

# **PS 3000: Introduction to Political Research**

University of Missouri

Spring 2016

MW, 10:00 - 10:50 AM, 106 Lefevre Hall

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Office location: 204 Professional Building

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Office hours: MW 12:00 - 3:00 PM (or by appointment)

Wednesday or Friday Lab

**General:** This course introduces students to the philosophy and practice of political science research. There are two major goals of this course. The first is to have students become critical consumers of current political science literature. The second (more ambitious) goal is for students in this course to develop theories of politics, empirically test them, and eloquently discuss the results of their analysis. For illustrative purposes, the class provides substantive examples from several fields of political science (American politics, international relations, comparative politics, and public policy). The goals of the course are to prepare political science majors for the more analytical upper-level political science courses, to improve their research skills, and to increase their ability to make valid causal statements about political events and behaviors.

This is a writing intensive course. Effective writing is encouraged through several writing assignments that require you to think clearly and express your thoughts concisely.

The weekly lab session (on Wednesday or Friday) will include exercises to help you learn the material and improve skills. Some of these exercises will emphasize writing and clear communication. Topics, for instance, include designing a research proposal, conducting original research and creating a report of research results.

**Grades:** Course grades will be based on:

- midterm and final examinations (worth 20% each, 40% total)
- three written assignments (worth 15% each, 45% total; more on this below and in class)
- attendance in lecture and discussion labs, periodic quizzes, homeworks and in-class assignments (15% total)

Final class grades will be assigned with the following grading scale:

**A+ = 97.0 - 100**

**A = 93.0 - 96.99**

**A- = 90.0 - 92.99**

**B+ = 87.0 - 89.99**

**B = 83.0 - 86.99**

**B- = 80.0 - 82.99**

**C+ = 77.0 - 79.99**

**C = 73.0 - 76.99**

**C- = 70.0 - 72.99**

**D+ = 67.0 - 69.99**

**D = 63.0 - 66.99**

**D- = 60.0 - 62.99**

**F = 0 - 59.99**

You will need a blue book for each of the tests. All assignments must be turned in at the beginning of class on the assigned date (or the day of the lab in which you are registered). Late work will be deducted a letter grade for each calendar day late. **I strongly encourage you to turn in the assignments late rather than not at all. A grade of 0 can be fatal to your final grade.** During the semester, we will have several unannounced quizzes, in-class assignments and short homeworks on the course materials. Attendance in the lectures, as well as labs, is mandatory. We will take attendance using a random sampling technique. I will describe this on the first day of class.

**Readings:** There will not always be perfect unity between the course lectures and assigned readings. Thus it will be necessary to attend all lectures and to read the assigned materials in order to be exposed to all of the material that you are responsible for in this course.

There is one required textbook for this course. All other readings will be distributed in class.

- Kellstedt, Paul M. and Guy D. Whitten. 2013 *The Fundamentals of Political Science Research*. 2nd Edition. Cambridge University Press.

## Class Requirements

Two exams, a midterm and a final, will contain multiple choice, short answers and/or essays. There will be three short (approximately four to six pages) papers, each to be revised and resubmitted. For each of the three papers, a student makes an initial submission, receives comments on the paper, and submits a subsequent and final revision. There will also be weekly exercises in labs, some of which will have a writing component. You are expected to attend the lectures, your lab, and to participate in weekly exercises in the labs.

As this is a writing intensive course, writing assignments account for a substantial component of the course grade. Moreover, the writing assignments are intended to be vehicles for learning the material covered in the course. Each student will choose from a list of research topics provided in the first lab meeting, and this research topic will serve as the theme for all writing assignments. Each of the three short papers will be submitted twice. After your initial submission, your paper will be returned to you with comments regarding content and style. You must then rethink and revise your original paper (not merely correcting grammatical and stylistic errors). Your final grade will be assigned following the subsequent and final revision. Due dates 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 research 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 academic literature (i.e., peer-reviewed) on your research topic and justify new research. The second paper asks you to consider a political phenomenon and to define and defend an objective measurement of that phenomenon. The intent is to learn how difficult it can be to operationalize and measure what we often consider commonly observable. The second paper also requires you to consider certain types of methodological approaches frequently used in political science and to evaluate how appropriate the methods are for given contexts. The goal is to show how some methods are better under some circumstances, but that there is no “best” methodology. The third paper lets you create and evaluate quantitative data presentation (figures, tables,

or statistics) in order to communicate information effectively to the reader (or hearer). You will locate and analyze data, create and perform an appropriate method of presentation, and discuss its relative merits. Further information on specific writing assignments will be given in class and labs will be available from the class site on Blackboard.

