FURMAN UNIVERSITY

PSC 150          Prof. Fraser
Introduction to Political Analysis       Spring 2015

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course is intended to introduce you to the challenges and rewards associated with studying politics in an empirical way. It will focus on the “big picture” questions of whether or not political phenomena such as voting, rioting, and negotiating can be studied in a “scientific” manner; how cause-and-effect relationships can be posited; and what constitute the” best” techniques for testing the veracity of political theories and hypotheses. Most centrally, this course, in the words of J. Robert Oppenheimer, is therefore concerned with “the bumpy contingent nature of the way in which you actually find out something.” This way seems to work for physicists--the hope is that it works for political scientists as well!

The course will also focus on the “nuts and bolts” of conducting political science research by affording you the opportunity to use a variety of techniques associated with the collection (e.g., interviews, surveys, content analysis) and analysis (e.g., crosstabulation tables and multiple regression models) of political data.

Finally, this course is structured for those intending to complete the major in Political Science; however, once you have completed it, whatever your academic or career goals, you will be well on your way to becoming a more astute observer (and analyst) of the world around you—a prerequisite, in my view, for sensitive and committed global citizens (and productive social scientists).

COURSE ADMINISTRATION: Class will meet between 9:30-10:20 a.m., Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, in JH 105. Note that there is a LAB component scheduled for each Wednesday from 3:30-4:45 p.m. The venue for the LAB is FH 117. This day and time is reserved for a variety of purposes—we will probably not use LAB sessions early in the term, but they will become more salient for us as the term progresses. Rest assured, I will indicate when we will meet—and for what purpose.

My office is 111B in Johns Hall. Office hours are by appointment. My office phone is 294-3185, and my email is cleve.fraser@furman.edu.

READINGS: The core text for the course is:

Malici, Akan, and Elizabeth S. Smith, eds. (2012). Political Science Research in Practice
New York: Routledge.

Other readings/course materials will be made available to you at the appropriate times via the course’s Moodle portal.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: The data that I will analyze in determining your course grade is noted below:
Research Practicum:

- Research question/lit review  Monday, February 9  10%
- Content Analysis   Friday, March 20  10%
- Interview/survey questions  Friday, April 10  20%
- Data Analysis   Monday April 27  20%

Midterm Exam   Wednesday, February 25  15%

Final Exam    Wednesday May 6  15%
(8:30-11:00 a.m.)

Participation  10%

More detailed requirements for each segment of your research practicum will be forthcoming in the near future, and should be considered as appendices to this document. In general, all written assignments associated with your research projects are to be typed (word processed), 1 ½ spaced, 12 point font Times New Roman with 1 inch margins (top-bottom, left-right) and must include a References Cited/Bibliography.

The midterm exam will be short answer/essay; the final exam (short answer/essay) is cumulative (a study guide will be provided).

Given the nature of this course, your participation grade will be based on both attendance and your contribution to class discussion. With respect to attendance, given that the accumulation of knowledge in this course is linear and cumulative—that is, it builds on consideration of prior topics, your presence is also absolutely essential for you and your colleagues to derive maximum benefit from this experience. With respect to participation, the accumulation of systematic knowledge about politics is enhanced by:

- Thorough preparation and mastery of the material.
- Effective expression of well-thought out questions and comments.
- Constructive critiques and/or insights related to the work and ideas of colleagues.

Legitimate excuses for missing an exam include but are not limited to: (1) an illness vouched for by a physician, (2) an extracurricular activity approved by the relevant university officials, and (3) the death or incapacity of an immediate family member. Other reasons may also be considered, although they must be documented in writing. If an absence is unexcused, it will result in a 1 point reduction in your participation grade.

A final note: I am a technophile by nature—that is, I usually embrace and use the latest electronic gadgets. I suspect that many of you are technophiles too, but during our class time together please insure that all of your electronic communications devices are turned off for the
duration of the class. **The owner of a ringing PDA/cell phone will lose two (2) points per occurrence on his/her participation grade.**

Students with disabilities who need academic accommodations should contact the Office of Disability Services in a timely manner **prior** to contacting me. The number is 294-2320. They are located in Room 202, Earle Infirmary.

