Political Science 150-I
Introduction to Political Analysis

Spring 2018
Class: MWF, 1:30-2:20 pm, JH 101
Lab: W, 3:45-5 pm, FH 117

Mr. Guth, JH 111T, ext. 3330
Office Hours: MWF, 10:00-11:15 a.m., or by appointment.

Required Texts:
J.B. Johnson and H.T. Reynolds  Political Science Research Methods (7th ed.)
Akan Malici and Elizabeth Smith  Political Science Research in Practice
Articles made available by the instructor.

This course introduces students to the methodology of political science, especially research techniques for studying political behavior; it focuses on the “science” side of Political Science. You will be encouraged to think like a social scientist, learn to pose researchable questions, undertake a research project and present findings to a scholarly audience. You will analyze the work of other scholars (and your peers), discuss the strengths and weaknesses of methodologies, and evaluate the scientific method’s utility for studying politics.

Although many students dread a “dull” course on research methods, the question of how we develop “knowledge” is not only central to the discipline, but involves intriguing and exciting issues. This class will be a “practicum” in the social scientific study of political life. As a “research community,” we will focus this term on explaining the role of religious factors in American political life, focusing on electoral, presidential and congressional politics. As everyone knows, religion and politics are inevitably banned from polite discussions at the dinner table—and political science methodology itself often elicits strong debates among its practitioners. This makes it all the more essential that we think clearly about how we seek answers to important questions. For example, does religion influence party identification and electoral choices? Does it affect how the mass public views international events and policy? Does it influence the actions of legislators and executives? The media often produce “false truths” in answering these and other important questions. Political scientists, especially, have a responsibility to provide accurate understandings of human behavior and communicate their research findings, not only to the community of scholars, but also to the public.

The social sciences have developed many “tools” to use in seeking objective knowledge about politics. These include historical and documentary studies, experimental research, content analysis, case studies, field research, survey research and many kinds of data analysis. We will at least touch on all of them. But remember that the scientific method is only one form of “knowing”; others include intuition, common sense, mystical, or religious knowledge. It is important to respect these while engaging in science. Indeed, these sources often inform “scientific” hypotheses which we can test empirically.

Classroom Courtesy

There are certain “rules of the game” that apply to our class interactions, rules that will be strictly enforced. You are expected to give others the respect and consideration you want for yourself. A classroom should operate as a marketplace of ideas, where open discussion permits everyone to digest and evaluate information. While it is permissible to question vigorously a competing interpretation, personal attacks are never appropriate. Students will exhibit good manners, listen when others are talking, and behave professionally. Like the research skills taught in this class, “good professional manners” are both ethically desirable and an asset in every professional setting.

Another aspect of classroom courtesy involves electronic devices. Your learning and that of others is impeded by their classroom use. All the experimental evidence on classroom learning shows that such
devices are detriments to meaningful class involvement. All conversations should be among members of the class, not your Facebook friends. Thus, there is a very simple rule for the classroom: no cell phones should ever be seen. When you enter the door, your cell phone must be put away and you may not bring it out until you have left the classroom at the end of the class hour. This applies to lab sessions as well. Laptops may be used for taking notes and analyzing data, but all other applications (e-mail, internet, etc.) should be closed (not merely minimized). But please note that all the psychological research on learning shows that taking notes manually is much more conducive to learning than using a laptop or tablet.

OTHER INFORMATION: Peer Tutors are available free of charge for many classes and may be requested by dropping by CAS (LIB 002) or online here: www.furman.edu/CAS. 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. Find more information and request accommodations at the SOAR webpage. Any student with a disability or special need should inform me immediately so that we can make any necessary arrangements or accommodations.

ETHICAL CONDUCT: Your presence in class signifies that you accept the basic rules of academic honesty discussed at www.furman.edu/integrity. All work in this course should be your own. Although everyone will draw on the professional resources of the political science community, the instructor and other class members, the final work on any phase of your project must be yours. Cheating on a test or other assignment will result in an automatic loss of all points for that assignment.

Course Assignments
Given the nature of this course, it is imperative that you consult regularly with me. I will be available during regular office hours (and by appointment). The assignments in this class are “path-dependent,” that is, your ability to perform well on each successive assignment is dependent on how well you did on the previous one(s). So master the assigned text materials. You should also get started with each phase of research as soon as possible. There is one immutable truth of political science research: nothing ever goes right the first time. That means if you wait until the deadline approaches to produce each assignment, you will not do very well. As preliminary work on one project will often overlap with completion of another (a “real world” situation in any job), staying abreast of all your work is especially important. And tolerance for conflicting demands is also helpful.