You must type and double-space all written assignments. I am not picky about formatting as long as you use citations for all ideas, work, intuition, quotes, etc, that is not your own. Make sure that you cite any and all appropriate sources whenever you use someone else's ideas. What I am picky about is proof-reading. You must proof-read each written assignment that you turn in for this class. Ideally, you would follow the following steps: 1) Run a spell check. 2) Read the document aloud to yourself or to someone else to make sure that it flows. 3) Read the document at least one time eliminating any words that are unnecessary. 4) Put the document down for at least 24 hours and then read it again.

**Blackboard:** We will be using Blackboard ([courses.missouri.edu](http://courses.missouri.edu)) to display grades, post additional readings, and for announcements.

## Other Considerations

- Out of respect for fellow students, each person will refrain from talking, whispering, eating, making offensive remarks, newspaper reading, and other disruptive behavior during lecture. Cell phones must be turned off and may not be used during class time. Inappropriate classroom behavior may result in the student being requested to leave the classroom.
- In this class, students may not make audio or video recordings of course activity. Those students who are permitted to record are not permitted to redistribute audio or video recordings of statements or comments from the course to individuals who are not students in the course without the express permission of the faculty member and of any students who are recorded.
- Academic integrity is fundamental to the activities and principles of a university. All members of the academic community must be confident that each person's work has been responsibly and honorably acquired, developed, and presented. Any effort to gain an advantage not given to all students is dishonest whether or not the effort is successful. In this course, you are expected to submit original work and behave in a respectful manner toward both the professor and other students in the class. Breaches of the academic integrity rules are extremely serious matters. Sanctions for such a breach range from instructor-imposed academic sanctions, such as a failing grade for the course, to University-imposed disciplinary sanctions, such as probation or expulsion. If you have questions, please consult the University's academic integrity website, <http://academicintegrity.missouri.edu/>, and the University M-book, [www.missouri.edu/~mbook](http://www.missouri.edu/~mbook). **Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Any student plagiarizing (or cheating on tests) will receive an automatic grade of 0 for that assignment.**
- Final Examination: Each student must take the final examination at the time assigned in the University's schedule of classes. You MUST NOT make any travel arrangements for holidays, family occasions, or the like that would require you to miss this examination. There will be no exemptions from the final or early final examinations given.
- Teaching Assistant: The role of the Teaching Assistant is to serve as an assistant to me. When a student needs help or clarification, the first step is to consult their lecture notes or readings. If that doesn't clear up the misunderstanding, then the student should contact the TA.
- If you anticipate barriers related to the format or requirements of this course, if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need to make arrangements in case the building must be

evacuated, please let me know as soon as possible. If disability related accommodations are necessary (for example, a note taker, extended time on exams, captioning), please register with the Disability Center (<http://disabilitycenter.missouri.edu>), S5 Memorial Union, 573- 882-4696, and then notify me of your eligibility for reasonable accommodations. For other MU resources for persons with disabilities, click on “Disability Resources” on the MU homepage.

## **Make-up Exams/Excused Absences**

Make-up exams will only be given for university-excused absences. For any of these absences to be “excused,” you must provide me with written documentation. To be excused the student must notify me in writing (acknowledged e-mail message is acceptable) prior to the date of absence if such notification is feasible (in particular in times of university-excused absences). In cases where advance notification is not feasible (e.g. unanticipated illness, accident, or emergency) the student must provide notification by the end of the second working day after the absence by 5:00 PM. This notification should include an explanation of why notice could not be sent prior to the class.

The student must also provide satisfactory documentation substantiating the reason for the absence prior to taking the make-up exam. Failing to take a make-up exam at a previously agreed-to time will result in a zero. The make-up exam must be taken within one week of the original test date listed in the syllabus, except under extreme circumstances approved by the instructor. For illness, documentation should include an official note from a doctor or clinic.

