

POLS 340: Introduction to Political Analysis

Fall Semester 2017
Tuesday and Thursday 11 a.m.-12:15 p.m.
Class Location: Cole 106
Professor April K. Clark

Office: Zulauf 402
Office Hours: Tues., 12:30-1:30 p.m. & Thurs., 12:30 p.m.-3:00 p.m. or by appt.
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RA: Anna Zapolska - azapolska1@niu.edu (by appointment)

Course Outline:

This course presents an introduction to the research methods commonly used by political scientists (and other disciplines), to answer their questions of interest. The aim of the course is (1) to provide students with analytic tools with which they can critically evaluate both social science research and also causal arguments found in everyday life and (2) to improve students' abilities to pose and answer research questions of their own. We will examine a number of different topics that all political scientists must think about whenever they do research such as: 1. Formulating research questions, 2. Developing and testing hypotheses, defining concepts, and (but not always) creating variables, 3. Designing a research plan for hypothesis testing, 4. Choosing the appropriate measurement strategies, 5. Making observations, 6. Sampling, 7. Performing data analysis, and 8. Research ethics.

Please note that a prior knowledge of statistics is NOT a requirement for this class. As I like to use the Socratic method (pose questions and listen to your answers to help you learn), I will expect participation in the classroom. Moreover, your active participation is necessary in this type of course and will help you to do well in the class.

Class Schedule:

Class meets Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 11 a.m.-12:15 p.m., during the 16-week term – August 28 through December 8, 2017.

Course Texts:

Johnson, Janet Buttolph, Reynolds, H.T. and Jason Mycoff (2016). *Political Science Research Methods*, 8th Edition. CQ Press: Washington DC. ISBN: 978-1-5063-0782-4 **(JR)**
<https://edge.sagepub.com/johnson8e>

Babbie, Earl, William E. Wagner, III, and Jeanne Zaino. (2015). *Adventures in Social Research Data Analysis Using SPSS*, 9th Edition. Sage Publications: California. ISBN: 978-1-4833-5958-8 **(BHZ)** <https://study.sagepub.com/babbie9e>

BRING THE BABBIE BOOK WITH YOU TO EVERY CLASS!!

Supplemental Material:

1. A few other required readings will be distributed in class and/or posted to the class's Blackboard website as we move along.
2. You should also read a daily newspaper, news magazine such as the *Economist* or *Newsweek*, and research institution publications such as the *Pew Research Center*, *Gallup*, *Roper*, *Polling Report*, or the *Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC)* in order to find examples of concepts or issues to reinforce class discussions.

Learning Goals:

By the end of the semester, students should:

1. Be able to evaluate readings in the social sciences i.e. recognize how the author(s) conceptualised their work, created their measures, identify their research design and understand the pros and cons of the various approaches taken by the author(s). This will help you to understand research presented in other areas too, such as in television news, newspapers, and journals.
2. Be able to use SPSS for Windows to examine and analyse a computer-based dataset, at least in terms of basic descriptive statistics, and associations.
3. Be able to plan and conduct their own original research by using the techniques learned and/or demonstrated throughout the class.
4. Be able to discuss thoughts and ideas comfortably in a public setting (i.e. in front of your peers).

Class Attendance:

Attending lecture is not compulsory but should be treated as such since we cover a lot of material fairly quickly, and also because lecture will include discussion of material not found in the readings. Lecture is an opportunity to expand on, and apply ideas from the readings, as well as for students to discuss the reading and to ask any questions as well engage in applied work (i.e. lab and/or homework examples). **Any time you miss class when we do applied work on the computers you will be put at a significant disadvantage!**

Course Requirements:

Since this is a required course for graduation, students are required to complete all of the elements listed below and the failure to do so will result in an "F" in the course.

