

**POS3930 ADVANCED SEMINAR: RESEARCH DESIGN**  
**RESEARCH INTENSIVE BACHELOR'S CERTIFICATE CORE COURSE**  
**HCB 0219**  
**MONDAY AND WEDNESDAY 3:35 - 4:50PM**  
**SPRING 2014**

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Office hours: Monday and Wednesday 1:00 - 2:30pm

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Office hour: Wednesday 12:00 - 1:00

### **What This Class Promises to You**

This class shows you how to study social science. As social scientists, we will identify puzzling events in politics. We will construct logical stories that answer those puzzles. We will develop ways to see how valid our stories are, and will look for evidence that can help confirm or reject the stories. We'll identify the holes in the proposed stories and address alternative explanations. Finally, we'll draw conclusions about how right or wrong our stories are.

The objective of the class is for you to start and finish an original research project. To accomplish this, we focus on principles of research design and analysis, rather than specific topics within political science. We will read and discuss a number of works in political science, but they will be chosen based on your substantive interests. We will also carefully study the research designs of the pieces we read. The class will be conducted in seminar style, which means that you are expected to discuss each of the readings assigned for the class.

You will then build a research project in several steps. You will propose a research question, build a theory that answers the question, develop a hypothesis to test the theory, construct a dataset suitable for testing the hypothesis, write a paper of the results, and present your research as a poster. By the end of the class, you will have gained valuable skills in conducting research. You will be able to design and execute quantitative analyses to explore research questions in political science and other disciplines.

### **What You Bring to the Class**

As part of the Florida State community, we strive to find truth. We are a research community that seeks to understand the world around us. Florida State cannot achieve those goals without the engagement of its undergraduate students. That means your participation in this class is valuable. You have unique gifts, skills, and insights that advance our search for truth and knowledge. If you withhold participation, it stifles and hinders the ability of the community to conduct research.

By enrolling in this class, you have the opportunity to develop, enhance, and contribute knowledge in political science. As members of this class, you and I commit to:

- Being in class, and being on time
- Doing the readings in advance
- Engaging in class discussion and using technology only to further that discussion

This class stresses active learning and is taught in a seminar style as much as possible. We engage in a great deal of discussion in small groups and as a class.

### **Textbook**

Kellstedt, Paul M., and Guy D. Whitten. 2013. The Fundamentals of Political Science Research, 2nd edition. New York: Cambridge University Press. ISBN 978-1-107-62166-4.

All other required readings are posted to Blackboard.

### **Grades**

#### *Participation, 10% of overall grade*

To function as a class, your participation is needed. You can participate by asking questions and making quality contributions to class discussion. Your participation is assessed by how much you engage the assigned readings. I will call on students to identify and discuss various aspects of the readings. If you show up to every class but do not say a word, you can expect a C for this portion of the grade.

After spring break, the class will operate more like a workshop, where we bring our research to class to share with others. You will be expected to read and provide feedback on your colleagues' work.

#### *Research Project, 65% of overall grade*

The largest component of your grade is an original research project that you will develop throughout the course of the semester. The research project analyzes empirical data. Each portion of the research project will be submitted and evaluated in parts:

- Proposal and puzzle 5%
- Theory and hypothesis paper 15%
- Dataset 5%
- Analysis paper 15%
- Final paper and response memo 20%
- Poster presentation 5%

#### *Peer Reviews, 10% of overall grade*

You will write two reviews of your classmates' work throughout the semester. The purpose of

these is to help your classmates produce a stronger paper. You will apply the concepts learned in this class to critically evaluate your classmates' work.

*In-class quizzes and take-home assignments, 15% of overall grade*

There will be a number of in-class quizzes and short take-home assignments over the course of the semester. In-class quizzes are not announced and cannot be made up.

*Grading Scale*

	B+ 89 - 87	C+ 79 - 77	D+ 69 - 67	
A 93 - 100	B 86 - 83	C 76 - 73	D 66 - 63	F 59 - 0
A- 92 - 90	B- 82 - 80	C- 72 - 70	D- 62 - 60	

*The Grade of A*

The grade of A is given to work that expresses clear, cogent, and logical arguments. Work that receives an A uses evidence from scholarly works and reputable sources to back up its conjectures. It fully considers a number of possible stories before settling on the right one. Work receiving an A is clearly written and organized, in a manner that is accessible to people outside of the class. Someone on the street should be able to read the argument and know exactly the story that is being told.

A student receiving an A grade is able to identify and generate clear dependent and independent variables. The student can explain the relationship between variables being tested, as well as the way those variables are operationalized and measured. The student identifies weaknesses in the empirical test of the relationship and proposes alternative ways of testing the relationship. The student knows what conclusions are supported by the empirical test and knows which conclusions are not.

An A grade is given to students who are on time to class and are fully engaged in class discussion. A student receiving an A only has one or two absences during the semester. The student consistently demonstrates strong understanding of the assigned readings, behaves in a professional manner, and offers helpful analysis of classmates' work.

*The Grade of B*

The grade of B is given to work that makes arguments, but the argument is not logically consistent. It provides some evidence for its conjectures, but the evidence is not always relevant or does not strongly support the story.

A grade of B can identify and generate dependent and independent variables and hypotheses, but may exhibit some confusion over the results of an empirical test. It is not able to critically assess the limits of a particular test or suggest alternative ways of testing the relationship. B work may also be somewhat confused about the extent to which conclusions are supported by an empirical test.

A grade of B is given to students who are not always on time to class and are only somewhat engaged in class discussion. The student has three unexcused absences throughout the semester. The student often demonstrates understanding of the assigned readings, but may at times offer factually inaccurate insights.

