

GOVT 4396  
Study of Politics  
Monday and Wednesday 4:00–5:15pm  
Fall 2005

Prof. Patrick T. Brandt  
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Office: Green 2.802  
Hours: Monday and Wednesday 2pm–4pm  
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## Description

The goal of the course is to familiarize students with the appropriate techniques and methods of research, research design, inference, and data in political science. The aim of this course is to get you thinking about, evaluating, and doing research in politics and the social sciences.

## Grading and Requirements

There will be three kinds of assignments in this course:

**Quizzes / Exams** One midterm and one final exam. (50% of the final grade — each is 25% of the final grade in the course.)

**Short written assignments** Out of class assignments that will be given based on lectures and readings. (Average of the assignments is 20% of the final grade in the course.)

**Research paper / proposal** The real goal of this course is an independent research project. In the end you will submit a research project / proposal. You will work on this in stages throughout the course. The interim components of the paper will be part of your final grade on the paper. (Paper grade will be 30% of the final grade in the course).

**Failure to take either exam or complete the final paper will result in failing the course. In addition, each course assignment is worth about 3% of your final grade. Failing to complete at least 6 of the assignments will likely result in a failing grade.**

## Grading

Grades for the course will be computed using the following formula:

$$\text{Percentage} = 0.25\text{Midterm} + 0.25\text{Final} + 0.2\text{Short Assignment Average} + 0.3\text{Paper}$$

Grades are based on the standard grading scale: A = 100-90, B = 89-80, C = 79-70, etc.

If you have any questions about your grade on an assignment, please wait until 24 hours after receiving your assignment before discussing the grade with the professor. There are no exceptions to this policy.

If you wish to have an assignment re-graded, it must be returned to the professor within two days of the day it was returned (if I am not available that day, ask the staff of the School of Social Sciences to leave it in my box). Assignments to be re-graded must include a memo stating the reason why you believe they assignment should be re-graded. Finally, re-graded assignments can be graded higher, lower, or the same as the initial grade.

## Course conduct

Your conduct is governed by the Student Code of Conduct and the Regents' Rules and Regulations. Students are expected to follow these requirements. If there is any doubt about acceptable practices for assignments, students are expected to ask the instructor. Ignorance of these requirements does not exonerate you from their requirements, or from knowledge of what constitutes cheating. It should be noted that the instructor has a zero-tolerance policy on cheating and plagiarism. *The recommended penalty in most cases of scholastic dishonesty on an assignment, exam or paper will be a failing grade on the assignment, a failing grade for the course and be referral to the appropriate Dean*

The following rules apply in class:

1. Turn off your cell phone. I really do not care if they ring, but it is VERY distracting to others. (Exceptions to this policy can be made, come to talk to me.)
2. Do not fall asleep. It is rude and distracting. Bring coffee if you need it (I do.)
3. Be polite and courteous to your fellow students.
4. Raise your hand when you want to be recognized to answer or ask a question. If you do not raise your hand I will not recognize you or your answer.
5. You are responsible for things: therefore if you miss something I announced my response will be "How is this my problem?"
6. Note that this syllabus is not a contract. It is subject to change at my discretion. While we may be studying the political science, this class is not a democracy.
7. Class starts at 4:00pm. Not 4:15. Be here on time.

## Assignments

Assignments are due at the start of class. Do not expect me to accept assignments after class has started. Missed and late assignments will not be viewed favorably. As a general rule, I do not allow make-ups or late submission of assignments. In cases of extenuating circumstances, such as severe illness or a university approved reason, I am willing to consider excuses on a case-by-case basis. If you have any questions about excused absences or make-up assignments, please contact me as soon as possible either in person, via e-mail, or by phone.

*You are expected to be proactive in anticipating and planning for any absences or problems you will have in completing course work.* Make arrangements for possibly missed work prior to the due date is preferable and more likely to be successful than doing it after the due date. If you know you will not be in class or not present to turn in an assignment, then you are responsible to making arrangements to complete the assignments in a timely matter that satisfies the course requirements.

