POLI 321: INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL SCIENCE METHODS

January 7th – April 5th, 2018

Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday: 12:30-1:20pm
in Cornett Building B107

Instructor: Dr. Grace Alexandra Lore
Office Hours: Fridays 9:30-12:00. David Turpin Building A334.
Email: glore@uvic.ca

Course Description:

As an introduction to research methods, this course aims to introduce students of political science to questions surrounding how to do research in Political Science and to assess critically research results and research design. The course will teach students how political scientists ask answerable questions; how we define key political concepts; how we formulate hypotheses and theories about political dynamics; how we measure the phenomena we want to study; how we think about and assess relationships of cause-and-effect; and how we report our findings to the world. This course also develops skills that will help students know how to write up, present and discuss empirical research findings. Students will learn by using employing the concepts, ideas, and methods on a topic of their choosing.

Required Texts:

Additional readings are available online through the U Vic library website or on CourseSpaces as pdfs. The course also makes use of videos, news articles, and other sources that can all be found online. The links are found in the syllabus and will be posted to CourseSpaces.

Course Requirements, Assignments and Evaluations:
Class participation & attendance is mandatory. Any student attending fewer than 70 percent of scheduled class sessions will not be permitted to write the final exam or get credit for the course.

Three short assignments (between 300-500 words): 30%
Three reflections on other students assignments: 10%
Midterm: 15%
Group survey activity (Week 11): 10%
Final paper – Research Proposal: 15%
Final exam: 20%
Short assignments – 10% each (30% total)

Over the course of the term you will complete three short assignments that will build up to your research proposal. Assignments focus on a topic of your choice and build on each other. If you need to switch topics partway through the term, make an appointment to come to my office hours so I can support you in doing this. Each assignment will be approximately 300-500. Assignments are posted on Course Spaces for the week in which they are due, but it is to your advantage to read all of them and understand what is expected of you well in advance.

Assignment #1 due February 1st at 12:00pm.
Assignment #2 due February 25th at 12:00pm.
Assignment #3 due March 25th at 12:00pm.

Responding to another student’s assignment – 10% total

You will be responsible for responding to and reflecting upon another student’s assignment. This is not meant as an opportunity for criticism but to offer suggestions, asks for clarifications, and to support your colleagues in developing rigorous, clear, and well thought out research proposals.

Reflection #1 due February 5th at 12:00pm.
Reflection #2 due March 1st at 12:00pm.
Reflection #3 due March 27th at 12:00pm.

Midterm – 15%

Midterm will be in class February 15th in class

Group survey activity – 10%

In Week 11 we will use class time to work in groups to draft a survey on a question of interest. We will use this opportunity to practice drafting a research question and a causal claim and hypothesis we can test. We will operationalize concepts, review types of variables and measurement concerns, and will see what it actually looks like to use surveys to measure these concepts of interests. We will give respondents two weeks to fill out the survey and in Week 13 we will review some of the results and take the opportunity to practice writing about our research findings.

Final Research Proposal - 20%

Your final paper for this class will use your assignments and the feedback you received to help you develop a research proposal. This research proposal will including a research question, theory, causal logic, proposed methods, measurement, research challenges and strengths. We will discuss this thoroughly in class. Papers will be 5-7 pages.
Final exam – 20%

The final exam will include all course content and will take place during the exam period set by the University between April 8th and 27th. The final exam is cumulative.

Late policy & extensions
Late essays, assignments will incur a penalty of 6% per day, including weekends. Late responses will incur a penalty of 20% per day, including weekends. Please reach out to me as soon as possible if you encounter an issue that will prevent you from handing your paper in on time. Extension requests after a due date has passed are much harder to approve. Extensions will not be approved for foreseeable events so you need to plan your time accordingly with your other classes.

Course experience survey (CES)
I value your feedback on this course. Towards the end of term, as in all other courses at UVic, you will have the opportunity to complete an anonymous survey regarding your learning experience (CES). The survey is vital to providing feedback to me regarding the course and my teaching, as well as to help the department improve the overall program for students in the future. The survey is accessed via MyPage and can be done on your laptop, tablet, or mobile device. I will remind you and provide you with more detailed information nearer the time but please be thinking about this important activity during the course.

Use of laptops and phones
Please use common sense and considerate of yourself, your classmates, and your instructor. Use your laptop for taking notes or following along with the lecture. Please don’t use your phone. (Pro Tip: there’s a 75% chance I can see you texting).