1. Students are required to have read the assigned readings prior to class and to be prepared for class discussion.
2. There may be pop quizzes throughout the course of the semester – particularly if students do not demonstrate their familiarity with assigned readings.
3. Students will complete **several lab assignments**, which will be turned in near the end of the semester, and graded along with attendance and participation.
4. Students will complete **4 homework assignments**.
5. Students will be required to submit a **10-15 page research paper**. More details on the paper are contained at the end of the syllabus.
6. There will be **one take-home final exam**. The final exam will consist of some combination of multiple-choice, short answer, and essay-style questions. You will do poorly if you do not complete the reading assignments and attend class.

Course Grading:

The breakdown of grading for each piece of work will be as follows (850 points total):

- Class attendance, participation, and lab journal – 100 points.
- 4 Homework Assignments – 100 points each (total 400).
- Research Paper – 200 points.
- Take-home Final Exam – 150 points.

Course Grades will be distributed as follows:

Final Overall Percentage	Final Letter Grade
90-100%	A
80-89%	B
70-79%	C
60-69%	D
Below 60%	F

*Final course grades will be submitted in compliance with PUC's plus/minus (+/-) grading system.

Class Attendance, Participation and Lab Assignments (100 points):

Class is incredibly important since it will take place in the computer lab, and time will be given to learning how to use SPSS, and to working on lab assignments, and your research papers. Students will be required to turn in lab assignments for credit at the end of the semester in class on **Tuesday, November 21st**. These lab assignments/exercises will be assigned throughout the course of the semester to help you acquire the skills necessary to complete the homework assignments and the final research paper. Bring the **BHZ** book to class. **All classes will take place in Cole 106.**

Four Homework Assignments (100 points each, for a total of 400 points):

Four homework assignments to be announced in class, and posted to Blackboard. You will always have at least one week to complete the assignments, which are due at the **beginning** of class on the day they are due – see specific dates listed below in the schedule. If you fail to turn your homework assignment in at the **beginning** of class on the day it is due, you will receive a **ZERO** for the assignment. I will **NOT** accept homework assignments turned in after this time (except in cases of documented emergencies), nor will I accept e-mailed assignments. **NO EXCEPTIONS.** Please make a note of due dates.

All lab and homework assignments must be **typed** in the **actual** lab or homework document, with standard margins (approximately 1" all around). Papers must include page numbers and be stapled together with the SPSS output and tables upon which your answers are based - otherwise, they will automatically receive a **full letter-grade deduction.**

A Final Examination (150 points):

The final will be a take home exam due in class, **Tuesday, November 14th**. The final exam will make use of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions and will be heavily based on the readings. The purpose of the exam is to make sure that you have absorbed the diversity of the course materials. Since the homework assignments will allow you to demonstrate your in-depth understanding of some of the topics covered in the class, the final exam will allow you to demonstrate your broad understanding of all of the topics covered in the course readings. If you fail to turn in the completed final exam at the **beginning** of class on the day it is due, you will receive a **ZERO** for the exam. I will **NOT** accept final exams turned in after this time (except in cases of documented emergencies), nor will I accept e-mailed assignments. **NO EXCEPTIONS.** Please make a note of due dates.

Final Research Paper (200 points total):

The research paper is designed to introduce you to social science research methods through practical experience and investigation of a topic that is of interest to you. The research project will be used to test students' abilities to correctly apply statistical techniques, and to interpret, and report results. In the process of defining your research question, evaluating the leading authorities on the topic, and providing an analytically rich narration of the statistical procedures involved you will develop research and writing skills that will have lifelong value (see final paper requirements at the end of the syllabus). The paper is due on or before –**Tuesday, December 12th at 10:00 am.** If you fail to turn your final research paper in at specified day and time it is due, you will receive a **ZERO**. I will **NOT** accept research papers turned in after this time (except in cases of documented emergencies), nor will I accept e-mailed research papers. **NO EXCEPTIONS.** Please make note of due dates.

Extra Credit Reading Quizzes:

Students are expected to have read the assigned material for each lecture beforehand and “extra credit” pop quizzes will be given from time to time. The subject matter of these quizzes will be drawn from: 1) the reading assignment for that day, or 2) the topics covered in previous lectures.

