2 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: Friday November 6 5pm.
Word Count: 1000 words
 NOTE: this assignment follows the LinkeIn Learning course "Learning Public Data Sets."
For this assignment, you will apply what you learned in "Learning Public Data Sets" and define which data set you will download and study for your final project. You will provide the following:
-a description of the data set and where it is located;
-a description of some of the variables in the data set, including those variables that you will analyze;
-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
-discuss ways that your data will be analyzed.

Paper Assignment #3

Due Date: Friday December 11 5pm.
Word Count: At least1500 words.

In this assignment you will complete your data analysis project with a paper and powerpoint.

Write EITHER a Policy Brief or Decision Memo, per the specific chapter in The CQ Press Writing Guide for Public Policy.

Your chosen format must address a policy issue or political research with the following guidelines:
1. Your chosen data set facilitates research on the policy issue.
2. You apply one or more of the research approaches studied in class.
3. You use one or more the bivariate approaches covered in the course to address correlations and perhaps causation between variables in your study.

a. You discuss how your dependent and independent variables are measured, and show (in figures and/or tables) their distributions and/or summary statistics.
b. You state a clear hypothesis if appropriate that suggests how your independent variable should be associated with your dependent variable(s).
c. You explain the statistical tests you will use and justify why they are appropriate.
d. You present the results and their statistical significance and discuss preliminary findings.

More details about each of the writing assignments will be posted in Canvas.