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Political Science 251
SUNY--Geneseo
Fall 2009

MODERN POLITICAL ANALYSIS

This course is an introduction to the approaches and techniques of modern political analysis. This course will introduce you to how Political Scientists learn about the political world. How do political scientists analyze politics? What does it mean that the word "science" appears in the title of our discipline? What do we mean by the scientific study of politics? We will talk about how Political Scientists discover new knowledge, make inferences, design their research, collect data, and make use of social statistics. Since learning by doing is the best method for gaining knowledge, you will be required to design research and make use of social statistics to understand some political phenomenon. Prior knowledge or experience with statistics is not required for this course.

Please note that students who receive credit for PLSC 251 cannot receive credit for the following statistics courses: MATH 242, ECON 202, PSYC 250, and SOC 211; and vice versa.

Readings and Ancillary Materials:
The Essentials of Political Analysis, 3rd Edition & An SPSS Companion to Political Analysis, 3rd Edition + SPSS Student Version Software package. October 2008, Philip Pollock III. ISBN 978-1-60426-502-6.

(Note, the above text can be purchased as a package or separately, but it is typically less expensive if purchased as a package, with the accompanying CD-ROM).
You will need a calculator for this course, it should be able to add, subtract, multiply, divide, square, and take square roots.

Other readings will be distributed via mycourse or via email.

Homework and Lab Exercises:
There will be several labs, in-class assignments, and homework assignments. These assignments will count for 25% of the final course grade. Failure to complete or participate in lab or in-class assignment by the conclusion of a class will head to a reduction in one's homework and lab exercise grade.

Midterm and Final:
There will be one mid-term and a final. Each will count for 25% of your final course grade. The scheduled time for the final exam is Monday, December 21st, 12:00-3:00 P.M.

Paper:
A 14-16 page term paper is required (approximately 7-9 pages should be the written portion, the rest are tables or figures), it is due the last day of class and will account for 25% of your grade. The paper will involve analysis of data included on the CD-ROM. You should begin by reading Chapter 11 of An SPSS Companion to Political Analysis. You will be required

to develop your own paper topic. Students are encouraged to meet with the professor to discuss their paper. I urge you to meet with me early and to begin work early. Past experience demonstrates a relationship between when a student begins work and the grade a student receives on his or her paper. Papers will be graded on the quality of the presentation (writing clarity, organization), sophistication of the data analysis, and demonstrated mastery of political analysis. I want you to apply what you have learned in this course to a small research project of your own design. Students must hand in a two-page (double-spaced) research design proposal on **October 5th**. Your research design proposal should address the first three items listed below.

You need to identify a research question that the available data will allow you to investigate.

1. Explain the importance of your topic for the sub-discipline of Political Science your research fits within (American Politics, International Politics, or Comparative Politics). What is the point of looking into your topic? Why might we want to know more about the topic? I encourage you to do some background reading to answer these questions or draw on materials from other political science courses. Your sources should be Political Science journals or books; magazines and newspapers are not appropriate.

2. What are the key concepts and how were they measured?

3. What are your hypotheses? Identify the independent and dependent variables. Explain the reasoning behind your proposition or hypothesis. It is not enough to state that you believe there is a positive or negative relationship between variable A and variable B, *you must also explain why you think that proposition is plausible*. A good hypothesis should be a reasonable conjecture, even though it may turn out to be wrong. Papers should have approximately 4 or 5 hypotheses.

4. Describe the bivariate relationship of interest that you are trying to test. Present the findings in a clearly labeled table and interpret those findings in paragraph form. Only show what is necessary in your tables but show all that is necessary. Tables should be professional in appearance, following the standards of the text.

5. If you control for a third variable, explain why you did so and describe your results.

6. Do the findings support or contradict your hypothesis? If you do find a relationship, how strong or weak would you say it is?

7. If appropriate (and in most cases it is appropriate), do a multivariate analysis of the data.

8. Going back to #1, address the question you raised.

A preliminary version of your paper is due **November 18th**. At this time one of your peers will read your paper and provide you with critical feedback on your paper. You can do with their criticisms/suggestions what you wish. The final version of your paper is due the last day of class. I advise all students to keep two copies of their paper to protect against the unlikely

event I misplace the one hand in.