Also, keep in mind that an exam proctored outside of the normal exam time may be of a different format than the original exam. If you do not have an excused absence you will receive a zero for the exam. **No exceptions.**

## **Teaching Assistants**

The labs (on Wednesday or Friday) are a critical part of this class, and much of the material in the lectures and in the textbook leads toward the discussion and hands-on training that occurs in the labs. There are four excellent TAs for the course.

Chris Jahns  
Labs: A & E  
Email: [cej998@mail.missouri.edu](mailto:cej998@mail.missouri.edu)  
Office: 22 Professional Building  
Office Hours: T 12:30-3:30pm, R 12:30-2:30pm

Murat Yildirim  
Labs: C & D  
Email: [tmypqf@mail.missouri.edu](mailto:tmypqf@mail.missouri.edu)  
Office: 22 Professional Building  
Office Hours: WF 12:00-3:00pm

## Course Schedule

**Class Schedule:** We will spend as much time as necessary on each topic for this course. Because I am unable to predict in advance how long each topic will take, the schedule below is only a rough guideline. *I expect that you will have read the assigned readings **before** the class period for which they are assigned. I will announce additional required readings during class meetings.*

### January 18-22: Course Overview

- Monday: No Class
- Wednesday: Course Overview
- **Select Research Topic in Lab**

### January 25-29: Scientific Study of Politics I and II

- Monday: Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 1-2
- Wednesday: Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 3

### February 1-5: Scientific Study of Politics III

- Monday: Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 4
- Wednesday: TBD

### February 8-12: Formal Theories of Politics

- Monday: Kellstedt and Whitten, pages 34-44 **AND** Dubner, Stephen J. and Steven D. Levitt. Nov. 6, 2005. "Why Vote?", *New York Times Magazine*.
- Wednesday: Social Choice (In-Class)
- **First submission of Paper 1 due at the beginning of the lab**

### February 15-19: Formal Theories of Politics

- Monday: Game Theory (In-Class)
- Wednesday: Spatial Models (In-Class)

### February 22-26: Measurement and Descriptive Statistics

- Monday: Kellstedt and Whitten, pages 92-109
- Wednesday: Kellstedt and Whitten, pages 109-129
- **Revised submission of Paper 1 due at the beginning of the lab**

**February 29-March 4: Logic of Statistical Hypothesis Testing**

- Monday: Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 6
- Wednesday: TBD

**March 7-11: Review and Midterm Examination**

- Monday: Review
- Wednesday: Midterm Examination
- No Lab

**March 14-18: Bivariate Hypothesis Testing**

- Monday: Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 7
- Wednesday: TBD

**March 21-25: Bivariate Hypothesis Testing**

- Monday: Bivariate Analysis I (In-Class)
- Wednesday: Bivariate Analysis II (In-Class)
- **First submission of Paper 2 due at the beginning of the lab**

**March 28-April 1: Sprint Break: No Classes**

**April 4-8: Multivariate Hypothesis Testing I**

- Monday: Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 8
- Wednesday: Regression I (In-Class)
- **Revised submission of Paper 2 due at the beginning of the lab**

**April 11-15: Multivariate Hypothesis Testing I**

- Monday: Regression I (In-Class)
- Wednesday: Regression I (In-Class)

**April 18-22: Multivariate Hypothesis Testing II**

- Monday: Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapters 9-10
- Wednesday: Regression II (In-Class)

### **April 25-29: Multivariate Hypothesis Testing III**

- Monday: Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapters 11
- Wednesday: Regression III (In-Class)
- **First submission of Paper 3 due at the beginning of the lab**

### **May 2-6: Research Ethics**

- Monday: Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapters 12 **AND** Christie Aschwanden. “Science Isn’t Broken.” Available online: <http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/science-isnt-broken/>
- Wednesday: Review for Final Examination
- No Lab–Reading Day

### **May 9-13: Final Week**

- Revised submission of Paper 3 handed in (or emailed) to TA by Friday, May 13 at 5:00pm
- Final Examination: Tuesday, May 10, 12:30-2:30pm