



**Research Methods  
POL 360  
Fall 2018**

**TR: 9:30 am-10:45 am, FH 404**

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Department of Political Science & Sociology

Credit Hours: 3

## **1 Research Methods**

## **2 Course Description and Prerequisite(s):**

This course introduces students to social science research methods. Emphasis will be placed on the scientific method, research design, the various methods of data collection commonly used in political science, and data analysis.

**Prerequisite(s): STA 135 or PSY 300 and POL 359, or permission of instructor.**

## **3 Course Objectives**

By the end of the semester the student will be able to do the following.

- A. Develop a political science research question;
- B. Make valid causal hypotheses about the political world;
- C. Understand the basics of data collection; and
- D. Use quantitative methods to empirically test a political science research hypothesis.

## **4 Course Outline**

This course introduces students to the fundamentals of the “science” within political science. POL 359 helped students better digest political science literature and this course further students’ abilities to develop causal political theory, understand the logic of quantitative methodologies, and to discuss the results of statistical analysis. Students will use existing data sets to conduct their own analysis based on existing theories from the three core subfields of political science (i.e., American Politics, International Relations, and Comparative Politics). Moreover, the information in this course will help students in their upper-level political science courses, improve their research and writing skills, and learn how to make valid causal statements about the political world.

This course is writing intensive. Effective writing is strongly encouraged through a number of writing assignments and written exams. Students should use formal writing in this course, meaning they express their thoughts concisely, clearly, and in a grammatically correct manner. As such, students are expected to come prepared with the material that they learned in POL 359 (Writing and Inquiry in the Social Sciences). I strongly encourage that students review this material prior to our first course meeting.

This course also includes a lab component. A significant portion of students' final grades will be based on performance on exercises related to conducting statistical analysis. Students will have to perform basic mathematical calculations based on statistical formulas discussed in lecture and the text. A calculator is recommended for all class sessions.

## 5 Field, Clinical, and/or Laboratory Experiences: None

## 6 Text(s) and Resources

In this course, there is one required text. **Please be sure to get this text as soon as possible.**

- Kellstedt, Paul M. and Guy D. Whitten. 2018. *The Fundamentals of Political Science Research*, 3rd Edition. Cambridge University Press.

Additional readings will be made available on *Canvas*. These readings will be announced in class and will be available prior to the corresponding class period. It is important to note that the readings supplement the lectures, and therefore, they are not identical to lectures. It is the responsibility of the student to read all of the necessary materials as well as to attend each lecture. Both the readings and lectures are fair game for exams.

## 7 Evaluation and Grading Procedures

Students' grades will be comprised of four parts. The first part is made up of two exams—a midterm and a final—with each exam worth 20% of the student's final grade. The exams are not cumulative, but keep in mind that, while these are not cumulative tests, there are some foundational items that will be utilized throughout the semester and it is the student's responsibility to know these items.

The second part of students' grades is the three written assignments. Together, these assignments will cover 45% of the final grades (with each assignment being worth 15%). More details on these assignments is provided in assignment specific guides.

The third portion of grades is lab assignments. To familiarize students with the concepts and the SPSS statistical software, I incorporate labs and assignments throughout the semester. The purpose of these is to ensure that students fully grasp the concepts of the course and are able to practice with these ideas prior to exams and written assignments.

The final part of grades is attendance. This course requires student attendance each and every class period. Therefore, every class I will be taking attendance. **You will be granted two unexcused absences for the semester, after which you will see a deduction in this portion of your grade for each class that you miss.** If you show up later than 15 minutes to class, you will also be counted as absent. If I notice that students are not keeping up with readings and going over lecture material outside of class, I will also incorporate pop quizzes.

If you miss class because of illness or University-sanctioned event, you must provide written documentation within one week of the missed class. Excused absences will not count against your two free absences.

Grades are calculated based on the following weights:

Midterm	20%
Final Exam	20%
Written Assignments	45% (3 worth 15% each)
Lab Assignments	10%
Attendance	5%

***Class Requirements:*** Two exams will be given in this course, which consist of multiple choice, short answer, and/or essay questions. Additionally, there will be three short writing assignments in this course (approximately four to six pages each). For each of the three papers, a student makes an initial submission, receives comments on the paper, and resubmits them for final evaluation and a final grade.

