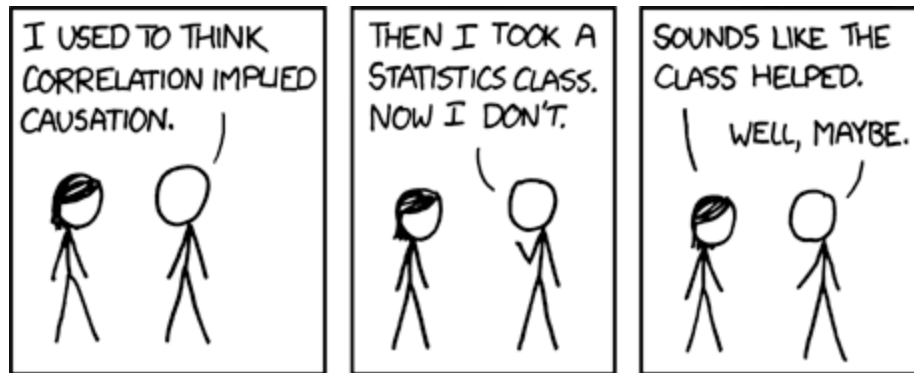


# POIS 235: POLITICAL RESEARCH METHODS AND APPROACHES

Fall 2016



Source: xkcd (<http://xkcd.com/552/>).

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**Instructor:** Florian Justwan, Ph.D.

**Class:** Monday, Wednesday, Friday; 9:30 am - 10:20 am (AD 336)

**Office Hours:** Wednesday 10:30am - 12:00pm

Wednesday: 3:30pm – 5:00pm (Administration 323)

**Email:** [fjustwan@uidaho.edu](mailto:fjustwan@uidaho.edu)

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## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course has three main goals. *First*, students should become familiar with the scientific study of politics (including but not limited to: hypothesis formulation, variable measurement, and bivariate hypothesis tests). *Second*, course participants are expected to gain a high degree in “statistical literacy” that allows them identify misuses of statistics in everyday life. *Third*, students should become proficient with the statistical software package SPSS.

The course is organized as follows: after a short introduction which covers the essentials of scientific inquiry, the first part of the course is devoted to the issue of causal inference in the social sciences. We will explore the problems that researchers face when they attempt to identify causes of phenomena in the social world. In the second part of the class, we will take a closer look at the building blocks of quantitative research methods. We will spend a lot of time on matters related to measurement and operationalization and cover the uses and misuses of descriptive statistics. Finally, in the last part of the course, we will begin to turn our attention to the tools that enable researchers to test their hypotheses about the social world and to make causal inferences about political phenomena.

## **COURSE MATERIALS**

You will need to buy three books for this class:

- Kellstedt, Paul, and Guy Whitten (2013). *The Fundamentals of Political Science Research*. Second Edition. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Pollock, Philip H. (2015). *An SPSS Companion to Political Analysis*. Fifth Edition. Washington, DC: CQ Press.
- Best, Joel (2008). *Stat-Spotting: A Field Guide to Identifying Dubious Data*. Berkeley: University of California Press (**note**: a digital version of this book is available for free via the UI library).

Most of our weekly readings will come from these books (mostly: the Kellstedt and Whitten textbook). All other readings will be provided to you online. It is absolutely essential that you carefully read all of the required material prior to each class session. I expect that you take your responsibilities seriously. Failing to do so will both significantly impact your grade and the quality of our in-class activities.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADES**

- 10% Attendance & Participation
- 20% Four Homework Assignments
- 20% Midterm Exam (October 10)
- 25% Take-home Final Exam (Due Date: December 16).
- 25% Research Paper

Part I: Research Question and Literature Review (5%)

Part II: Theory and Hypothesis (5%)

Part III: Descriptive Statistics (5%)

Final Version: polished parts I – III + bivariate data analysis & conclusion (10%)

### Attendance

Each unexcused absence will lower your final participation grade (calculated on a scale from 0 – 100) by 5 percent. I will take attendance every day. Therefore, it is essential that you show up on time. If you do come in late, it is your responsibility to approach me *directly after class* (as long as I am still in the classroom) and make sure that I checked your name on the class roll.

### Participation (10 percent)

Your participation grade will be based on the quality and quantity of your oral contributions during class. As stated above, I expect you to read and think about the assigned material prior to our meetings. In class, you should be able to discuss the main ideas and demonstrate that you are able to apply them to political research. Please note that your participation grade is only affected by *active* participation. If you don't talk, your final participation grade will be a 60 (minus 5 x *number of unexcused absences*). If you have any concerns about your participation grade, contact me as soon as possible.

### Four Homework Assignments (20 percent)

There will be 4 homework assignments over the course of the term. Each assignment is graded on a scale from 0 to 100 and counts towards 5 percent of your final grade. The due dates can be found in the course schedule below. Late assignments receive an automatic 50 percent grade penalty.