Comments:

This course is extremely demanding. We have about 15 weeks to complete all phases of research methods design. Much of your success depends on sticking to a set schedule. To be successful, you must follow the deadlines carefully. I will do what I can to help you meet those deadlines but this is a large class and individual tutoring during class time is virtually impossible. Please remember to ask questions when they arise to avoid any confusion. Do not wait until the assignments are due to ask questions. Use my e-mail at the top of the page if you cannot reach me during the day at school. You may bring in your own laptop to school, but NIU cannot be held responsible for its safety. Please be careful! Many of the class handouts and useful links are available on Blackboard. Use these before panicking!

As it's really important to me that you develop skills that will serve you well outside of the classroom, I will take into consideration student improvement over the duration of the course. For example, if you are a reluctant participator at the beginning of the class, but by the end you feel more comfortable talking in front of your peers, then this will demonstrate to me that you have improved your public speaking, something that will be very useful beyond a college course.

Statistical Software:

We are set up to run SPSS version 24.0 remotely i.e. the software is not physically present on the lab computers. To access the software requires going through a portal or interface, the plugin for which can be found at: <https://anywhereapps.niu.edu/AnywhereApps/clientDetection/downloadNative.aspx>. Any machine - smartphones and iPads - on which you download the plugin should then allow you to access SPSS from anywhere – even home. Ooh! You will need a flash-drive on which to save your files (data, SPSS output etc).

The SPSS statistical software is also available in the main SOCQRL (in 222 DuSable; www.socqrl.niu.edu). Course fees enable you to use these facilities and there are a number of lab assistants available to answer questions. No one should feel intimidated by these assignments. No prior knowledge of statistics is required, the software is user friendly, and experienced lab assistants will be available (at the SOCQRL) to help with the assignments when needed.

You can also download a trial version of SPSS for Windows, the statistical software program that we will use, from: http://www.spss.com/downloads/Papers.cfm?prod_familyID=00005&Name=SPSS

It expires after 14 days, so this might come in handy towards the end of the quarter when we begin more sophisticated statistical analyses. Note that the trial version might be slightly newer than the lab version.

Course Policies (pay close attention!):

1. Late papers and assignments: Late papers and assignment **WILL NOT** be accepted. Papers and assignments are due at the **beginning** of class on the day that it is due as designated in the course syllabus – *please see summary of important dates for a list of course assignments and due dates*. If you fail to turn in the paper or assignment on the appropriate day and time you will receive no score (except in cases of documented emergencies). E-mailed papers will not be accepted, notwithstanding absolutely exceptional circumstances. Papers must be typed, one-sided, double-spaced, and use a font no smaller than 12-point. **Any paper not stapled or in compliance with the formatting requirements will automatically receive a full letter-grade deduction.**
2. Make-up exams: Make-up exams will only be given in extraordinary circumstances. If such circumstances arise, please contact the instructor as soon as possible *and* before the scheduled exam. To keep the process fair for everyone in the course, students will be **required** to support requests for makeup exams with appropriate documentation. A signed note from your mother does not suffice. **A missed examination without prior notification and/or a documented excuse will result in a zero.**
3. Handouts: Handouts are a privilege for those students who attend class on a regular basis. No student is entitled to supplemental materials simply because they are registered for the course.
4. Classroom Etiquette: Attendance at all class sessions is expected, and the instructor will periodically check attendance. Active and informed participation in class discussion will make for a better class, and can notably boost a student's final grade. Participation can also significantly help students in borderline grade situations. Students are expected to arrive at class on time. Late arrivals disrupt the class and will be treated as class absences. Students are to remain for the entire session unless excused by the professor beforehand or confronted with a serious personal emergency. It is not acceptable for students to walk in and out of class to answer cell phones, take casual bathroom and smoking breaks, or attend to other personal matters. Please **silence your cell phone prior to the start of each lecture**. It is absolutely unacceptable to sleep, use an iPod, read a newspaper, use a laptop for anything other than taking class notes, or engage in other behavior that distracts the instructor or other students from class once it has begun. No one should talk while someone else is talking; this includes comments meant for a classmate rather than the entire group. Overall, classroom dialogue and behavior should always be courteous, respectful of others, and consistent with the expectations set forth by the university. For more information, see: http://www.niu.edu/judicial/Code_of_Conduct.pdf
5. Note taking: Although PowerPoint will be used for the purposes of presenting class material it is imperative that **students take their own detailed notes during lectures**. The PowerPoint slides provide a broad outline of discussion topics but do not cover everything. If you miss class for whatever reason, be sure to obtain the notes from someone else in class (making a friend in class is always a good idea).
6. Incomplete Requests: Such petitions will be granted only in extraordinary circumstances. The instructor reserves the right to ask for documentation to verify the problem preventing completion of the course by the normal deadlines. If the student does not present documentation from a university office or official, the matter will be left to the instructor's discretion.
7. Academic Dishonesty: Any written work for this class will be checked electronically through on-line databases to assess the originality of the work. Regarding plagiarism, the NIU