Writing is a substantial component of this course. It is expected that students are utilizing effective and scholarly writing styles when completing all aspects of this course. While I am here to help, it is expected that students retain and review their knowledge from the previous course on writing and social inquiry (POL 359). Each student will choose from a list of research topics provided early in the semester, and this research topic will serve as the theme for all subsequent writing assignments. Each of the three short writing assignments will first be submitted, then your paper will be returned with comments regarding content and style. You must then rethink and revise your initial paper (noting that sometimes these can include substantial revisions). Your final grade will be assigned based on how well you incorporate these revisions into your final submission. Due dates for these are identified in the course schedule below. You must return your first version to receive a grade on the second version.

Following the selection of your topic, the first paper allows a brief discussion of relevant literature to guide future writing assignments. The purpose of the paper is to synthesize arguments within the literature on your topic and justify new research. The second paper allows you to consider a phenomenon and then define and defend a measurement of this phenomenon. The second paper will help with the operationalization and measurement of variables. It also requires you to consider types of methods for given contexts. Through this, you will see that some methods are better under some circumstances, but that there is no “preferred” methodology. The third paper lets you create and evaluate quantitative data presentation (figures, tables, or statistics) in order to effectively communicate your findings.

You must type and double-space all written assignments. Citations are required for all written assignments. **Use citations for all work that is not your own.** I will be picky about proof-reading. Sloppiness in these assignments indicates a lack of respect for the material and myself. You must proof-read each written assignment that you turn in for this class. If there are too many grammatical errors or no citations, I will return the paper to the student to resubmit with a grade deduction. If you turn in the first draft of an assignment late, there will also be a grade deduction.

**No curve will be given in this course; the grade you earn is the grade you receive. I also do not round grades.** I will use the following grading scale in this course:

- A (Excellent): 90-100%
- B (Good): 80-89%
- C (Satisfactory): 70-79%

D (Poor): 60-69%

E (Failure): 0-59%

## 8 Attendance Policy

Due to the nature of this course, it is important to attend every lecture. This course progresses rather quickly at points, and as it is a cumulative subject, students must attend all lectures for subsequent material to make sense. Therefore, I will be keeping attendance for every class period. **Students are allowed 2 unexcused absences throughout the semester.** After those, I will begin to deduct points from the attendance portion of your grade. Excused absences for illness or University-sanctioned events must include written documentation within one week of the absence. Excused absences will not count against your two free absences. If students are also not reviewing the material and completing the readings, I will also give random pop quizzes to ensure that students are keeping up with the material outside of lecture. To ensure that you are prepared, it is important to always come to class prepared for a quiz of your knowledge. If you are coming to class, but ill-prepared, this will hurt your overall grade.

**Make-up Exams:** Unforeseen emergencies do occur, however only University-approved absences will be accepted for an excused absence or an alternative exam date. All approved absences require written documentation within **one week of the exam date. No exceptions!** Without appropriate documentation in the stated time frame, the student will receive a **zero** for the exam or a deduction of your attendance grade. Keep in mind that alternative/make-up exams may be of a different format than the original exam provided on test day.

## 9 Classroom Conduct

Students are to be respectful of both other students and myself. To be respectful of others, please refrain from talking or whispering during class time. Any inappropriate or disruptive behavior by a student may result in the student being asked to leave the classroom. Additionally, this is, at times, complex material. There are no stupid questions, and I want all students to feel comfortable expressing themselves and asking relevant questions during class time. Please be respectful of one another and each other's ideas.

**Electronics Policy:** Studies have found that handwritten note-taking is better for the retention of information than taking notes on a computer or electronic device. Further, electronic devices provide a great disturbance to other students, and at times, the instructor. **Therefore, students will not be allowed to use electronic devices in this course, including laptops, tablets, or phones.** This is to ensure that all students have access to lecture material without interruption or disturbance from other students. Please ensure that your phones are placed on silent *before* class starts, and all other electronics are turned off. If you are seen using any of these devices, you will automatically lose points for your attendance grade, regardless of your current performance in the course. If you have extenuating circumstances and require some accommodation for usage of an electronic device, please see me before or after class so we can make alternative arrangements.

