POLS 3103: Intro to Political Inquiry  
Fall 2017  
2:30-3:20 pm WWF  
MSCS 422  

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Course Description  
This course focuses on providing students basic tools such as data literacy and research communication – useful job skills in today’s information-based economies. In this course, students will learn the basics of the scientific method as used by political scientists. In addition, students will also learn some basic statistics for analyzing “big data,” as well as some tips on conducting quality survey research, experimental research, and case studies.

Required Reading  
This book is required for the course, and is available for purchase from the university bookstore:


Any additional readings are posted on the course’s Brightspace page. Check out Brightspace for the full reading schedule.

About TopHat  
We will be using the Top Hat ([www.tophat.com](http://www.tophat.com)) classroom response system in class. You will be able to submit answers to in-class questions using Apple or Android smartphones and tablets, laptops, or via text message (SMS).

You can visit [http://tinyurl.com/THStudentRegistration](http://tinyurl.com/THStudentRegistration) for the Student Quick Start Guide, which outlines how you will register for a Top Hat account, as well as providing a brief overview to get you up and running on the system. An email invitation will also be sent to your email account (if you don’t receive this email, you can register by visiting our direct Top Hat course URL: [https://app.tophat.com/e/469887](https://app.tophat.com/e/469887)

Top Hat will require a subscription. There are three options to choose from:

- $26 for 4 months of unlimited access  
- $38 for 12 months of unlimited access  
- $75 for lifetime student access

1 Monday night office hours are also Cooper office hours, so if you visit those days, expect to see a dog in the office!
Class Expectations

This course is **NOT**...

- ...easy. Expect to read – and participate! – in discussions and workshops.
- ...a current events course. This course is about teaching you how to study politics as a quantitative analyst, which means looking at systematic and long-term cause-effect relationships.
- ...somewhere you get to talk about your feelings. This is a class that teaches you how to make arguments with **evidence**, not opinion or ideology.

I do expect...

- ...manners. College is a stepping stone to your professional career, and you should conduct yourself as a professional in the classroom. No need for you to wear a suit and tie, but these things will help make the classroom experience more fulfilling for all students:
  - No food. Drinks (especially those with caffeine!) are welcome.
  - No sleeping in class, and especially, no snoring!
  - Cell phones can be distracting to fellow students – please make sure to mute yours and avoid checking your messages during class.
  - Keep computer use off games and/or social networks and on academic content.

- ...regular attendance. While I do not take daily attendance (see “Participation” in the grading section for more details), but you will not do well in this course if you regularly miss lecture.

- ...assignments to be completed in a timely manner. Workshops assignments are **NOT** accepted late. For other assignments, any late submissions will be penalized 1 letter grade for every day it is late (beginning at the end of class time). Assignments will not be accepted for grading 1 week after the due date.

- ...academic integrity. Any work submitted by the student must reflect the student’s own work. Plagiarism is theft of another’s work or ideas, and is a violation both of the student handbook and academic ethics. Not only that, it’s a felony that violates US copyright laws.

In case you are wondering, plagiarism includes:

1. Claiming someone else’s work as your own.
2. Copying the exact phrase from another source *without giving the author(s) credit.*
3. Using data from another source *without giving author(s) credit.*
4. Failing to put a quotation in quotation marks.
5. Using an idea or concept from an author *without giving credit to the source.*
6. Giving incorrect information about the citation source.
7. Changing the words or phrasing of the sentence but still keeping the original meaning *without giving credit to the source.*
From this list, you might notice that most of the time, all it takes to **NOT** plagiarize is to properly cite and give credit to the people from whom you are borrowing information or ideas. When in doubt, cite it!

For more information about academic integrity, see the OSU Syllabus attachment at the end of this syllabus.

**Grading**

Following university guidelines, our grading scale is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>%</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90-100</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Exceptional &amp; outstanding work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-89</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Very good work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Adequate work; superficial grasp on concepts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Very poor work; poor understanding of the material</td>
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<tr>
<td>Below 60</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Failing; unacceptable work</td>
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Remember, “A” is a rare grade reserved for projects that demonstrate outstanding skill and effort.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of Grade</th>
<th>Participation. I will not be taking attendance, but will grade you for your overall quality and quantity of participation.</th>
<th>10%</th>
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</thead>
</table>

Each week, I will mark you down if you have participated in-class OR through Top Hat’s weekly discussion question. To receive a checkmark, you need to contribute something of *substance*; one word answers will not net you any points. Likewise, asking or posting a question that can be easily looked up in the reading will also yield no points.

At the end of the semester, I will then look over your weekly participation and consider the overall *quality* of your participation. Students who regularly attend the course and actively participate will receive full points here…other students, not so much!