Undergraduate Catalog states: "Students are guilty of plagiarism, intentional or not, if they copy material from books, magazines, or other sources without identifying and acknowledging them. *Students guilty of, or assisting others in, either cheating or plagiarism on an assignment, quiz, or examination may receive a grade of F for the course involved and may be suspended or dismissed from the university.*" The above statement encompasses a paper written in whole or in part by another; a paper copied word-for-word or with only minor changes from another source; a paper copied in part from one or more sources without proper identification and acknowledgment of the sources; a paper that is merely a paraphrase of one or more sources, using ideas and/or logic without credit even though the actual words may be changed; and a paper that quotes, summarizes or paraphrases, or cuts and pastes words, phrases, or images from an Internet source without identification and the address of the web site. In addition, while students may work collaboratively to complete lab and homework assignments, any completed work that is turned into the instructor must be the student's own work i.e. written in their own words and outlining their logic or calculations where appropriate or requested.

8. **Students with Disabilities:** A student who believes that reasonable accommodations with respect to course work or other academic requirements may be appropriate in consideration of a disability must (1) provide the required verification of the disability to the Disabilities Resource Center, (2) meet with the Disabilities Resource Center to determine appropriate accommodations, and (3) inform the faculty in charge of the academic activity of the need for accommodation. Students are encouraged to inform the faculty of their requests for accommodations as early as possible in the semester, but must make the requests in a timely enough manner for accommodations to be appropriately considered and reviewed by the university. If contacted by the faculty member, the staff of the Disabilities Resource Center will provide advice about accommodations that may be indicated in the particular case. Students who make requests for reasonable accommodations are expected to follow the policies and procedures of the Disabilities Resource Center in this process, including but not limited to the Student Handbook. A wide range of services can be obtained by students with disabilities, including housing, transportation, adaptation of printed materials, and advocacy with faculty and staff. Students with disabilities who need such services or want more information should contact the Disabilities Resource Center at 815-753-1303. A student who believes that reasonable accommodations with respect to course work or other academic requirements may be appropriate in consideration of a disability must (1) provide the required verification of the disability to the Disabilities Resource Center, (2) meet with the Disabilities Resource Center to determine appropriate accommodations, and (3) inform the faculty in charge of the academic activity of the need for accommodation. Students are encouraged to inform the faculty of their requests for accommodations as early as possible in the semester, but must make the requests in a timely enough manner for accommodations to be appropriately considered and reviewed by the university. If contacted by the faculty member, the staff of the Disabilities Resource Center will provide advice about accommodations that may be indicated in the particular case. Students who make requests for reasonable accommodations are expected to follow the policies and procedures of the Disabilities Resource Center in this process, including but not limited to the Student Handbook. A wide range of services can be obtained by students with disabilities, including housing, transportation, adaptation of printed materials, and advocacy with faculty and staff. Students with disabilities who need such services or want more information should contact the Disabilities Resource Center at 815-753-1303.
9. NIU provides a writing center that can assist students in formulating, developing, and revising course assignments. Do not be scared or embarrassed to ask for assistance if you feel you would benefit from it. The university provides these resources in order to help students better reach their academic goals. Information regarding the writing center can be found at: <http://www.niu.edu/uwc/>

