

Louisiana State University  
Department of Political Science  
POLI-4001 • Fall 2011  
T-TH 12:10-1:30 • 235 Lockett Hall

## **RESEARCH METHODS IN POLITICAL SCIENCE**

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 1:30-2:30, and by appointment

**Course Description:** The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the processes and techniques necessary to conduct social science research. Specifically, students will learn how to frame a research question, assess methods best suited to research questions, measure concepts, understand data collection strategies, and analyze data.

**Course Objectives:** The major objectives of the course are as follows:

1. To introduce students to research methods used in the social sciences.
2. To enable students to efficiently locate, understand, and evaluate social science research reported in both scholarly publications and in more mainstream outlets (e.g., newspapers).
3. To enable students to critically analyze published research and identify flaws and limitations of previously conducted research.
4. To help students design and conduct research by providing the tools to formulate research questions and develop the appropriate study design and methods (both qualitative and quantitative) needed to generate the data necessary for answering those questions.
5. To encourage students to work with others to both enhance understanding of the materials and to optimize the creativity and fun involved in the research process.
6. To provide students with the knowledge and the ability to conduct and evaluate research in their respective discipline.
7. Demonstrate analytical, verbal, and written skills.

### **Course Methods:**

To reach these goals, you will:

- Read and discuss weekly assignments;
- Write a research proposal; and
- Complete an exam that gauges competencies of course content.

### **Basic Expectations:**

You can expect me (the professor) to:

- Arrive on time and be prepared for class;
- Follow the syllabus and alert you in advance of any changes;
- Respond as quickly and as thoroughly as possible to your work and concerns; and
- Evaluate your work fairly according to clearly communicated expectations.

I expect you (the student) to:

- Be both prompt and prepared for class;
- Place all cell-phones, CD players, and MP3 players in your book-bag;
- Read and follow the written syllabus and ask any clarifying questions in advance;
- Take the initiative in communicating with me before problems get out of control; and
- Evaluate your own work according to the expectations of the course.

■ I'm happy to meet, talk, or email with you about problems, questions, confusions or concerns about the class, and hope you will take advantage of my office hours which are held on Tuesdays from 1:30-2:30 or by appointment.

### **Policies & Procedures:**

Missing an Examination- In the event of an in-class missed exam the student should contact the instructor as soon as possible. It is your responsibility to find me; do not expect me to track you down. You must take exams when they are scheduled. If you miss an examination due to an emergency (car accident, emergency room visit, sick child, or death in the family) you must: (1) contact me within 24 hours of your absence, and (2) provide written documentation of your absence.

Attendance & Participation- Class attendance is regarded as an obligation as well as a privilege, and all students are expected to attend regularly and punctually to all classes. Failure to do so may jeopardize your grade. Absences of military personnel are reported in accordance with university rules. These guidelines follow University policy as described in the general catalog. I encourage meaningful and positive class participation. Participation will heavily be considered at the end of the semester. Meaningful and positive class participation needs to be done in an organized matter. Please raise your hand to be acknowledged. Talking out of turn will not be tolerated. Please respect me and your colleagues when they are speaking.

Student Code of Conduct- Chatting (side conversations), reading the paper, sleeping, wearing personal stereos, playing with cell-phone, and generally not paying attention during lecture can be distracting not only to me but to your fellow classmates. Students who must leave earlier than the end of the class period should inform me before lecture begins; otherwise they will be "absent." Please do not pack-up before I indicate that class has been dismissed. Please turn off cell-phones before coming into class. I expect that you will maintain the highest standards of intellectual honesty in this class. Anyone involved in any act of academic dishonesty as outlined by the University's Student Conduct Code will be referred to the Dean of Students.

Students with disabilities: If you are seeking classroom accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act, you are required to register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS). The ODS is located in 112 Johnston Hall. Phone is 225/ 578-5919. To receive academic accommodations for this class, please obtain the proper ODS forms and meet with me at the beginning of the semester.

Copyright Statement- Students shall adhere to the laws governing the use of copyrighted materials. They must ensure that their activities comply with fair use and in no way infringe on the copyright or other proprietary rights of others and that the materials used

and developed at Louisiana State University contain nothing unlawful, unethical, or libelous, and do not constitute any violation of any right of privacy.

### Required Texts:

- Neuman, W. Lawrence. 2009. Understanding Research. (New York: New York, Pearson Education Inc.).
- Additional readings posted on Moodle [Denoted as **M** on reading schedule].

