FURMAN UNIVERSITY

POL 150-02                  Prof. Fraser
Introduction to Political Analysis     Fall 2019

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 noted physicist, 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!

We will also focus on the “nuts and bolts” of conducting political science research by affording you the opportunity to participate in a collaborative learning project which will culminate in the creation of a poster presentation. Along the way require you (and 2 or 3 colleagues) will formulate a question you would like to answer, assess what others have had to say about that question, plan a strategy to collect information aimed at “proving” or “disproving” your hypotheses, and, finally, analyzing your data and drawing some conclusions from it. Your poster will be presented at an “extravaganza” tentatively scheduled for the last Monday of class.

I have reserved certain class days to be devoted to your group projects. They will be used in a number of different ways, but all of them are intended to propel your project to a successful completion.

This course is structured for those intending to pursue the major in Politics and International Affairs; 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 1:30-2:20 p.m., Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, in JH 109.

Note that there is a LAB component for this course which is scheduled for each Thursday from 3:30-5:00 p.m. The venue for the LAB is JH 203. 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. The primary activity will be to introduce you to the whys and wherefores of using SPSS to organize and analyze empirical data. In any case, rest assured I will indicate when we will meet—and for what purpose.

My office is 111B in Johns Hall. Office hours are Monday from 3:30-4:30, or by appointment. My office phone is 294-3185, and my email is cleve.fraser@furman.edu.
READINGS: The following text is required for the course:


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

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

- **Group Project:**
  - Research question/lit review: Wednesday, September 25, 10%
  - Group Project Outline: Friday, October 25, 10%
  - Group Project Poster Draft: Friday, November 15, 10%
  - Posters Due: Monday, December 2
  - Group Project Reflection: Friday, December 6, 10%
  - POL Poster Extravaganza: Monday, December 9 (tentative), 20%

- **Midterm Exam:** Monday, October 7, 15%
- **Final Exam:** Tuesday December 17 (12:00-2:30 p.m.), 15%

**Participation:** 10%

*More detailed requirements for each segment of the course 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 penalty for late assignments is a ten (10) point deduction for every five (5) minutes of "lateness."

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 class or an assignment 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 **one (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 cell phone will lose two (2) points per occurrence on his/her participation grade.**

With respect to the use of computers for note taking, let me point you to a summary of a recent study which may assist in making an informed decision on whether or not using computers improves a student’s classroom performance. Again, my preference is for old school pen and paper notation, but I recognize that there are valid reasons for employing computers and tablets to record information in this type of setting.

**Academic integrity:**
Academic Integrity standards are important to our Furman community and will be upheld in this class. Students should review the Academic Integrity Pledge posted in the classroom and resources available on [www.furman.edu/integrity](http://www.furman.edu/integrity). In this class, the grade penalty for an academic integrity violation is [describe].

**Additional resources in the Center for Academic Success (CAS; LIB 002):**

The Writing & Media Lab (WML) is staffed by student Consultants who are trained to help you improve your writing and multimodal communication skills. The consultation process is non-directive and intended to allow students to maintain ownership of their work. In addition to helping with the nuts and bolts, WML Consultants also support you in developing your own ideas thoughtfully and critically, whether you’re writing an essay or planning a video or other multimedia project. You may drop into the WML during its regular hours (LIB 002; 9 AM to 10 PM) or visit the Writing and Media Lab website to make an appointment online.

Peer Tutors are available free of charge for many classes and may be requested by dropping by CAS (LIB 002) or on the Center for Academic Success website. Tutors are typically recommended by faculty and have performed well in the class.

Professional **Academic Assistance Staff** in CAS can provide students assistance with time management, study skills, and organizational skills.
The Writing and ESL Specialist provides professional writing support as well as support for students whose primary language is not English.