### Exams

There are 2 exams in this class – 1 midterm (20 percent) and 1 final exam (25 percent). Exam material will be drawn from the following: lecture notes, assigned required readings, class discussion, lab meetings, and any other supplementary materials. **All exams are cumulative.** One piece of advice: Do the required readings, attend class, participate and you will be very well prepared for both exams.

### Paper (25 percent)

As part of your final grade you will also have to write a research paper in which you apply the tools introduced in this class. The paper will be divided into four parts. More information will be provided in class. You may write this research paper with a classmate of your choosing. In fact, I encourage you to do so. After all, social science research is collaborative. The expectations and requirements are exactly the same for working with a coauthor as not.

## **GRADE SCALE**

Note: final grades will NOT be rounded

- A = 90.00-100.00
- B = 80.00-89.99
- C = 70.00-79.99
- D = 60.00-69.99
- F = 00.00-59.99

## **COURSE POLICIES**

### Absences & Make-Up Exams

As stated above, attendance is absolutely essential if you want to succeed in this class. You are permitted TWO unexcused absences. Every other absence will lower your participation grade by 5 percent, unless you have a valid excuse (medical, academic, etc.) AND proper documentation. Make-up exams are ONLY offered for documented absences. If you know in advance that you have a conflict preventing you from taking one of the exams at the scheduled date, please contact me as soon as possible. Finally, if you want 3 points of extra credit on the midterm exam, send me an email with the subject line “Go Vandals!” by 9:30am on August 24<sup>th</sup>.

### Academic Honesty

All students are responsible for maintaining the highest standards of honesty and integrity in every phase of their academic careers. The penalties for academic dishonesty are severe, and ignorance of the academic honesty policy is not an acceptable defense. Each student must meet the standards laid down in the University of Idaho’s “Student Code of Conduct”

(<http://www.uidaho.edu/DOS/judicialaffairs/studentcodeofconduct>). I will report all instances of academic dishonesty.

### Disabilities

Reasonable accommodations are available for students who have documented temporary or permanent disabilities. All accommodations must be approved through Disability Support Services, located in the Idaho Commons Building, Room 306, in order to notify your instructor(s) as soon as possible regarding accommodation(s) needed for the course. Contact DSS at 208-885-6307, email [dss@uidaho.edu](mailto:dss@uidaho.edu) or go to [www.uidaho.edu/dss](http://www.uidaho.edu/dss).

### Classroom Etiquette

The use of cell phones, iPods, iPads, or any other electronic device will not be permitted during class meetings. I will permit you a laptop ONLY to take notes and review online readings. Please note that I reserve the right to reverse this policy at any time

### Grade Appeals

If you believe your exams or assignments have been graded unfairly, you can appeal your grade in written form. You have to hand in your appeal on the day after the assignment or exam was returned. Comparisons to other students' graded assignments will not be accepted for a complaint. Hand in the original copy of the graded assignment/exam together with the written appeal. I will reevaluate your grade in light of the argument that you made. However, the new grade may be the same, higher, or lower than the original grade and it will be final.

**COURSE SCHEDULE** (This is only a tentative schedule for this course. Content may change)

<b>PART I: Introduction – Theories in Political Science</b>		
<b>Week 1</b>		<b>Introduction &amp; Research Questions, Theories and Hypotheses I</b>
	August 22 (M)	No readings.
	August 24 (W)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kellstedt and Whitten Chapter 1.</li> <li>• This syllabus.</li> </ul>
	August 26 (F)	Kellstedt and Whitten Chapter 2.
<b>Week 2</b>		<b>Research Questions, Theories and Hypotheses II</b>
	August 29 (M)	M. Fuhrmann (2009). “Spreading Temptation: Proliferation and Peaceful Nuclear Cooperation Agreements.” In: <i>International Security</i> 34 (1), pp. 7-41 ( <b>read 7-23 only; focus on the questions on bblearn</b> ).
	August 31 (W)	No readings.
	Sept. 2 (F)	No Class. Instructor at Conference.
<b>Week 3</b>		<b>Paper Writing Basics and Literature Reviews</b>
	Sept. 5 (M)	No Class. Labor Day.
	Sept. 7 (W)	Baglione Chapters 3 and 4.
	Sept. 9 (F)	Paper Writing Workshop. <b>Homework 1 Due Today!</b>
<b>PART II: Causality and the Logic of Control</b>		
<b>Week 4</b>		<b>Causality and the Variety of Research Designs in the Social Sciences</b>
	Sept. 12 (M)	Kellstedt and Whitten Chapter 3.
	Sept. 14 (W)	No readings.
<b>LAB A</b>	Sept 16 (F)	Pollock Chapter 1 and 11.
<b>Week 5</b>		<b>The Logic of Control in Qualitative Research Methods</b>
	Sept. 19 (M)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• K. He (2013). “Case Study and the Comparative Method.”</li> <li>• D. Posner (2004). “The Political Salience of Cultural Difference:</li> </ul>