One additional caveat: good writing both contributes to and reflects good thinking. A clear writing style is vital if you hope to communicate effectively. It is very important to proofread your papers for grammar and style. Once you have finished your “final” draft, let it sit for a few hours (or better yet, a day or two) and then revisit it. This way you are more likely to detect and correct errors before the due date. Read it out loud several times: this is especially useful for catching errors. You may also seek stylistic advice from a classmate or friend who has good literary skills. I will also be available for comment at the scheduled times. All deadlines for assignments are noted in the course schedule below. Please make a note of each of these on your personal calendar and plan to allow plenty of time to complete each project.
Grading. The proportion of your grade derived from each requirement is:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assignment 1</td>
<td>Documentary Analysis</td>
<td>10 percent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment 2</td>
<td>Participant Observation</td>
<td>10 percent</td>
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<td>Assignment 3</td>
<td>Interview Project</td>
<td>10 percent</td>
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<td>Assignment 4</td>
<td>Research Design/Literature Review</td>
<td>10 percent</td>
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<td>Assignment 5</td>
<td>Final Research Paper.</td>
<td>25 percent</td>
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<td>Final Exam.</td>
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<td>15 percent</td>
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<td>Participation, lab assignments</td>
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<td>20 percent</td>
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Grades for each assignment will include any quizzes given related to that assignment. To ensure that everyone reads each assignment when indicated, I will be giving frequent brief quizzes at the beginning of class. **In answering the questions, you may use any notes that you have taken from reading the text—but not the text itself.** Note also the participation requirement. You must attend class and participate actively. You cannot achieve a satisfactory score if you just “sit in.” The quality of your work on frequent short lab assignments will also be incorporated in the participation portion of your grade. Unexcused absences result in a loss of points towards your final grade. Excused absences are accompanied by a written explanation, together with legitimate supporting documentation. For example, if you must miss a class due to extra-curricular activities, please provide a letter from the faculty member organizing the event; if for medical reasons, a letter from your doctor or the infirmary.

1. SETTING THE STAGE
*In this section we discuss the general strategy of the class and some core issues in the conceptualization and measurement of political phenomena.*

**Week 1**
8 January (Monday) J&R, chapter 1.
10 January (Wednesday) M&S, chapters 1 and 2.
Laboratory Introduction to SPSS: Frequencies and Crosstabs
12 January (Friday) J&R, chapter 2; M&S, chapter 12

2. GETTING INTERESTED AND ORIENTED: CLASSIC RESEARCH STRATEGIES
*In this section, we consider two classic methods of empirical research—document analysis and fieldwork, considering strengths and weaknesses of each. Although our final class project will emphasize the secondary analysis of survey data, we begin with these older techniques, which are valuable ways to learn about a research question and generate new ideas and “hypotheses.”*

**Week 2**
15 January (Monday) MLK Holiday (No Class)

**Assignment 1. Document and Content Analysis**
In this project, we will collaborate as a class in producing a data set from the documentary record that will allow us to test several hypotheses about the way members of the U.S. House of Representatives communicate (or do not) their religious orientation to the public. Each student will be assigned a specific group of members elected in 2016 and will consult their congressional web sites for any mention of religious identification or participation on the part of the member and will search the internet for other relevant information. Each student will write a brief (5-7 pp.) paper on the strengths and weaknesses of this research technique. The instructor will provide a coding framework for use by all members of the class. We will then combine the “cases” in an SPSS data set for analysis in our lab sessions.

**Paper due: Friday, January 26 in class.**
**Assignment 2. Participant Observation Project.**
The first year of the Trump Administration has seen an intensification of religious politics, with the President making many decisions that appeal to some religious groups and antagonize others. To what extent are these issues reflected in the activities of religious congregation? During the **weekend of January 26-28 (preferably) or February 2-4**, you will attend a religious worship service at the congregation of your choice (preferably not your own) to observe the intersection of religion and politics. Use the principles discussed in the text and in class to sharpen your observational powers. Then write a 5-7 page research report, outlining the questions you considered, your observations, and some assessment of the value of this kind of research. **Paper due Friday, February 16 in class.**

**Assignment 3. Elite Interviews: Clergy.**
The class will develop an interview protocol for “elite” interviews, in this case of religious leaders of local congregations. We will use this opportunity to give students an opportunity to get some experience with developing questionnaires and administering them to an “easy” group of subjects. We will discuss some of the differences between mass and elite surveys as well. Students will make arrangements to interview a clergy person (this may be your own pastor if you like) sometime between February 4 and February 23 (the earlier the better). You should prepare a 5-7 page paper on the results of your interview. **Paper due Thursday, March 1 at noon in my office.**

**Week 5**
5 February (Monday) Elite interviews (continued).
7 February (Wednesday) Elite interview discussion.
9 February (Friday) M&S, chapter 10: experimental research.