**Accommodation Requests:** The Student Office for Accessibility Resources is committed to helping qualified students with disabilities achieve their academic goals by providing reasonable academic accommodations under appropriate circumstances. If you have a disability and anticipate the need for an accommodation in order to participate in this class, please register with the Student Office for Accessibility Resources. They will assist you in getting the resources you may need to participate fully in this class. You can contact the SOAR office at 864.294.2320 or at soar@furman.edu. You can find additional information and request academic accommodations at the [SOAR webpage](http://soar.furman.edu).

**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.

**COURSE OUTLINE:** *Note that the instructor reserves the right to add or delete topics/readings at his discretion.*

August 28: Course introduction

August 30: Politics and political puzzles

**READINGS:** Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff, chapter 1

**September 2:** Labor Day (No Class)

September 4: Why study political phenomena “scientifically?”

**READINGS:** Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff, chapter 2

September 6: A brief history/sociology of the discipline

**READINGS:** Outline via Moodle

September 9: Formulating research questions

**READINGS:** Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff, chapter 3, and chapter 15

September 11: The literature review

**READINGS:** Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff, chapter 3, and chapter 15
September 13: Research questions and literature reviews

READINGS: Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff, chapter 3, and chapter 15

September 16: Group project day

September 18: Hypotheses and propositions

READINGS: Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff, chapter 4 (pp. 73-85)

September 20: Concepts and Their Measurement

READINDS: Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff, chapter 4 (pp. 86-96)

September 23: A note on causality

READINGS: Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff, chapter 6

September 25: Research Question/Literature Review Due

Quantitative research designs: a classic example

VIDEO: “Obedience”

September 27: Quantitative research designs (‘nonclassical”)

READINGS: Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff, chapter 9 (pp.169-174)

September 30: Quantitative research designs (natural and quasi-experimental)

READINGS: Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff, chapter 9 (pp. 174-181)

October 2: Group project day

October 4: Quantitative research designs (observational studies)

READINGS: Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff, chapter 9 (pp. 182-190)

October 7: Midterm Exam

October 9: Qualitative research designs (case studies)

READINGS: Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff, chapter 7
October 11: Qualitative research designs (data collection techniques)

READINGS: Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff, chapter 8

October 14: Fall Break (No class)

October 16: Documents/archival (content analysis)

READINGS: Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff, chapter 10 (pp. 193-196)

October 18: Group project day

October 21: Sampling basics

READINGS: Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff, chapter 5 (pp. 101-108)

October 23: Sampling types

READINGS: Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff, chapter 5 (pp. 109-117)

October 25: Group Project Outline Due

Quantitative methods (survey research)

READINGS: Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff, chapter 10 (pp. 196-200)

October 28: Quantitative methods (interviews)

READINGS: TBD

October 30: Data analysis: an introduction

READINGS: Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff, chapter 11 (pp. 211-214)

November 1: Univariate (or descriptive) statistics

READINGS: Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff, chapter 11 (pp. 214-218)

November 4: Group project day

November 6: The beauty and elegance of graphs

READINGS: Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff, chapter 11 (pp. 218-235)

November 8: Hypothesis testing
READINGS: Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff, chapter 12 (pp. 239-243)

November 11 Group project day

November 13: Hypothesis testing

READINGS: Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff, chapter 12 (pp. 249-260)

November 15: Group Poster Draft Posters Due

Bivariate techniques and levels of measurement

READINGS: Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff, chapter 13 (pp. 267-287)

November 18: Crosstabulation analysis

READINGS: Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff, chapter 13 (pp. 290-304)

November 20: Group project day

November 22: Linear regression

READINGS: Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff, chapter 14 (pp. 307-323)

November 25: Linear regression, continued

READINGS: Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff, chapter 14 (pp. 324-328)

November 27: Thanksgiving Break (no class)

November 29: Thanksgiving Break (no class)

December 2: Posters Due

December 4: Group Reflection Preparation

December 6: Group Reflection Paper due/Wrap-up and review

December 9: Political Analysis Poster Extravaganza

December 17: Final Exam (12:00-2:30 p.m.)