Tables and figures in your paper should be professional in appearance, they should not be a simple "cut and paste" of spss output, although you can use the spss editing function to make your tables or figures look more professional. Tables should not contain extraneous information. Tables and figures should be numbered and contain titles, variable names and labels should be clear. Examples of professional looking tables and graphs are contained in the text.

Classroom Etiquette: If you must use the restroom please do so before or after class; **not during class**. Cell-phones should be turned off during class, and texting during class is very inappropriate.

Exams:
The only reason that an exam can be rescheduled is in the event of an illness verified by the health services center or a death in one's immediate family. Other reasons one might offer for being unable to take an exam at the schedule time—too many exams schedule on one day, already purchased travel tickets, ride is leaving early, scheduled family vacation, etc.,—are not acceptable.

Final Thoughts:

There will be times when you will be required to work with others for projects. It will help you immensely if, where appropriate, you work so you can share skills and learn from each other. You will benefit from working with someone who already understands the material as well as with someone who does not. Attempting to explain the material to someone who does not understand it is probably the best way you can learn something.

My prior experience in teaching this course at Geneseo and conversations with friends, who teach this course at other institutions, as well as my own experience as an undergraduate and graduate student, leads me to believe most students find this course a significant challenge. I very much understand the challenges you face. I love social science statistics; I think the social scientific approach is a way of thinking about the world that is tremendously valuable. If I cannot persuade you to love the social scientific approach, I hope you will come to understand why I love this approach and believe it tremendously useful.

1. Introduction--The Scientific study of Politics. What do we mean by scientific? What should Political Scientists study?

   READ: Essentials of Political Analysis, Introduction
   An SPSS Companion to Political Analysis, Introduction and Chapter 1.

2. Concepts, Variables and Measurement. How do we measure concepts? What problems do political scientists encounter when measuring political phenomena?
   READ: Essentials of Political Analysis, Chapter 1.

3. Hypotheses and Explanations. What is a good hypothesis? Where do hypotheses come from, where do good questions come from?

READ: Essentials of Political Analysis, Chapter 2.

4. Descriptive Statistics.
READ:Essentials of Political Analysis, Chapter 3.
An SPSS Companion to Political Analysis, Chapters 2.
   a. Measures of central tendency and dispersion.
   b. Crosstabulations.
   c. Graphs and Plots.

5. Research Design: Making Controlled Comparisons
READ: Essentials of Political Analysis, Chapter 4.
An SPSS Companion to Political Analysis, Chapters 3, 4, and 5.

6. Sources of Data in Political Science.

MIDTERM: October 7th.

7. Making an Inference from a sample.
READ: Essentials of Political Analysis, Chapter 5.
An SPSS Companion to Political Analysis, Chapter 6.
   a. One-Sample Confidence Interval for a Mean.
   b. One-Sample Confidence Interval for a Proportion.
   c. Sample size necessary for Confidence interval for a mean
   d. Sample size necessary for Confidence interval for a proportion
   e. One Sample Hypothesis Test for a Mean.
   f. One Sample Hypothesis Test for a Proportion.
   g. Small-Sample Confidence Interval for a Mean.
   h. Small-Sample Hypothesis Test for a mean.

8. Bivariate Statistical Analysis: Hypothesis Testing, Proportions, Means, and Measures of Association.
READ:Essentials of Political Analysis, Chapter 6 &7.
An SPSS Companion to Political Analysis, Chapter 7.

   a. Two-Sample Confidence Interval for a Difference in Means.
   b. Two-Sample Hypothesis Test for a Difference in Means.
   c. Two-Sample Confidence Interval for a Difference in Proportions.
   d. Two-Sample Hypothesis Test for a Difference in Proportions.
   e. Chi-Square.
   f. Gamma and Tau-b

9. Correlation, regression, and multivariate analysis.
Read: Essentials of Political Analysis, Chapters 8 and 9.
An SPSS Companion to Political Analysis, Chapters 8, 9, and 10.
   a. correlation.
   b. bivariate regression.

c. Multivariate regression.
d. Dummy variable regression.
e. Interaction effects.
f. Logistic regression.