## 10 Academic Honesty Policy

Murray State University takes seriously its moral and educational obligation to maintain high standards of academic honesty and ethical behavior. Instructors are expected to evaluate students' academic achievements accurately, as well as ascertain that work submitted by students is

authentic and the result of their own efforts, and consistent with established academic standards. Students are obligated to respect and abide by the basic standards of personal and professional integrity.

**Violations of Academic Honesty include:**

**Cheating** - Intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized information such as books, notes, study aids, or other electronic, online, or digital devices in any academic exercise; as well as unauthorized communication of information by any means to or from others during any academic exercise.

**Fabrication and Falsification** - Intentional alteration or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise. Falsification involves changing information whereas fabrication involves inventing or counterfeiting information.

**Multiple Submission** - The submission of substantial portions of the same academic work, including oral reports, for credit more than once without authorization from the instructor.

**Plagiarism** - Intentionally or knowingly representing the words, ideas, creative work, or data of someone else as one's own in any academic exercise, without due and proper acknowledgment.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the accuracy of your material, please see me immediately! It is best to come have a conversation with me before an assignment is due, than to wait until afterwards and risk disciplinary action.

Disciplinary action may include, but is not limited to the following:

- 1.) Requiring the student(s) to repeat the exercise or do additional related exercise(s).
- 2.) Lowering the grade or failing the student(s) on the particular exercise(s) involved.
- 3.) Lowering the grade or failing the student(s) in the course.

**If the disciplinary action results in the awarding of a grade of E in the course, the student(s) may not drop the course.**

Faculty reserve the right to invalidate any exercise or other evaluative measures if substantial evidence exists that the integrity of the exercise has been compromised.

**If a student is found cheating or plagiarizing written assignments, they will receive an automatic "E" on the assignment/exam. If it happens again, they will receive an "E" in the course. NO EXCEPTIONS!**

A student may appeal the decision of the faculty member with the department chair in writing within five working days. Note: If, at any point in this process, the student alleges that actions have taken place that may be in violation of the Murray State University Non-Discrimination Statement, this process must be suspended and the matter be directed to the Office of Institutional Diversity, Equity and Access. Any appeal will be forwarded to the appropriate university committee as determined by the Provost.

Students are prohibited from selling notes or being paid for taking notes by any person or commercial firm without the express written permission of the instructor. Do not engage in any of the websites or companies that sell or distribute notes. This will be considered a form of academic dishonesty, and further administrative actions will be pursued if necessary.

## 11 Non-Discrimination Policy and Students with Disabilities

Murray State University endorses the intent of all federal and state laws created to prohibit discrimination. Murray State University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, age, veteran status, or disability in employment or application for employment, admissions, or the provision of services and provides, upon request, reasonable accommodation including auxiliary aids and services necessary to afford individuals with disabilities equal access to participate in all programs and activities.

In particular and without limiting the preceding and pursuant to and consistent with the requirements of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and its regulations 34 CFR 100 et seq.; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and its regulations 34 CFR 104; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, 20 USC 1681 et seq., and its regulations 34 CFR 106 et seq; and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975 and its regulations 34 CFR 110, Murray State University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, handicap, or age in its educational programs and activities. This non-discrimination in education programs and activities extends to employment and admissions and to recruitment, financial aid, academic programs, student services, athletics, and housing. Murray State is required by Title IX and 34 CFR part 106 not to discriminate on the basis of sex and the prohibition against sex discrimination specifically includes a prohibition of sexual harassment and sexual violence.

For information regarding nondiscrimination policies contact the Executive Director of IDEA/Title IX Coordinator, Camisha Duffy, Office of Institutional Diversity, Equity and Access, 103 Wells Hall, Murray, KY 42071. Telephone: 270-809-3155 (Voice) 270-809-3361 (TDD).

### **Statement Addressing Students with Disabilities**

Students with Disabilities: Students requiring special assistance due to a disability (temporary or permanent) should visit the Office of Student Disability Services immediately for assistance with accommodations. For more information, students with disabilities should contact the Office of Student Disability Services, Ken Ashlock, 423 Wells Hall, Murray, KY 42071. Telephone: 270-809-2018 (Voice) 270-809-5889 (TDD).