*The Grade of C*

The grade of C is given to work that expresses unclear and muddled arguments. It avoids

taking a definite position and tries to straddle a number of different stories. The work does not provide clear evidence for its conclusions. It relies on emotions or personal opinion to support its conjectures. Finally, the writing is unclear and disorganized.

Work receiving a C has trouble identifying and developing theory, dependent variables, independent variables, or hypotheses. It does not engage in much critical assessment of empirical tests. It may be able to identify conclusions that are drawn in a particular work, but cannot adequately explain how the evidence provided supports those conclusions.

A grade of C is given to students who are often late to class, are unengaged, and do not often behave professionally. A C grade reflects general lack of knowledge about the readings. The student has four unexcused absences.

#### *The Grade of D*

Work receiving a grade of D is unable to identify dependent or independent variables, theory or hypotheses. It may give facts or information received in class, but it cannot relate that information to a broader story or show how that information supports or rejects a theory. Like a grade of C, work receiving a grade of D uses emotions and personal conjectures rather than facts or evidence to support a particular argument.

A grade of D is given for five unexcused absences throughout the semester.

#### *The Grade of F*

The grade of F is given to work that makes no attempt to incorporate information from this class to answer puzzles or questions. It bases its argument solely on emotions or opinions that were not developed through research. It uses street knowledge or conventional wisdom to make a case. F work may also be factually inaccurate. Taking another scholar's direct words and passing them off as one's own (plagiarism) also constitutes F work. Finally, a grade of F is given to work that is not turned in or completed.

A student who has six or more unexcused absences during the semester is automatically eligible for failing the class.

### **Academic Honor Policy**

Both you and I are responsible for upholding academic integrity. By my writing this syllabus, and by your enrolling in this course, we agree to uphold the FSU Academic Honor Pledge, which says "I affirm my commitment to the concept of responsible freedom. I will be honest and truthful and will strive for personal and institutional integrity at The Florida State University. I will abide by the Academic Honor Policy at all times." If you would like more clarification and examples of academic honor violations, please visit <http://academichonor.fsu.edu/policy/policy.html>

### **Americans with Disabilities Act**

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should: (1) register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center; and (2) bring a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done during the first week of class.

This syllabus and other class materials are available in alternative format upon request. For more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities, contact the: Student Disability Resource Center

874 Traditions Way  
108 Student Services Building  
Florida State University  
Tallahassee, FL 32306-4167  
(850) 644-9566 (voice)  
(850) 644-8504 (TDD)  
sdr@admin.fsu.edu  
<http://www.disabilitycenter.fsu.edu/>

### **Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings**

The syllabus may be modified as needed to reflect the pace of the course. Readings may be added or subtracted. Complete the readings listed for each day before coming to class.

### **Puzzles in Political Science**

Wed, Jan 8

- Zinnes, Dina. “Three Puzzles In Search of a Researcher.”
- Munger, Michael. “10 Tips on How to Write Less Badly.”

### **Reading and Writing Political Science**

Mon, Jan 13

- McMenamin, Iain. “Process and Text: Teaching Students to Review the Literature.”
- Knopf, Jeffrey. “Doing a Literature Review.”

Wed, Jan 15

- Leeds, Ashley. “Guide to Writing Your Research Paper.”

### **Theory Building**

Mon, Jan 20: No Class, Martin Luther King, Jr., Day

Wed, Jan 22

- Volden, Wiseman, and Wittmer. “When are Women More Effective Lawmakers than Men?”
- Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 2.

### **Research Design Strategies for Assessing Causality**

Mon, Jan 27

- Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 3.
- Hultman, Lisa, Jacob Kathman, and Megan Shannon. “United Nations Peacekeeping and Civilian Protection in Civil War.”

Wed, Jan 29

### **Research Design and Constructing Datasets**

Mon, Feb 3

- Research proposal due
- Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 4.

Wed, Feb 5

- Nagler, Jonathan. “Coding Style and Good Computing Practices.”

### **Measuring Political Concepts and Developing Hypotheses**

Mon, Feb 10

- Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 5.

Wed, Feb 12

### **Measuring Political Concepts and Developing Hypotheses**

Mon, Feb 17

- Dataset due

Wed, Feb 19

### **Testing Hypotheses and Drawing Inferences**

Mon, Feb 24

- Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 12.

Wed, Feb 26

### **Testing Hypotheses and Drawing Inferences**

Mon, Mar 3

- Theory and Hypothesis Paper Due

### **Reviewing Work in Political Science**

Wed, Mar 5

- Miller, E., Pevehouse, J., Tingley, D., Rogowski, R., and Wilson, R. "How to be a peer reviewer: a guide for recent and soon-to-be Ph.D.'s."

Mar 10 - 14: Spring Break

### **Workshop: Literature Review and Theory Development**

Mon, Mar 17

- Peer Review 1 Due

Wed, Mar 19

### **Workshop: Datasets and Measurement**

Mon, Mar 24

Wed, Mar 26

### **Workshop: Operationalizing Concepts**

Mon, Mar 31

- Analysis Paper Due

Wed, Apr 2

### **Workshop: Hypothesis Testing**

Mon, Apr 7

Wed, Apr 9

- Peer Review 2 Due

### **Workshop: Interpreting Results and Drawing Conclusions**

Mon, Apr 14

Wed, Apr 16

### **Poster Preparation**

Mon, Apr 21

Wed, Apr 23

**Poster Session: Wednesday, April 30th, 12:30 - 2:30pm in Bellamy 5th Floor Conference Room**

- Research paper and response memo are due at the beginning of the poster session.