10. Department of Political Science website: Undergraduates are strongly encouraged to consult the Department of Political Science website on a regular basis. This up-to-date, central source of information will assist students in contacting faculty and staff, reviewing course requirements and syllabi, exploring graduate study, research career options, tracking department events, and accessing important details related to undergraduate programs and activities. To reach the site, go to <http://polisci.niu.edu>

11. Undergraduate Writing Awards: The Department of Political Science recognizes, on an annual basis, outstanding undergraduate papers written in conjunction with 300-400 level political science courses or directed studies, such as independent studies or honors theses. Winners are expected to attend the Department's spring graduation ceremony where they will receive a certificate and a check for \$100. No more than two papers may be submitted by a student. There is no requirement as to the length of papers submitted for the award. Often the Department awards prizes for both an outstanding short paper and an outstanding long paper. The number and types of award is dependent upon the papers submitted for consideration in any given year. Authors do not have to be political science majors or have a particular class standing. Only papers written in the previous calendar year are considered for the award. However, papers completed in the current spring semester are eligible for the following year's competition even if the student has graduated. Papers can be submitted by students or faculty and must be supplied in triplicate to the undergraduate secretary. All copies must have two cover pages – one with the student's name and one without the student's name. Papers are not to be stapled or bound. Instead, please use paper clips. Papers are generally due in March and notice of call for papers and submission deadlines will be published in the department e-announcements. You may also contact the department for information at 815-753-1012.

Course Calendar (additional readings may be added):

Courses sometimes do not go as planned and you should be ready to diverge from this syllabus. Any significant changes will be clearly announced in class. You are responsible to stay up to date on course happenings. You should complete readings **before** coming to class, and try to get an early start on the research paper.

Week One (August 29th)

Tuesday: Course Overview and Introductions
Reading: No reading assigned

Thursday: Understanding Political Science Research – Why is it Important?
Reading: JR Chapter 1

Week Two (September 5th)

Tuesday: Understanding Political Science Research – Why is it Important?
Reading: JR Chapter 2

Thursday: Understanding Political Science Research – Why is it Important?
Reading: BHZ Chapter 1

Week Three (September 12th)

Tuesday: Starting the Research Process

Reading: JR Chapter 3

Homework 1 Assigned – Due: Thursday, September 21st

Thursday: Getting Started on Lab Work: SPSS and the GSS Dataset

Reading: BHZ Chapters 2-4

Lab 1 Assigned

Week Four (September 19th)

Tuesday: Theories, Hypotheses, Variables

Reading: JR Chapter 4

Thursday: Theories, Hypotheses, Variables (cont'd.)

Reading: JR Chapter 4

Homework 1 Due TODAY: Thursday, September 21st

Week Five (September 26th)

Tuesday: Lab Work: Thinking About Measurement – Reliability, Validity, and Levels of Measurement

Reading: BHZ Chapters 5 and 7, JR Chapter 11 pgs. 354-368

Lab 2 Assigned

Thursday: Thinking About Measurement – Definitions and Operationalization

Reading: JR Chapter 5; BHZ Chapter 8, McDonald, Michael P., and Samuel Popkin. “The Myth of the Vanishing Voter.” *American Political Science Review* (2001), 95(4):963-974; “What is Terrorism?” at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/1555265.stm>; “So Who Are the Activists?” The New York Times at <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/07/06/opinion/06gewirtz.html> (all available on BlackBoard)

Week Six (October 3rd)

Tuesday: Investigating the Relationship Between Two Variables aka. “Bivariate Analysis”

Reading: JR Chapter 13 pgs. 413-478

Homework 2 Assigned – Due: Tuesday, October 24th

Thursday: Getting into Bivariate Analysis – The Power of the Crosstab

Reading: BHZ Chapters 10-12

Week Seven (October 10th)

Tuesday: Research Design and Causal Inference: Experimental Design vs All the Others, Internal and External Validity

Reading: JR Chapter 6; Carson, Carole. 2010. Is Television Priming Us to Be Fat? Huffington Post, 30, August to be found on BlackBoard.