### Evaluation:

■ **Participation** (208 Points): Your grade will be based on your attentiveness, involvement, and attitude. I expect everyone to attend all classes. There is no distinction between an “excused” or “unexcused” absence, and you don’t need to tell me when or why you’ll be absent. If you miss class for any reason, you are expected to obtain any missed material from other students in the class. I will not provide a summary of the class during my office hours. In order to obtain participation points, you have to be present in class, and you must have read the material before class and add your voice to the classroom discussion. I will at random ask you to answer questions and share your input, and consistently not having a response will greatly affect your participation points. There will be 26 class periods in which you can earn 8 points for participation (totaling 208 points). In order to receive participation points, you are to sign the attendance sheet (if you were present) and place a check next to your name, if you participated in class discussion. *If I find you have checked your name without having participated (or someone other than you has signed and checked your name), your name will be forwarded to the Dean’s Office for engaging in academic dishonesty.*

■ **Homework** (80 Points): For certain weeks, your group will be required to submit homework assignments. By requiring each piece of the research design process throughout the semester, your group will not feel overwhelmed at the end of the semester. In addition, these submissions will allow me to gauge whether the information I provide is helpful in your learning process. Each of the assignments varies in points. Your group must attend class on this day to submit the assignment. E-mail submissions or placing them in my mailbox will be not accepted. I do not accept late work.

■ **Exam** (200 Points): There will be one exam worth 200 points. This exam will include essay questions taken directly from discussions and readings. In order to do well on the exams, you must answer all parts of a question and give detailed responses. Often, students do not receive full credit, because they simply list their answers or they just write one sentence. In the directions, it will state clearly to please explain answers in-detail. Simply writing one sentence or listing is not answering questions in-detail. As a word of advice, when a question is worth 10, 15, and 20 points, it means more is required in terms of explanation. Please do not just write one or two sentence, because that is not enough to receive full credit! Based on student engagement in the course, the exams will either be in-class or take-home. If it is a take-home exam, you must attend class on this day to submit your exam. E-mail submissions or placing them in my mailbox will be not accepted. Furthermore, I will NOT accept any late exam.

■ **Research Presentation** (50 Points): Your group will present the various parts of a research design you turned in for assignments using PowerPoint. This include the: research question, literature review, and methods and analysis. Each member of the group must present. These presentations will begin on **Tuesday, November 29**. The selection of group presentations will be randomly chosen. If the group is called and is not prepared to present, the group will receive a

zero grade. You will also be required to submit a hard-copy of the presentation on the day of the presentations. E-mail submissions or placing them in my mailbox will be not accepted.

**Grading Scale:** In order to calculate your grade, you will divide your total points earned by the total points allowed--which is 538 points.

The following grading scale will be used to determine the letter grade for the course:

A	90-100
B	80-89
C	70-79
D	60-69
F	<60

**Course Schedule:**

Class Meetings:	Readings Due:
Tuesday, August 23 – Thursday, August 25	Introductions -Discussion of Syllabus ✓ Research Proposal Guidelines [M] ✓ Sample Research Proposal [M]
<b>Section 1: Defining Research, Research Errors &amp; Ethics</b>	
Tuesday, August 30- Thursday, September 1	<b>Topic 1:</b> What is Research? <b>Topic 2:</b> Errors in Research <b>Readings:</b> <u>Neuman, W. Lawrence Chapter 1: “Why do Research”</u> (pg. 1-22). <b>Topic 3:</b> Ethics in Research <b>Readings:</b> <u>Neuman, W. Lawrence Chapter 3: “Becoming an Ethical Researcher”</u> (pg. 60-84). <u>Article:</u> Brandt, Allan M. Racism and Research: The Case of the Tuskegee Syphilis Study [M] <u>Human Subjects Document: <i>The Nuremberg Code (1949)</i></u> [M] <u>View Website:</u> <a href="http://www.prisonexp.org/">http://www.prisonexp.org/</a>
Tuesday, September 6- Thursday, September 8	<b>Topic 3:</b> Ethics in Research...continued <b>Readings:</b> <u>Neuman, W. Lawrence Chapter 3: “Becoming an Ethical Researcher”</u> (pg. 60-84). <u>Article:</u> Brandt, Allan M. Racism and Research: The Case of the Tuskegee Syphilis Study [M] <u>Human Subjects Document: <i>The Nuremberg Code (1949)</i></u> [M] <u>View Website:</u> <a href="http://www.prisonexp.org/">http://www.prisonexp.org/</a>

