

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

APPLIED RESEARCH: POLITICAL SCIENCE

GOV 355M
Unique No. 38280
Hans-Inge Langø
Spring 2018

COURSE & INSTRUCTOR INFO

MEETING PLACE:	MEZ 2.122	MEETING TIME:	TTH, 5pm-6:30pm
OFFICE:	MEZ 3.228	OFFICE HOURS:	T, 10am-1pm
EMAIL:	hans.lango@utexas.edu		

COURSE OVERVIEW

This course is the second semester of a two-semester program to introduce undergraduate students to the research process in the social sciences. In this program, students will get hands on experience by contributing to research projects similar to the lab setting of the natural sciences. Furthermore, students will learn how to take a project from an idea to a fully developed research paper. Students learn how social scientists approach research, develop a research proposal, and do preliminary research in the first semester. Students conduct research and write up results as a research article in the second semester. During the spring course, lectures are divided into three parts: constructing and revising theories, working with data in Stata, and advanced topics in research.

Note: Students may join the class in the second semester. However, to catch up with the rest of the class they must 1) read chapters 1-4 in the textbook by the first day of class; 2) come to office hours in the first week to discuss their project; and 3) turn in a 3-page paper introducing a clear research question, dependent variable, independent variable, unit of analysis, likely case study, and data source by the second class.

COURSE STRUCTURE AND POLICIES

- **Course Format:** Class meetings will be a combination of lecture and discussion. Students should come to class prepared to discuss both their research project and the assigned readings.
- **Communication:** Course announcements will be posted on Canvas and/or sent via email. Important announcements may also be made during class, without other notice. If you miss class it is a good idea to check with fellow students or contact me if you have questions or concerns. Anyone having difficulty with the course should feel free to see me after class or arrange to see me in my office.
- **Office Hours:** You have to come to office hours at least once during the semester to discuss your research ideas, but I encourage you to meet with me several times. This will make it

easier for me to get to know your interests and provide feedback and suggestions. It will also ensure that you do not waste your time working on unrealistic projects.

- **Deadlines:** Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the dates listed below. No late assignments will be accepted, with the exception of an illness, university-approved function, or death in the immediate family. Documentation is required for any of the above and it is required that you inform me before the deadline. Failure to notify me in advance will result in a zero for the assignment.
- **Grading:** Shorter assignments will be given a Pass/Fail grade, while longer assignments will be given a numerical score. Any complaint about grading must be submitted in writing within two weeks of the assignment deadline.
- **Internship Reporting:** To ensure that students are working the required hours (5) per week, every student has to fill out the Google reporting form each week, submitted no later than the following Monday morning. The permanent URL for the form can be found on Canvas, and I will send out a weekly reminder at the end of the week. Late submissions will not be accepted, and if you fail to fill out the form for a week, I will assume you did not do any work that week.
- **Readings:** The primary emphasis of this course is on research and writing. Thus, students will be expected to regularly read academic articles related to their chosen research topic. Additional readings may be assigned by the instructor and will be made available electronically. In addition, the following book is required for this course (the 2008 version is also acceptable):

Kellstedt, Paul, and Guy Whitten. *The Fundamentals of Political Science Research*. Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Assessment

- **Class Participation (10%):** Due to the structure and goal of this class it is essential that students are both present and prepared to discuss the assigned readings and their research projects. Students are scored based on their **participation** in class. This means asking questions and contributing to class discussions. You are also required to meet with me once during office hours to discuss your project. Additional visits to office hours help with the participation score, but it is not weighted as much as participating in class.
- **Short Written Assignments (5%):** Throughout the semester you will be asked to do short assignments related to your research ideas. These will be assigned the week before they are due, and are graded on a Pass/Fail basis.
- **Internship (30%):** This portion of your grade is based on your contributions to your assigned internship project. Students will be expected to make significant contributions to course research weekly, working a minimum of **5 hours per week**, and be prepared to discuss progress on their research assignments in class. See also reporting policy above.
- **Peer Evaluations (10%):** Twice this semester students will be divided into groups to discuss each other's work. Students will read the other group members' work before class, and in class discuss and make suggestions on improvements. Following group discussions,

each student will have to write a brief (2-3 double-spaced pages) critique of another student's work. These essays should focus on particular theoretical assumptions or empirical modeling decisions that can be improved. The purpose of these exercises is to give students experience in offering thoughtful, constructive criticism.

- **Revised Research Design Section (5%):** In this assignment, you have to revise the research design section of your paper based on comments from me and the work you have done with the data (2-3 double-spaced pages).
- **Draft Analysis Section (5%):** In this assignment, you have to submit a draft of your analysis section, where you discuss the empirical results of your regression model(s) and/or case studies (2-3 double-spaced pages).
- **Research Paper (30%):** In this final assignment, students have to submit a fully realized research paper based on their work over the past two semesters. Papers should be approximately 15-25 double-spaced pages, not including bibliography. More information about the requirements of the paper will be discussed in class.
- **Presentations (5%):** Students will have to present their paper twice. The first presentation will be a poster presentation. The Department of Government will host one poster session in April, but if there is a scheduling conflict, students may present at the college or university poster sessions. The second presentation will be in class, using slides.