Thursday: Making Empirical Observations – Direct and Indirect

Reading: JR Chapter 8

Week Eight (October 17th)

Tuesday: Making Empirical Observations – Direct and Indirect

Reading: Richard Fenno. 1978. *Home Style: House Members in Their Districts*. Appendix

Thursday: Qualitative Research

Reading: JR Chapter 9

Final Exam Assigned – Due: Tuesday, November 14th

Week Nine (October 24th)

Tuesday: Lab Work – Measures of Association and Statistical Significance

Reading: BHZ Chapters 13-15, re-read JR Chapter 13 but particularly pages 426-464

Homework 2 Due TODAY: Tuesday, October 24th

Thursday: Sampling

Reading: JR Chapter 7

Homework 3 Assigned – Due: Thursday, November 9th

Week Ten (October 31st)

Tuesday: Sampling

Reading: Scott Keeter et al. 2007. “What’s Missing from National RDD Surveys? The Impact of the Growing Cell-Only Population.” *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 71 (5), pgs. 772-792; “Web Surveys Unlikely to Represent All Views” to be found on BlackBoard.

Thursday: Survey Research

Reading: JR Chapter 10, Pew Global Attitudes Project, November 17th 2011, “The American-Western European Values Gap: American Exceptionalism Subsides.”

<http://www.pewglobal.org/2011/11/17/the-american-western-european-values-gap/>;

“Voters Skeptical That 2016 Candidates Would Make Good Presidents,” at

<http://www.people-press.org/2016/01/20/voters-skeptical-that-2016-candidates-would-make-good-presidents/>;

“Parenting in America,” at

<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2015/12/17/parenting-in-america/>

Week Eleven (November 7th)

Tuesday: Basic Regression
Reading: JR Chapter 13, pgs. 478-513

Lab 3 Assigned

Thursday: Multivariate Analysis
Reading: BHZ Chapter 17, JR Chapter 14

Homework 3 Due TODAY: Thursday, November 9th

Week Twelve (November 14th)

Tuesday: Multivariate Analysis
Reading: BHZ Chapters 18-20

Final Exam Due TODAY: Tuesday, November 14th

Thursday: Lab Work – Multivariate Analysis
Reading: re-read JR Chapter 14

Homework 4 Assigned – Due: Tuesday, November 28th

Week Thirteen (November 21st)

Tuesday: The Graphical Presentation of Data
Reading: BHZ Chapter 6, JR Chapter 11, pgs. 369-384

Lab Assignments 1-3 Due TODAY: Tuesday, November 21st

Thursday, November 23rd: THANKSGIVING BREAK – NO CLASS

Week Fourteen (November 28th)

Tuesday: Research Ethics
Reading: Earl Babbie. *The Practice of Social Research 13th edition*, Chapter 3

Homework 4 Due TODAY: Tuesday, November 28th

Thursday: Lab Work
Reading: None Assigned

Week Fifteen (December 5th)

Tuesday: Lab Work
Reading: None Assigned

Thursday: Wrapping Up
Reading: None Assigned

*****Final Research Paper Due on Tues. December 12th at 10 a.m. in Cole 106*****

Summary of Important Dates

Homework Due Dates – **September 21st, October 24th, November 9th, November 28th**

Take-Home Final Exam Due – **Tuesday, November 14th** in class (or sooner if you prefer)

Lab Assignments Due – **No later than Tuesday, November 21st** in class (or sooner if you prefer)

Final Research Paper Due – **No later than Tuesday, December 12th at 10 a.m.** (or sooner if you prefer)

Words of Advice for How to Do Well in this Course

- Do the reading assignments before class.
- Take notes on copies of the readings and lecture materials.
- Participate in class discussions.
- Ask questions!
- Do the assignments and turn them in on time.
- Study before exams.
- Make sure the professor knows your name AND associates it with good things.