**COURSE GRADE:** Your course grade will be determined by aggregating the number of points received for each assignment/exam (out of a maximum of 100). The grading scale is as follows: 100-98=A+; 97-92=A; 91-90=A-; 89-88=B+; 87-82=B; 81-80=B-; 79-78=C+; 77-72=C; 71-70=C-; 69-68=D+; 67-62=D; 61-60=D-; 59 and below=F.

As a general rule, late assignments will be penalized at the rate of **5 points per every 15 minutes of “lateness.”**

**COURSE OUTLINE:** As the course progresses, we will rely less on reading and more on doing, which is reflected in the” readings” for later activities in the term. Note that the instructor reserves the right to add or delete topics/readings at his discretion.

- **January 12:** Course Introduction
- **January 14:** Politics and political puzzles/LAB
  
  READINGS: Outline via Moodle
- **January 16:** Why study political phenomena “scientifically?”
  
  READINGS: Malici and Smith, chapter 1
  Outline via Moodle
- **January 19:** MLK Holiday (no class)
- **January 21:** A brief history/sociology of the discipline/LAB
  
  READINGS: Outline via Moodle
- **January 23:** Theory and theory-building
  
  VIDEO: “The Elegant Universe”
- **January 26:** Theory types
  
  READINGS: Malici and Smith, chapter 2
  Outline via Moodle
January 28:  Formulating research questions/LAB

READINGS:  Malici and Smith, chapter 12

January 30:  The literature review

READINGS:  Malici and Smith, “literature review” sections in various chapters

February 2:  Research questions and literature reviews

READINGS:  Handout via Moodle

February 4:  Hypotheses and propositions/LAB

READINGS:  Malici and Smith, various chapters

February 6:  A note on causality

READINGS:  Outline via Moodle

February 9:  Research Question/Literature Review Due/
Experimental research designs, part I

VIDEO:  “Obedience”

February 11:  Experimental research designs, part II/LAB

READINGS:  Malici and Smith, chapter 10
Outline via Moodle

February 13:  Experimental research designs, part III

READINGS:  Malici, and Smith, chapter 10
Outline via Moodle

February 16:  Non-experimental research designs, part I

READINGS:  Malici and Smith, chapter 8

February 18:  Non-experimental research designs, part II/LAB

READINGS:  Malici and Smith, chapter 3

February 20:  Non-experimental research designs, part III
February 23: Non-experimental research designs, part IV

READINGS: Malici and Smith, chapter 11 (*recommended, but not required*)

February 25: **Midterm Exam**

February 27: Variables and their measurement/LAB

READINGS: Outline via Moodle

March 2: Making empirical observations: an introduction

READINGS: Outline via Moodle

March 4: Documents/archival (content analysis)/LAB

READINGS: Malici and Smith, chapter 9

March 6: Content analysis, continued

READINGS: Malici and Smith, chapter 9

March 9: **Spring Break (no class)**

March 11: **Spring Break (no class)**

March 13: **Spring Break (no class)**

March 16: Interviews

READINGS: Malici and Smith, chapter 5

March 18: Questions about questions, part I/ LAB

READINGS: Malici and Smith, chapter 7

March 20: **Content Analysis Due/Questions about questions, part II**

READINGS: Malici and Smith, chapter 7

March 23: Survey research and samples

READINGS: TBA
March 25: Data analysis: an introduction/LAB
READINGs: Outline via Moodle

March 27: Univariate statistics, part I
READINGs: Moodle materials

March 30: Univariate statistics, part II
READINGs: Moodle materials

April 1: Bivariate Statistics, an introduction/LAB
READINGs: Moodle materials

April 3: **Easter Break (no class)**

April 6: **Easter Break (no class)**

April 8: Statistics for nominal/ordinal data/LAB
READINGs: Moodle materials

April 10: **Interviews Due/Crosstabulation analysis**
READINGs: Moodle materials

April 13: Correlation analysis
READINGs: Moodle materials

April 15: Multivariate statistics, an introduction/LAB
READINGs: Malici and Smith, chapter 6

April 17: Correlation matrices
READINGs: Moodle materials

April 20: Bivariate regression
READINGs: Moodle materials
April 22: Multivariate regression/LAB

READINGS: Moodle materials

April 24: Multivariate regression, continued

READINGS: Moodle materials

April 27: Data Analysis Due/Wrap-up and review

May 6: Final Exam (8:30-11:00 a.m.)