**Week 6**
12 February (Monday) (Preliminary discussion of clergy project findings)
14 February (Wednesday) (discussion continued)
Lab Work: Introduction to multivariate analysis
3. CHOOSING A MAJOR RESEARCH TOPIC AND LITERATURE REVIEW
In this section we focus on the choice of topics for your data analysis project and on discovering what is already known about these topics. As our focus will be on the role of religion in politics, I will discuss the kinds of data available to class members, so every student can find a topic of personal interest that will sustain a high level of excitement throughout the term.

16 February (Friday): Designing a Research Project: J&R, chapter 3

**Assignment 4: Research Question/Literature Review/Design Paper**
You are to formulate a research question and examine the political science literature for insight on what is known and what remains to be known about your topic. The literature review should identify efforts by other scholars plus any controversies associated with them. The paper should have a minimum of 7 to 9 of the most relevant scholarly works on the subject and contain an assessment of what we know about the topic and the theoretical, empirical, and methodological bases for any disagreements. After reviewing the literature, you should also devise a research design/strategy for examining a precise research question. Central issues include the following: What is your research question? Why is it important to study this subject? What are your independent and dependent variables? What are your suggested hypotheses? What is the causal mechanism you propose? What data will you use to investigate your hypotheses? Why is this data appropriate? This paper should be about 7-10 pages in length.

**Paper due on Wednesday, March 21 at the beginning of class.**

**Week 7**
19 February (Monday) The Literature Review. J&R chapter 3 (sections on literature reviews)
21 February (Wednesday) Class and Lab Work on Literature Review
23 February (Friday) (Continue discussing research design and literature review)

**Week 8**
26 February (Monday) Final discussion of problems on design and literature reviews.
28 February (Wednesday) Class and Lab: Introducing and experimenting with multivariate work.
1 March (Thursday) (Elite interview paper due in my office).
2 March (Friday) NO CLASS: enjoy your break!

2-11 March No class. Spring Break

4. ANALYSIS OF SURVEY DATA.
In this final section, we will test the hypotheses we have generated with survey data, one of the most important and widely used research strategies in the social sciences. We will become proficient in the use of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Although we will be illustrating specific statistical tests in class, students will be encouraged to “try out” these techniques on their own research questions as we move through March and April. Thus, by the time the final research project is due, most of the important analysis will be completed—relatively painlessly!

**Assignment 5: Final Research Paper**
This final assignment should represent the culmination of your previous assignments, beginning with the statement of research question and literature review, perhaps incorporating insights derived from the other projects, and testing your hypotheses with available data. This is, however, not a “cut and paste” exercise. You will need to incorporate corrections and revisions based on the feedback you receive over the course of the semester. In its ideal form your research paper will represent a scholarly article with all the necessary components. It should be approximately 15 pages long. You will present some version of this paper at the
*Furman Engaged* colloquium (see below): it may be a “panel” or a “poster” presentation, depending on the structure of the program and other factors. You will be informed well in advance about these matters.

**The final paper is due in class on Monday, 23 April.**

**Week 9**

12 March (Monday)  J&R, chapters 7 and 10.
14 March (Wednesday)  M&S, chapters 7 and 8.
                        Lab data analysis: simple and multiple regression
16 March (Friday)  J&R, chapters 6 and 11

**Week 10**

19 March (Monday)  (Literature review due); (continued analysis of survey data)
21 March (Wednesday)  J&R, chapters 12 and 13
                        Class and Lab data analysis
23 March (Friday)  NO CLASS

**Week 11**

28 March (Wednesday)  Presentation issues in scholarly research.
                        Lab consultation with the instructor on projects.
30 March (Friday)—  No Class. University Holidays.
2 April (Monday)

**Week 12**

4 April (Wednesday)  Class presentations of preliminary papers
                        (continued in Lab session).
6 April (Friday)  No Class: Continue Work on Paper

**Week 13**

9 April (Monday)  Preparation for Furman Engaged
10 April (Tuesday)  FURMAN ENGAGED PRESENTATIONS
11 April (Wednesday)  Paper discussions and revisions
13 April (Friday)  Paper discussions and revisions

**Week 14**

16 April (Monday)  Class discussion of research process and debriefing
18 April (Wednesday)  Final REVISIONS OF PAPERS
20 April (Friday)  Class Wrap-up

**Week 15**

23 April (Monday)  Final papers due.
30 April (Monday)  Final Examination, 12-2:30 p.m.
                        This examination will cover all assigned reading material and will focus on the basic concepts and techniques utilized in the course.