**Weekly Quizzes:** We will be taking a short (5 question, multiple choice) quiz nearly every week. Questions on this quiz will include material from that week's readings and from the lecture(s) earlier in the week. You may use flashcards or *paper* notes while taking the quiz, but **NO books or electronic notes.**

We will take 12 quizzes, but I will drop your two lowest scores to help cover any times you are sick or unable to attend (there are no quiz make-ups). This means only your top 10 quizzes will count towards your final grade.

10% total (1% per quiz)
Two in-class exams. Our exams will be a combination of multiple choice and practical exercises. Unlike the quizzes, exams are be closed book and closed notes. No makeups will be allowed without a 48-hour prior notice of your absence or a written medical excuse.

15% for Exam 1
10% for Exam 2

Assignments: To give you practice in research design, you will complete a variety of short assignments applying the skills you have learned thus far in the course. Details on each assignment will be posted on the course webpage. Assignments must be turned in by the end of class time the day it is due; any late assignments will receive an automatic 0.

35% total
(5% per assignment)

Final Paper: For the final project, you have 2 options:

1. Write a paper about presidential approval ratings.
2. Write an original research proposal for an empirical political science research project (similar to one you might submit for a Wentz Scholarship or other undergraduate research grant).

Both papers must be 4-pages (maximum), using Times New Roman, 12 point font, double-spaced, with margins no less than 1 inch. The citation style should be APSA citation. 20%
Tentative Semester Schedule

Topic I: Working with Other Peoples’ Data

Wednesday, August 6: Assignment 1 Due

Monday, September 18: Assignment 2 Due

Monday, September 25: Assignment 3 Due

Monday, October 9: Exam 1

Topic II: Creating Your Own Research

Monday, October 16: Assignment 4 Due

Monday, October 23: Assignment 5 Due

Friday, November 3: Assignment 6 Due

Monday, November 13: Assignment 7 Due

Friday, December 15 @ 2pm: Exam 2
  o In-class exam
  o Final research proposal / presidential approval papers due
Course Schedule and Readings

**Topic I: Working with Other Peoples’ Data**

**Week 1: Getting Serious about Political SCIENCE**

**Monday, August 21: Class Expectations**
- Read the Syllabus
- Sign-up for Top Hat
- Complete Quiz 1 (on Top Hat) before Friday, Sept. 1

**Wednesday, August 23: Thinking like a (Political) Scientist**
*Read before today:*

*In class:*

**Friday, August 25 – Beginning the Data Hunt**
*Read before today:*

*In class:*

**Week 2: Finding Data**

**Monday, August 28: Going Beyond Google**
*Skim before today:*

*In class:*
- Bring your laptop (if you have one) – we’re going to search out some data today!

**Wednesday, August 30: An Introduction to Web Scrapers**
*Read before today:*

*In class:*

**Friday, September 1: No class (Library Work Day)**
- Quiz 1 (on Top Hat) closes today
- Assignment 1 is due on Wednesday, so use this as a chance to get started on your project before the Labor Day weekend!

**Week 3: Beginning to Work with Data**

**Monday, September 4: Labor Day**
- No Class

**Wednesday, September 6: Career Workshop**
- Resume workshop with Chelsey Armstrong (Career Services)
Assignment 1 Due

Friday, September 8: Means, Medians, and When to Use Them
Read before today:

In class:
- Quiz 3

Week 4: Describing Data
Monday, September 11: Why is Polarization Increasing?
Read before today:

Wednesday, September 13: Lab Day
- Quiz 4
- Meet in CLB 407 & 408
- SPSS basics: opening files and using the Codebook
  - Working with data from the United States Elections Project

Friday, September 15: Lab Day
- Meet in CLB 407 & 408
- “Cleaning” and Merging Data, Basics of Descriptive Statistics
  - Working with data from the United States Elections Project

Week 5: Data Visualizations
Monday, September 18: Guest lecture by Dr. Meg Rincker on Interview methodology
In class:
- Assignment 2 Due

Wednesday, September 20: Beauty in Numbers
Read before today:

In class:
Quiz 4

Friday, September 22: Lab Day
- Meet in CLB 407 & 408
- Data visualizations with SPSS and Infogr.am

Week 6: Comparing Groups...The Correct Way
Monday, September 25: How NOT to Screw up an Infographic

Read before today:
- French, Katy. 29 June 2017. 7 Data Storytelling Tips from Centuries-Old Data Visualization. Retrieved from https://www.columnfivemedia.com/7-data-storytelling-tips-from-centuries-old-data-visualization
- Optional:

In class:

Wednesday, September 27: Real World Research (with T-tests)

Read before today:

In class:
- Assignment 3 Due

Friday, September 29: Lab Day
- Meet in CLB 407 & 408
- Quiz 5
- Learning how to compare means in SPSS

Week 7: Analyzing Relationships with Linear Regression
Monday, October 2: The Basics of Linear Regression

Read before today:
Wednesday, October 4: Real World Research Regression

Read before today:

In class:
- Quiz 6

Friday, October 6: Lab Day
- Meet in CLB 407 & 408
- Linear & Logistic Regression

**Topic II: Creating Your Own Research**

Week 8-10: Research Ethics + Career Development

**Monday, October 9: Exam 1**
- In-class exam

Wednesday, October 11: Career Workshop
- Tips for finding government jobs with Todd Pigg (Career Services)
- No readings!
- Add viewing of video about research ethics in data work:
  [https://players.brightcove.net/268012963001/SyDq0KScW_default/index.html?videoId=ref:oc-berkeley-lect-m2v5bd-OA00114](https://players.brightcove.net/268012963001/SyDq0KScW_default/index.html?videoId=ref:oc-berkeley-lect-m2v5bd-OA00114)

Friday, October 13: Lab Day
- Meet in CLB 407 & 408
- Basic Graphics in SPSS

Monday, October 16: Why We Have IRBs

Read before today:
- Baglione, pp. 15-31

In class:
- Assignment 4 Due

Wednesday, October 18: Working with Human Subjects

Read before today:
- Skim OSU’s “Human Subjects Research (IRB) – Applying to the IRB” page.

In class:
- Quiz

Friday, October 20: Fall Break
- No class

Monday, October 23: Career Workshop
- Interview dress & etiquette with Lindsay Vallaster (Career Services)
- Assignment 5 Due: 3 Proposed Research Questions

Wednesday, October 25: Research Scandals
Read before today:

Friday, October 27: The Importance of Data Transparency
  o Quiz

Week 11: Building on the Shoulders of Giants

Monday, October 30: Cite This, Not That
Read before today:
  o Baglione, pp. 41-50, 57-59, 76-79, 93-98
  o Optional:
    ▪ Baglione, pp. 61-71
    ▪ Sample Annotated Bibliographies from previous semesters
In class:
  o Quiz
  o Workshop: learning to identify the “good” articles from the bad

Wednesday, November 1: Organizing a Literature Review
Read before today:
In class:

Friday, November 3: Theories, Hypotheses, and Paradigms
Read before today:
  o Baglione, pp. 93-104
In class:
  o Assignment 6 Due

Week 12: Building Theory…and the Methodology to Test It

Monday, November 6: Hypothesis Workshop
Read before today:
In class:
  o Workshop: Rewriting Bad Hypotheses

Wednesday, November 8: Operationalization & Conceptualization
Read before today:
  o Baglione, pp. 126-139
  o Complete online assignment on terrorist incident coding
In class:
  - Guest lecture by Dr. Stephen Nemeth on “Defining Terrorism”

Friday, November 10: The Methods Checklist

Read before today:

In class:
  - Quiz

Week 13-14: Experimentation

Monday, November 13: Controlled Experiments

Read before today:
  - Optional:

In class:
  - Assignment 7 Due

Wednesday, November 15: Field Experiments

Read before today:

In class:

Friday, November 17: Natural Experiments

Read before today:

In class:
  - Quiz

Monday, November 20: Fun with Experiments

Read before today:

In class:
  - Watch the inspiration for the study: Stephen Colbert at the 2006 White House Correspondent’s dinner: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2X93u3anTco&t=546s

Wednesday, November 22-Friday, November 24: Thanksgiving Break
No class

**Week 15-16: Surveys, Polls, and Interviews**

**Monday, November 27: Writing Good Questions**
- No readings today!
- Lecture: The Dos and Don’ts of Survey Questions

**Wednesday, November 29: Good Interview Strategies**
*Read before today:*
- TBA

*In class:*
- Guest lecture by Dr. Farida Jalazai

**Friday, December 1: Getting the Sample Right**
*Read before today:*

*In class:*
- Quiz 11

**Monday, December 4: Assessing Poll Performance in the 2016 Election**
*Read before today:*

*In class:*

**Wednesday, December 6: Establishing Causality**
*Read before today:*
- Baglione pp. 139-148

*In class:*

**Friday, December 8: Career Workshop**
*Read before today:*
- From *Forbes*, read "Why College Freshmen Need to Major in LinkedIn" and "Social Media Can Cost You A Job: 6 Solutions"
- From *Business Insider*, "These foolproof tips from LinkedIn will help you land your dream job"

*In class:*
- Quiz 12
- In class workshop on Linkedin

**Final Exam: Friday, December 15 @ 2pm**
- Final research proposals due
- In-class exam