

CUYAMACA COLLEGE
COURSE OUTLINE OF RECORD

Political Science 170 – Introduction to Political Science Research Methods

3 hours lecture, 3 units

Catalog Description

This course welcomes students to the scientific study of politics, research ethics, theory construction and hypothesis generation, research design, conceptualization, operationalization, and measurement of political concepts, and data collection and management of political data. Students will be guided through qualitative and quantitative empirical analyses, which includes interpreting results of regression models for binary, ordinal, categorical, and count outcomes.

Prerequisite

None

Course Content

Units that provide introductory level knowledge of political science research methods that include:

- 1) Description of the scholarly community of political scientists (regional associations, national associations, academic conferences, journals and the peer-review process, and think tanks)
- 2) The scientific method and its use in political science
- 3) Theories, hypotheses, variables, and units and how they are used in political science research
- 4) Conceptualization, operationalization and measurement of political concepts
- 5) Elements of research design - including the logic of sampling - and how to create a research design that is relevant to the study of political science
- 6) Qualitative research methods (such as interviewing, focus groups, and observations)
- 7) Quantitative research methods (such as survey research, combining multiple methods, content analysis, aggregate data, and comparative research) that are relevant in political science and means of analysis as used in political science

Course Objectives

Students will be able to:

- 1) Formulate, and be able to explain, the principles of the scientific method and their role in studying political phenomena.
- 2) Demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between theory and research in political science.
- 3) Analyze how to move from a specific event to more general theories; assess how theory works at different aggregate levels (i.e., micro-macro); analyze the causes that lead to variation in the dependent variable; examine previous research; and evaluate what previous researchers missed.
- 4) Understand hurdles along the route to establishing causal relationships: Establishing whether there is a credible causal mechanism that connects X to Y, ruling out the possibility that Y causes X, determining whether there is covariation between X and Y, and controlling for confounding variables Z that could render the association between X and Y spurious. Analyze examples from political science such as democratic peace or democratic stability and determine whether causal relationships can be established.
- 5) Demonstrate knowledge of general research designs by creating a research design that deals with political research. Analyze types and purposes of research design and assess drawbacks to experimental research design and difficulties with observational studies.
- 6) Demonstrate knowledge of experimental and non-experimental (observational) methods specific to political science.

- 7) Demonstrate knowledge of standard research practices within political science.
- 8) Select and defend research designs and data collection procedures appropriate to test hypotheses regarding political outcomes.
- 9) Read reports of research findings from political science research, explain the generalizability of research results, and summarize a body of research findings within political science.
- 10) Identify and define conceptualization, operationalization, and measurement. Examine the social science measurements and assess challenges to quantifying human beings. For example, analyzing how we operationalize democracy.
- 11) Evaluate and apply sampling procedures in a research project: Illustrate and assess the difference between 'random assignment' versus 'random sampling'; examine survey research and construct a survey questionnaire.
- 12) Explain the ethical treatment of participants in research; identify and assess the role of ethics and politics on researching human beings as subjects.

Method of Evaluation

A grading system will be established by the instructor and implemented uniformly. Grades will be based on demonstrated proficiency in the subject matter determined by multiple measurements for evaluation, one of which must be essay exams, skills demonstration or, where appropriate, the symbol system.

- 1) Participation in class conversations, role playing, simulations, or debates about students' engagement with course content and course assessments.
- 2) Formative and summative writing prompts, quizzes, or exams that prepare students to confidently engage in course content.
- 3) Written assignments, such as students' reflections on course content.
- 4) Analysis of peer-reviewed journal articles.
- 5) Research papers or projects that are scaffolded over the course, so students have time to engage with challenging course content.
- 6) Oral presentations to give students the opportunity to practice their communication skills and share their research papers or projects with peers.

Special Materials Required of Student

None

Minimum Instructional Facilities

Smart classroom

Method of Instruction

- 1) Lecture
- 2) Visual aid supplements, such as PowerPoint slides, maps, DVDs, and graphs
- 3) Project-based learning
- 4) Instructor-facilitated discussion of assigned various written essays, both in class and out of class, reflecting criticism and analysis of materials that have been researched
- 5) Instructor-led oral discussions designed to require a student to defend and evaluate his or her own conclusions
- 6) Instructor-led discussion of assigned community participation/observation activities
- 7) Instructor-led debates
- 8) Instructor-led group meetings
- 9) Canvas enhancement shell for group discussions, projects, email

Out-of-Class Assignments

- 1) Analysis of reading assignments, such as analysis of peer-reviewed journal articles
- 2) Reading and review of course material
- 3) Collection of data and conducting data analysis
- 4) Completing formative assessments, such as quizzes

Texts and References

- 1) Required (representative examples):
 - a. Franco, Josh, Charlotte Lee, Kau Vue, Dino Bozonelos, Masahiro Omae, and Steven Cauchon. 2020. *Introduction to Political Science Research Methods*. 1st Edition.
 - b. Kellstedt, P. M. and G. D. Whitten (2018). *The Fundamentals of Political Science Research*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- 2) Supplemental: Franco, Josh. 2021. *Polimetrics: A Stata Companion to Introduction to Political Science Research Methods*. 1st edition.

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- 1) Formulate research questions, theories, and hypotheses for topics in political science.
- 2) Critique and evaluate political science research, with particular attention paid to the methodology and research design.
- 3) Identify, compare, and contrast differing methods used within political science.