<b>Section 2: The Research Process</b>	
<p>Tuesday, September 13- Thursday, September 15</p>	<p><b>Topic 1:</b> Decide The Following: Topic, Problem, Purpose, &amp; Questions  <b>Topic 2:</b> Conduct A Literature Review  <b>Topic 3:</b> Develop a Hypothesis  <b>Topic 4</b> Conceptualize &amp; Operationalize  <b>Readings:</b>  <u>Neuman, W. Lawrence Chapter 2:</u> “Planning a Study” (pg. 24-54).  <u>Neuman, W. Lawrence Chapter 4:</u> “Sampling: How to Select a Few to Represent the Many” (pg. 86-109).  <u>Neuman, W. Lawrence Chapter 5:</u> “Measuring Social Life” (pg. 112-139).  <b><u>Homework 1 Due September 15</u></b> (20 points): Submit 4 possible Research questions (one sheet per group).</p>
<p>Tuesday, September 20- Thursday, September 22</p>	<p><b>Topic 1:</b> Decide The Following: Topic, Problem, Purpose, &amp; Questions  <b>Topic 2:</b> Conduct A Literature Review  <b>Topic 3:</b> Develop a Hypothesis  <b>Topic 4</b> Conceptualize &amp; Operationalize  <b>Readings:</b>  <u>Neuman, W. Lawrence Chapter 2:</u> “Planning a Study” (pg. 24-54).  <u>Neuman, W. Lawrence Chapter 4:</u> “Sampling: How to Select a Few to Represent the Many” (pg. 86-109).  <u>Neuman, W. Lawrence Chapter 5:</u> “Measuring Social Life” (pg. 112-139).  <b><u>Homework 2 Due September 22</u></b> (10 points): Submit your group’s final research question (one sheet per group).</p>
<p>Tuesday, September 27 – Thursday, September 29</p>	<p><b>Topic 1:</b> Decide The Following: Topic, Problem, Purpose, &amp; Questions  <b>Topic 2:</b> Conduct A Literature Review  <b>Topic 3:</b> Develop a Hypothesis  <b>Topic 4</b> Conceptualize &amp; Operationalize  <b>Readings:</b>  <u>Neuman, W. Lawrence Chapter 2:</u> “Planning a Study” (pg. 24-54).  <u>Neuman, W. Lawrence Chapter 4:</u> “Sampling: How to Select a Few to Represent the Many” (pg. 86-109).  <u>Neuman, W. Lawrence Chapter 5:</u> “Measuring Social Life” (pg. 112-139).</p>

<b>Section 3: Modes of Observation</b>	
Tuesday, October 4 – Thursday, October 6	<p><b>Topic<sub>1</sub>:</b> Focus Group Method</p> <p><b>Readings:</b>  <u>Article:</u> “Focus Group Fundamentals” [M]  <u>Article:</u> Simon, Judith. “How To Conduct a Focus Group.” [M]</p> <p><b>In-Class Article Analysis Activity:</b>  <u>Article 2:</u> Psychological and Spiritual Growth in Women Living with HIV (Dunbar et al. pg. 10-17). [M]</p>
Tuesday, October 11	<p><b>Homework 3 Due</b> (25 points): Submit your group’s literature review (one copy per group).</p> <p>✓ <i>Must be in class to submit the literature review</i></p> <p>❖ <b>One-on-One In-Class Literature Review Discussion with Professor Sullivan</b></p>
Thursday, October 13	<b>NO CLASS – FALL BREAK</b>
Tuesday, October 18 – Thursday, October 20	<p><b>Topic<sub>2</sub>:</b> Content Analysis Method</p> <p><b>Readings:</b>            Neuman, W. Lawrence Chapter 8: “Research with Nonreactive Measures” (pg. 204-228).</p> <p><b>In-Class Article Analysis Activity:</b>  <u>Article 5:</u> Racial and Gender Biases in Magazine Advertising: A Content-Analytic Study (Plous and Neptune, pg. 38-46). [M]</p>
Tuesday, October 25 – Thursday, October 27	<p><b>Topic<sub>5</sub>:</b> Survey Method</p> <p><b>Readings:</b>            Neuman, W. Lawrence Chapter 6: “The Survey: Asking People” (pg. 142-176).</p> <p><b>In-Class Article Analysis Activity:</b>  <u>Article 9:</u> Today’s Husband More Involved in Household Duties Than Post-WW II (Moore, pg. 73-76). [M]</p>
Tuesday, November 1 – Thursday, November 3	<p><b>Topic<sub>4</sub>:</b> Experimental Method</p> <p><b>Readings:</b>            Neuman, W. Lawrence Chapter 7: “The Experiment” (pg. 178-202).</p> <p><b>In-Class Article Analysis Activity:</b>  <u>Article 14:</u> The Role of Peer Conformity in the Decision to Ride with an Intoxicated Driver (Powell and Drucker, pg. 97-100). [M]</p>

<p>Tuesday, November 8 – Thursday, November 10</p>	<p><b>Topic<sub>3</sub>: Naturalistic Observation Method</b></p> <p><b>Readings:</b>  <u>Neuman, W. Lawrence Chapter 10: “Observing People in Natural Settings”</u> (pg. 262-290).  <u>Article:</u> “Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collector’s Field Guide.” [M]  <u>Article:</u> E. Scott Geller, Nason W. Russ, and Mark G. Altomari. 1986. “Naturalistic Observations of Beer Drinking Among College Students.” <i>Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis</i>: 19: 391-396. [M]</p> <p><b><u>In-Class Article Analysis Activity:</u></b>  <u>Article 12:</u> An Unobtrusive Measure of Racial Behavior in a University Cafeteria (Page, pg. 89-91). [M]</p>
<p>Tuesday, November 15 – Thursday, November 17</p>	<p><b><u>Homework 4 Due November 15</u></b> (25 points): Submit your group’s methods section (one copy per group).</p> <p>✓ <i>Must be in class to submit the methods paper</i></p> <p>❖ <b>One-on-one in-class methods discussion with Professor Sullivan</b></p>
<p>Tuesday, November 22 – Thursday, November 24</p>	<p><b>NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING BREAK</b></p>
<p>Tuesday, November 29</p>	<p><b>Research Proposal Presentations</b></p>
<p>Thursday, December 1</p>	<p><b>Exam Due</b></p>