Course Grades

There are 100 possible points for the course. Points will correspond to the following letter grades:

93-100	A
90-92.99	A-
87-89.99	B+
83-86.99	B
80-82.99	B-
77-79.99	C+
73-76.99	C
70-72.99	C-
60-69.99	D
0-59.99	F

I do **NOT** round up scores. To achieve a specific letter grade, you have to obtain the corresponding minimum score noted above.

Classroom Conduct

This is a professional academic environment. Cell phones are to be silenced during class. Please be on time for class. It is inconsiderate and disruptive to arrive late to class or to leave class early. Laptops are allowed, however, students who create distractions by using their laptops will lose that privilege (e.g. auto-played videos during lecture can bother the instructor and fellow classmates).

University of Texas Honor Code

The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community. Students who violate University rules on plagiarism and scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, falsifying academic records, and misrepresenting facts. More information about academic dishonesty is given in "Appendix C, Chapter 11" of the 2012- 2013 General academic integrity will be referred to the Dean of Students office. For further information on please see: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acintstudent.php>

Use of E-Mail for Official Correspondence to Students

Email is recognized as an official mode of university correspondence; therefore, you are responsible for reading your email for university and course-related information and announcements. Email will be used to communicate class changes through Canvas. You are responsible to keep the university informed about changes to your email address. You should check your e-mail daily to stay current with university-related communications, some of which may be time-critical. You can find UT Austin's policies and instructions for updating your email address at <http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.php>.

Use of Canvas in Class

In this class I will use Canvas, a Web-based course management system with password-protected access at <http://courses.utexas.edu>. The syllabus, additional readings, grades, and class announcements will be posted on Canvas. Students are responsible for checking Canvas on a regular basis and are expected to consult Canvas (and the syllabus) prior to emailing the teaching assistant or the instructor with questions concerning the course. You can find support in using Canvas at the ITS Help Desk at 475-9400, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., so plan accordingly.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259 (voice) or 232-2937 (video phone) or <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd>. If you require accommodation, it is your responsibility to bring SSD certification to me early in the semester so we can work out arrangements.

Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL)

If you are worried about someone who is acting differently, you may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone your concerns about another individual's behavior. This service is provided through a partnership among the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050 or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>.

Religious Holy Days

By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Excused Absences

An absence from class will only be excused if documentation is presented. If you are sick, you will need to produce a note from a healthcare provider. I do not need to keep said documentation, only see it to confirm that the absence was excused. If you are unable to produce documentation, you will need to get documentation from the university. In the case of planned activities, the documentation must be presented to the instructor one week before the absence.

Emergency Evacuation

In the event of a fire or other emergency, it may be necessary to evacuate a building rapidly. Upon the activation of a fire alarm or the announcement of an emergency in a university building, all occupants of the building are required to evacuate and assemble outside. Once evacuated, no one may re-enter the building without instruction to do so from the Austin Fire Department, University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office. Students should familiarize themselves with all the exit doors of each room and building they occupy at the university, and should remember that the nearest exit routes may not be the same as the way they typically enter buildings. Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructors in writing during the first week of class. Faculty members must then provide this information to the Fire Prevention Services office by fax (512-232-2759), with Attn. Mr. Roosevelt Easley written in the subject line. Information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at <http://www.utexas.edu/emergency>.

Changes to the Course

The professor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus in order to better facilitate the needs of the course.

Course Outline

Part I: Building, and Rebuilding, an Argument

Week 1 (January 16th): Introduction

Week 2 (January 23rd): Theory (Redux)

- Readings: R. Harrison Wagner. 2001. "Who's Afraid of "Rational Choice Theory"?" [Canvas]
- Due: Short assignment. Identify a paper related to your topic, and discuss its theory in 1 page, identifying key assumptions.

Week 3 (January 30th): Theory Workshop

- Readings: Group members' 1-pagers.
- Due: Short assignment. Submit 1-pager summarizing your theory on Canvas and to the other members of your group. Come prepared to discuss your fellow group members' 1-pagers.

Part II: Data, Data, Data

Week 4 (February 6th): Getting to Know Your Data

- Readings: TBD
- Due: Peer evaluation on theory 1-pager.

Week 5 (February 15th): Managing Data

- Readings: TBD
- Due: Short assignment. 1-pager on descriptive statistics.

Week 6 (February 20th): Running Regressions

- Readings: TBD

Week 7 (February 27th): How to Write the Back Half of a Paper (and Workshop)

- Readings: Textbook, chapter 12.
- Due: Short assignment. Short description of regression model function, etc. Come prepared to discuss your fellow group members' 1-pagers.

Part III: Advanced Topics in Research Methods

Week 8 (March 6th): Case Studies

- Readings: TBD
- Due: Peer evaluation on research design 1-pager.

Week 9 (March 20th): Causality and Causal Inference

- Readings: TBD

Week 10 (March 27th and March 29th): Threats to Causal Inference

- Readings: TBD
- Due: Revised Research Design section (March 27th)

Week 11 (April 3rd): Research Week (no class)

Week 12 (April 10th): Logit/Probit and Other Estimators

- Readings: Textbook, sections 11.1-2.

Week 13 (April 17th): Autocorrelation and Time

- Readings: Textbook, sections 11.3-5.
- Due: Draft analysis section.

Week 14 (April 24th): Dealing with Heterogeneity

Week 15 (May 1st and May 3rd): Presentations

- Due: Research paper (May 3rd).