Academic Integrity & Grades
Please review the University’s grading scale and important information about academic integrity at the end of this syllabus.
Lecture and Reading Schedule:

**Week 1 January 7 - 11: Introductions, class logistics, and … And why we need to study, learn, and understand political science methods.**

Chapter 1: The Scientific Study of Politics. Sections 1.1 and 1.2

**Week 2 January 14 - 18: Questions, Claims, and Theories**

“Distinguishing between Normative and Empirical Statements” Reading on Coursespaces

Chapter 2: The Art of Theory Building. Sections 2.1 to 2.4

“General and Specific Knowledge” Reading on Course Spaces

**Week 3 January 21- 25: Causal Claims, Causal Logics**

“Causality: Counterfactuals, Deterministic Claim, Probabilistic Claims” Reading on Course Spaces

“Causal Logic” Reading on CourseSpaces

**Week 4 January 28 – February 1: Measurements, variables, and hypotheses 1**

Chapter 1: The Scientific Study of Politics.. Re-read page 4 and Section 1.3

Chapter 5: Measuring Concepts of Interest. Sections 5.1 to 5.2

Chapter 6: Getting to Know Your Data. Sections 6.1 to 6.4

****Assignment 1 due on February 1st****

**Week 5 February 4-8: Measurements, variables, and samples 2**

Chapter 5: Measuring Concepts of Interest. Sections 5.3 to 5.7

“Measurement Error” Reading on Course Spaces.

Chapter 7: Probability and Statistical Inference. Sections 7.1 to 7.3

**Week 6 February 11-15: Covariation and Causation**

Chapter 3: Evaluating Causal Relationships


Pg. 161-176.

***Midterm is February 15th***
Week 7 February 18-22: Reading break - No class.

Week 8 February 25 – March 1: Quantitative Analysis Part 1

****Assignment 2 due on February 25th****

Chapter 8: Bivariate Hypothesis Testing

Week 9 March 4 - 8: Quantitative Analysis Part 2

Chapter 9: Two-Variable Regression Models
Chapter 10: Multiple Regression. Sections 10.1 to 10.7

Week 10 March 11-15: Surveys and interviews

Berdahl, L., Archer, K. (eds.) Interview, focus Group, and Observation Research, in Explorations: Conducting Empirical Research in Canadian Political Science. Don Mills: Oxford University Press. Read intro “Destination” and section on interviews only (stop at top of 178)


Week 11 March 18-22: Putting it into practice – designing and executing a survey

This week we will put what we have learned about surveys and quantitative analysis to develop several surveys. We’ll send out the surveys to be answered and analyze them in the following two weeks.

Week 12 March 25-29: Case, studies, the comparative method and process tracing

***Assignment 3 due March 25***


Sherlock Holmes and the Story of Silver Blaze.

Week 13 April 1-5: Experiments and natural experiments, and review

Chapter 4: Research Design. Sections 4.1 and 4.2

***Paper due April 5th***
PLAGIARISM AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY
Academic integrity is intellectual honesty and responsibility for academic work that you submit individually or as a member of a group. It involves commitment to the values of honesty, trust and responsibility. It is expected that students will respect these ethical values in all activities related to learning, teaching, research and service. Therefore, plagiarism and other acts against academic integrity are serious academic offences.

The responsibility of the institution - Instructors and academic units have the responsibility to ensure that standards of academic honesty are met. By doing so, the institution recognizes students for their hard work and assures them that other students do not have an unfair advantage through cheating on essays, exams, and projects.

The responsibility of the student - Plagiarism sometimes occurs due to a misunderstanding regarding the rules of academic integrity, but it is the responsibility of the student to know them. If you are unsure about the standards for citations or for referencing your sources, ask your instructor. Depending on the severity of the case, penalties include a warning, a failing grade, a record on the student’s transcript, or a suspension. It is your responsibility to understand the University’s policy on academic integrity, which can be found on pages 32-34 of the undergraduate calendar.

Please see the (revised) academic integrity policy: [http://web.uvic.ca/calendar2017-09/undergrad/info/regulations/academic-integrity.html](http://web.uvic.ca/calendar2017-09/undergrad/info/regulations/academic-integrity.html)

PERCENTAGE GRADING SCALE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Passing Grades</th>
<th>Grade Point Value</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>90 – 100</td>
<td>Exceptional, outstanding and excellent performance. Normally achieved by a minority of students. These grades indicate a student who is self-initiating, exceeds expectation and has an insightful grasp of the subject matter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>85 – 89</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>80 – 84</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>77 – 79</td>
<td>Very good, good and solid performance. Normally achieved by the largest number of students. These grades indicate a good grasp of the subject matter or excellent grasp in one area balanced with satisfactory grasp in the other area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>73 – 76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>70 – 72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>65 – 69</td>
<td>Satisfactory, or minimally satisfactory. These grades indicate a satisfactory performance and knowledge of the subject matter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>60 – 64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>50 – 59</td>
<td>Marginal Performance. A student receiving this grade demonstrated a superficial grasp of the subject matter.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Failing Grades</th>
<th>Grade Point Value</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 – 49</td>
<td>Unsatisfactory performance. Wrote final examination and completed course requirements; no supplemental.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 – 49</td>
<td>Did not write examination or complete course requirements by the end of term or session; no supplemental.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. The percentage grading scale applies to all Faculties at the University of Victoria.
2. The percentage grades should be associated with a letter grading schema.
3. A percentage grade for an N grade should be assigned in the following manner:
   N GRADE: If a student has not completed the exam, or has not completed the course requirements, but has submitted course requirements that total more than 49% of the total grade for a course, an instructor will assign a percentage grade of 49%