RESEARCH PAPER REQUIREMENTS

The Research Paper is designed to introduce you to social science research methods through practical experience and investigation of a topic that is of special interest to you. In the process of defining your research question, evaluating the leading authorities on the topic, and providing an analytically rich description of the statistical procedures involved you will develop research and writing skills that will have lifelong value.

Your paper must be double-spaced, with standard margins (approximately 1" all around), and consist of between 10 and 15 pages, not including the title page, bibliography, or illustrations. Papers must include pagination and be stapled together with a cover page containing a title and abstract of your work. Any paper not stapled or in compliance with the formatting requirements will automatically receive a full letter-grade deduction. I have no preference between footnotes or endnotes but all of your references must be in a consistent format such as MLA, APA, or Chicago style.

The last day to turn in your paper is **Tuesday December 12th at 10 a.m. in Cole 106** – the last day of class. I **MUST** have received your paper by that time or you will receive a zero – **I DO NOT ACCEPT LATE PAPERS – NO EXCEPTIONS.** E-mailed papers will not be accepted, not withstanding absolutely exceptional circumstances. Papers turned in before **December 12th** will be happily accepted.

The goal of your paper is to empirically test a causal hypothesis regarding the relationship between two political phenomena e.g. does a person's religiosity help predict their attitudes towards gay marriage?

Your paper should include the following elements:

- Your name and cover page with title and abstract;
- Introduction, in which you pose your research question and describe your hypothesis:
 - Research question: What is your main research question or problem? (That is, what are you trying to explain?) Why do you think that your question is important? (**NOTE: If you choose to use the class dataset you MUST choose a relationship that is not examined in-depth (for example, analysis, tables, report of findings, etc.) in the**

textbook. If you have any concerns about your topic, please speak to me). In short, do not replicate studies from the class text.

- Discuss a hypothesis that posits a central relationship between two variables. That is, offers an answer to your research question. The hypothesis should be controversial in the sense that one could reasonably predict more than one outcome on the basis of prior social science theory/research (which you should describe in the literature-review section of your paper).

Define your variables. Which values of the independent variable do you think relate to which values of the dependent variable? Discuss the mechanism; if you can't come up with a mechanism, say so, but then say what this means for your hypothesis. Explain how the measures you have chosen are good ones – this requires you to assess their validity and reliability. For example, we have spoken how many relationships we are interested in researching are abstract and how we operationalize the measures may not be a valid measurement of the phenomena of interest – think party identification as an indicator/measure of political ideology. If you see any flaws in your measures, i.e. potential problems of validity and/or reliability, discuss them here. Discuss at least one alternative explanation that threatens the internal validity of your causal inference. For example, is there a potentially confounding third variable?

- A mini-literature review (see Chapter 6 of **JR** and the article by Fox and Smith (1998) and the article by Licklider (1995) on Blackboard) of research relevant to your topic (lit-review should address the relevance and importance of topic, theoretical and empirical research on topic, gaps in the literature, opportunities for future research and/or implications for practice).

Your goal as a researcher should be to identify the most authoritative sources you can find for your topic. Acceptable references for research papers include journal articles and book chapters - websites and popular literature should be used sparingly, if at all! There is no magic formula for the number of sources you should use. Instead, you should seek to locate as many of the most definitive and relevant sources for the topic that you can given the time you have available for the project. Your final bibliography should be a list of the most definitive resources that are available. You **must** use at least five sources in your paper. A good source for locating recent articles on your topic is **JSTOR** which is accessible through the university's library website. Google Scholar can also prove useful in tracking down relevant research.

- A discussion section in which you talk about your data, methods (analyses/statistics), results, and conclusions.