		Why Chewas and Tumbukas Are Allies in Zambia and Adversaries in Malawi." In: American Political Science Review 98 (4), pp. 529-545 (read 529 – 540 only; focus on the questions on bblearn).
	Sept. 21 (W)	D. Acemoglu and J. Robinson (2012). Why Nations Fail. Crown Publishers: New York, Chapter 1 ("So Close and Yet So Different").
	Sept. 23 (F)	No readings.
		<b>PART III: Building Blocks of Quantitative Methods</b>
<b>Week 6</b>		<b>Measurement and Operationalization I</b>
	Sept. 26 (M)	Kellstedt and Whitten Chapter 5 (pp. 92 – 114 only).
	Sept. 28 (W)	Wheelan Chapter 3.
	Sept. 30 (F)	Part I of Term Paper ("Research Question and Literature Review") Due Today!
<b>Week 7</b>		<b>Measurement and Operationalization II</b>
	Oct. 3 (M)	J. B. Johnson & H.T. Reynolds (2012). Political Science Research Methods. Sage: Los Angeles, Chapter 9.
	Oct. 5 (W)	Application: Content Analysis.
	Oct. 7 (F)	No assigned readings. Start preparing for Midterm Exam!
<b>Week 8</b>		<b>Midterm Exam Week &amp; Descriptive Statistics I (Theory)</b>
	Oct. 10 (M)	MIDTERM EXAM
	Oct. 12 (W)	Kellstedt and Whitten Chapter 5 (pp. 114 – 126).
	Oct. 14 (F)	No class.
<b>Week 9</b>		<b>Descriptive Statistics II (Practice)</b>
	Oct. 17 (M)	No readings.
<b>LAB B</b>	Oct. 19 (W)	Pollock Chapter 2.
<b>LAB C</b>	Oct. 21 (F)	Pollock Chapter 3. Part II of Term Paper (Theory and Hypothesis) Due Today!
<b>Week</b>		<b>Descriptive Statistics III (Mistakes)</b>

<b>10</b>		
	Oct. 24 (M)	Best, Chapters A - E.
	Oct. 26 (W)	Best, Chapters F-L.
	Oct. 28 (F)	N. Silver (2012). The Signal and the Noise. Why so many predictions fail – but some don't. New York, Penguin Books. Chapter 7. <b>Homework 2 Due Today!</b>
		<b>PART IV: Hypothesis Testing in Political Science</b>
<b>Week 11</b>		<b>Experiments</b>
	Oct. 31 (M)	Kellstedt and Whitten Chapter 4 (pp. 69 – 82).
	Nov. 2 (W)	M. Tomz and J. L. Weeks (2013). "Public Opinion and the Democratic Peace." In: American Political Science Review 107 (4), 849-865 ( <b>pp. 849 – 858 only!</b> ).
<b>LAB D</b>	Nov. 4 (F)	No readings.
<b>Week 12</b>		<b>Probability and Statistical Inference</b>
	Nov. 7 (M)	Kellstedt and Whitten Chapter 6.
	Nov. 9 (W)	Wheelan Chapter 10.
	Nov 11 (F)	<b>Homework 3 due today!</b>
<b>Week 13</b>		<b>Bivariate Hypothesis Testing I (Crosstabs)</b>
	Nov. 14 (M)	Kellstedt and Whitten Chapter 7 ( <b>pages 145 – 156 only</b> ).
	Nov. 16 (W)	No readings.
<b>LAB E</b>	Nov. 18 (F)	<b>Part III of Term Paper (Descriptive Statistics) Due Today!</b> Pollock Chapters 4 and 5.
<b>Week 14</b>		<b>Thanksgiving Break</b>
	Nov. 21 (M)	No class.
	Nov. 23 (W)	No class.
	Nov. 25 (F)	No class.

<b>Week 15</b>		<b>Bivariate Hypothesis Testing II (Difference of means and Correlation Coefficients)</b>
	Nov. 28 (M)	Kellstedt and Whitten Chapter 7 (pages 156 – 170).
	Nov. 30 (W)	No readings.
<b>LAB F</b>	Dec. 2 (F)	Pollock Chapter 6 and 7. <b>Homework 4 due today.</b>
<b>Week 16</b>		<b>Outlook: Regression Analysis</b>
	Dec. 5 (M)	Kellstedt and Whitten Chapter 8.
	Dec. 7 (W)	No readings.
<b>LAB G</b>	Dec. 9 (F)	Pollock Chapter 8.
<b>Week 17</b>		<b>Final Exam Week</b>
	Dec. 12 (M) at 11:59 pm	<b>Due date for Final Version of Term Paper</b> (polished versions of sections I – III <b>plus</b> bivariate data analysis and conclusion)
	Dec. 13 (T) at 8:00 am	<b>Take-home final exam emailed to all course participants.</b>
	Dec. 16 (F) at <b>noon!</b>	<b>Due date for take-home Final Exam</b> (email: <a href="mailto:fjustwan@uidaho.edu">fjustwan@uidaho.edu</a> )