I am a member of a Safe Zone Project and I am available to listen and support you in a safe and confidential manner. As a Safe Zone participant, I can help you connect with resources on campus to address problems you may face that interfere with your academic and social success on campus as it relates to issues surrounding sexual orientation and gender identity. My goal is to help you be successful and to maintain a safe and equitable campus. For more information, visit the Office of LGBT Programming at 243 Blackburn Science Building or online at [www.murraystate.edu/lgbt](http://www.murraystate.edu/lgbt).

## Weekly Schedule:

We will spend as much time as needed on each topic. Because of this, some topics might take longer than others and this schedule should be taken as a rough guideline and not an absolute. *I expect that you have read the assigned readings **before** the class period for which they are assigned. I will announce additional required readings during class meetings.*

<i>Tentative Weekly Schedule</i>	<i>Content</i>
<b>Week 1 (Aug 14, 16)</b> Introduction to Course	<b>Reading:</b> Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 1
<b>Week 2 (Aug 21, 23)</b> Scientific Study of Politics	<b>Reading:</b> Kellstedt and Whitten, Review Chapter 2 (pages 25-30); Chapter 3 (pages 56-68)
<b>Week 3 (Aug 28, 30)</b> Experimental Design	<b>Select Research Topic in Class by Tuesday, August 28</b> <b>Reading:</b> Chapter 4
<b>Week 4 (Sep 4, 6)</b> Measurement and Validity	<b>Reading:</b> Kellstedt and Whitten, Review Chapter 5 (pages 111-122); Chapter 6
<b>Week 5 (Sep 11, 13)</b> Formal Theories of Politics	<b>First Submission of Paper 1 due at the beginning of class on Thursday, September 13.</b> <b>Readings:</b> Kellstedt and Whitten, pages 44-51 Dubner, Stephen J. and Steven D. Levitt. Nov. 6, 2005. "Why Vote?", <i>New York Times Magazine</i> .
<b>Week 6 (Sep 18, 20)</b> Descriptive Statistics	<b>Reading:</b> Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 6
<b>Week 7 (Sep 25, 27)</b> Logic of Statistical Hypothesis Testing	<b>Revised Submission of Paper 1 due at the beginning of class on Thursday, September 27.</b> <b>Reading:</b> Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 7
<b>Week 8 (Oct 2, 4)</b> Clean Up and Review	<b>No class Thursday, October 4: Fall Break</b>
<b>Week 9 (Oct 9, 11)</b> Review and Exam 1	Tuesday: Review Thursday: Exam 1
<b>Week 10 (Oct 16, 18)</b> Bivariate Hypothesis Testing	<b>First submission of Paper 2 due at the beginning of class on Thursday, October 18.</b> <b>Reading:</b> Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 8
<b>Week 11 (Oct 23, 25)</b> Bivariate Hypothesis Testing (con't)	<b>Reading:</b> Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 8
<b>Week 12 (Oct 30, Nov 1)</b> Two-Variable Regression Models	<b>Revised submission of Paper 2 due at the beginning of class on Thursday, November 1.</b> <b>Reading:</b> Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 9
<b>Week 13 (Nov 6, 8)</b> Multivariate Regression: the Basics	<b>Reading:</b> Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 10

<b>Week 14 (Nov 13, 15)</b> <b>Multivariate Regression</b> <b>Model Specification</b>	<b>First Submission of Paper 3 due at the beginning of class on Thursday, November 15.</b> <b>Reading:</b> Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 11
<b>Week 15 (Nov 20, 22)</b> <b>Limited Dependent</b> <b>Variables and Clean Up</b>	<b>No Class Thursday, November 22: Thanksgiving</b> <b>Reading:</b> Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 12
<b>Week 16 (Nov 27, 29)</b> <b>Clean Up</b>	Work on Papers in Class <b>Revised Submission of Paper 3 due through <i>Canvas</i> on Friday, November 30 by 5:00 pm</b>
<b>Final Exam</b>	<b>Final Exam Date: Wednesday, December 5 at 8:00 am in normal lecture room.</b>