Data: This section could include a discussion of the following items: Which data set are you using and who compiled it? What are your cases or subjects (e.g., U.S. adults, citizens of the European Union, countries, companies)? How many of them are there, and how were they chosen? How was the data on your variables collected for these cases? Do a little reading about your data set – look at the **BHZ** textbook and/or accompanying CD; if using an outside source data set consult the introduction to the codebook, for example – to answer these questions.

Methods: Provide appropriate numeric and graphical summaries of your independent and dependent variables such as frequencies, cross-tabulations, etc. Assess the association between your variables using the appropriate descriptive or inferential statistics.

Results and conclusion: interpret the findings in the tables. What do you conclude about your hypothesis on the basis of this empirical analysis?

The paper is worth 200 points of your overall grade. A rough guide to the way I will grade these papers is as follows:

“A” papers will satisfy all criteria superlatively; “B” papers will satisfy most adequately to superlatively; “C” papers adequately, etc. Keep in mind that both presentation and substance matter: for this paper, throughout your academic career at NIU, and in the real world, *what* you say is important, but so too is *how* you say it.

Please speak with me during office hours if you have specific questions about the paper requirements or selecting a topic.

ADDITIONAL TIPS:

The paper is more than a string of different exercises. You want to try and avoid writing a paper that reads, “I did this, and then I did this, and then I did this.” It makes for a bad paper. Your paper should be written in a natural (conversational) and academic style. Think of the assigned journal readings to get a sense of what an academic writing style is like. Graphs and tables should be well designed and integrated with the text. All the substance for the suggestions I note below can be found in either of your textbooks, and in some cases your lecture notes too.

- Introduce your topic and state why we should care about this topic. For example, in my own research, I examined tolerance attitudes and suggested this was an important contribution to the existing research because tolerance is one of the most demanding and important requirements of Democracy.
- Write clear and testable hypothesis. State the null hypothesis. Discuss the reasoning and logic behind the hypothesis clearly. Are you going to make some “commonsense” assumption or do you have some evidence for this hypothesis? Saying Democrats will be more supportive of environmental protection might seem like a straightforward statement, but it’s not. To justify such statements you would need to say **what** it is about Democrats that would make them more supportive. If you think your logic is weak, be honest about this, especially if it’s easy to think of reasons as to why your hypothesis might not be correct.
- Refer to your hypothesis when you examine the relationship between your IV and DV using the techniques in your paper. Are you finding support for your hypothesis as you go along? Do the various tests help you reach more definitive conclusions? When you conclude at the end, summarize what you have learned about the relationships between your IVs and DVs.
- Don’t assume I know anything. Write as though you were writing for a general audience with little knowledge about research of this kind. So....
 1. Don’t say you ran a crosstab, say why you ran a crosstab (how are they helpful? What are the drawbacks?), and be sure to follow the guidance in SPSS about how to read a table (comparing across categories), and what this means substantively (what the results in your table tell you about the relationship). Think back to your hypothesis too.
 2. Don’t simply say you ran Lambda or Gamma or whatever it is. Say why you run a measure of association, why you chose that particular one, and what they help us to do that perhaps a crosstab alone can’t. What does your value of Lambda or Gamma tell you about the relationship between your variables? What are the drawbacks of these kinds of measures? Think back to your hypothesis each time.
 3. What is the appropriate test for statistical significance? What is the significance test telling us, and why is it useful to you in terms of your hypothesis? Both textbooks and

handouts provided to you previously have good information on these kinds of questions, and on how to interpret and write up your findings.

- I will be taking presentation into account, so think about the layout of tables, charts, graphs and so on. Enter the labels for the different categories of your variables, spell them correctly, and get tables to fit onto one page. If you have trouble integrating tables into the text, you may submit the paper with tables and figures on separate pages at the back of the paper with standard indications of text placement, (e.g., see Table 1). That is, make sure when you discuss data from your tables you make it clear where it's coming from so the reader can find it for themselves.