Numbered assignments listed in the Course Outline of this syllabus will be handed out in class. Other assignments, which are components of your paper will be described in class and on additional materials during the term of the course.

## Attendance

Attendance will be kept in this course. Given the intense nature of this class failing to attend will have serious consequences for your grade. Past experience with my courses shows that failing to attend will lower your grade by at least one letter.

## Books and other materials

- Johnson, Janet Buttolph, and H.T. Reynolds. 2004. *Political Science Research Methods*. 5th edition.
- Shively, W. Phillips. 2005. *The Craft of Political Research*. Prentice Hall.
- Levitt, Steven D. and Stephen J. Dubner. 2005. *Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything*. William Morrow.

In addition, I will make available various other readings either as xeroxes or on websites.

## Course Outline

The dates listed for each topic are approximate and will depend on how quickly we move through material. You should read the assigned chapters of the text before the date listed as I will be covering the material on the date given below.

Date	Lecture Topic	Readings
August 22	Introduction	
August 24	Questions in Political Science	JR Chapters 1 and 2
August 29	Questions in Political Science	Lave and March (xerox) Assignment 1 Handout
August 31	Interesting and Uninteresting Questions	Shively Chapters 1 and 2
September 5	NO CLASS – LABOR DAY	
September 7	Thinking Theoretically	Shively, Chapter 3 Levitt and Dubner Note and Introduction Assignment 1 Due
September 12	Theory and Hypotheses	JR Chapter 4
September 14	Theory, Logic, Reasoning	Levitt and Dubner Chapters 1 and 2 Assignment 2 Handout
September 19	Class discussion of Questions	
September 21	Variables and Concepts	JR Chapter 4 Sambanis, Nicholas. 2004. "What is Civil War? Conceptual and Empirical Complexities of an Operational Definition." <i>Journal of Conflict Resolution</i> 48(6):814-858. Assignment 2 Due
September 26	Literature Review, Data, and References	JR Chapter 5 Assignment 3 Handout
September 28	More on Literature Review	
October 3	Research Design	JR Chapter 3 Assignment 3 Due
October 5	Research Design	JR Chapter 3 Gilliam, Franklin and Shanto Iyengar. 2000. "Prime Suspects: The Influence of Local Television News on the Viewing Public." <i>American Journal of Political Science</i> 44(3):560–573. Assignment 4 Handout
October 10	Research Design	Levitt and Dubner Chapter 4 Shively Chapter 6 Assignment 4 Due
October 12	<b>Midterm Exam</b>	
October 17	Discussion of Research Designs	One page research designs due
October 19	Measurement	Shively Chapters 4 and 5 Assignment 5 Handout
	More Measurement	JR Chapter 6
October 24	Sampling	JR Chapter 9 Assignment 5 Due
October 26	Discussion of Papers	Rough Drafts Due

Date	Lecture Topic	Readings
October 31	Data Collection: Interviews	JR Chapters 7 and 10 Levitt and Dubner Chapter 3
November 2	Data Collection: Surveys	JR Chapter 10 Feldman, Stanley and John Zaller. 1992. "The Political Culture of Ambivalence: Ideological Responses to the Welfare State." <i>American Journal of Political Science</i> 36(1): 268–307.
November 7	Data Collection: Written records	JR Chapter 8 Assignment 6 Handout Dalton, Russell, Paul Beck and Robert Huckfeldt. 1998. "Partisan Cues and the Media: Information Flows in the 1992 Presidential Election." <i>American Political Science Review</i> . 92(1): 111–126.
November 9	Inference and Drawing Conclusions	Levitt and Dubner Chapters 5 and 6
November 14	Discussion of Papers	Assignment 6 Due
November 16	How to Write Stuff	JR Chapter 14
November 21	Presentations	Papers due
November 23	Presentations	
November 28	Presentations	
November 29-December 5	Final Exam TBD	