POLS 602: Scope and Methods of Political Science I

Fall Semester 2017
Mon 3.30-6.10pm; DuSable 464
Assoc. Professor Michael Clark
Office: Zulauf 401
Office Hours: Mon/Weds 10.00-11.30am or by appt.
E-Mail: mclark12@niu.edu (mclark followed by #12)

Course Description:

This course is designed to introduce students to some of the common approaches, problems, and obstacles to performing research in the social sciences, and in particular, trying to implement and successfully execute a research plan or design, as well as collect data. To some extent, then, the course is concerned with the “practical” as well as the “theoretical.” This course is not a statistics course though we may touch on some statistical problems and techniques as part of our discussion. Where we can, we will demonstrate by example by drawing on your own research experiences or mine, and also doing some simple original research. Students will be required to participate in class discussion as well as discuss their homework assignments when called on to do so.

Course Required Reading:

- Earl Babbie. _The Practice of Social Research 14th edition_ (Cengage Publishing)

The book should be available at the campus bookstore but you can order it from Amazon, or some other source, if not. Feel free to draw on other texts to supplement your reading/understanding. Any reading assignments that students cannot freely access will either be e-mailed to the class by the professor, or posted to Blackboard.

Course Requirements:

1. Students are required to attend all classes (naturally – it’s a grad level class).
2. Students are expected to have read the assigned readings prior to class, to be prepared for class discussion, and to participate in class discussion.
3. There will be 4 “homework” assignments to complete during the course of the semester.
4. There will be **one in-class exam on the last day of class**.
Course Grading:

The breakdown of grading for each piece of work will be as follows:

1. Four assignments worth 10% each
   a. Experimental design exercise
   b. Survey exercise
   c. Observation exercise
   d. Content Analysis exercise
2. Class participation worth 30%
3. In-class final worth 30%

Course Grades will be distributed as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Final Percentage</th>
<th>Final Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>90-100 %</td>
<td>A (90-92 is A minus, above is A)</td>
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<tr>
<td>80-89 %</td>
<td>B (80-83 is B minus, 84-86 is B, above is B plus)</td>
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<tr>
<td>70-79%</td>
<td>C (70-73 is C minus, 74-76 is C, above is C plus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69%</td>
<td>D (60-66 is D, above is D plus)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Below 60%</td>
<td>F (below 60)</td>
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Course Policies:

1. Late homework assignments: Late assignments will not be accepted except under the most extraordinary circumstances, and will be scored zero.

2. 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.

3. Honor Code: 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 the purchase or use of papers that were written by others. Please note that the instructor retains copies of papers written in previous years. In short, students are strongly advised to do their own work and learn the rules for proper quoting, paraphrasing, and footnoting. There are many online and campus resources to help students with this.
4. Accommodations for 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 Centre (2) meet with the Disabilities Resource Centre 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. Students who make requests for reasonable accommodations are expected to follow the policies and procedures of the Disabilities Resource Centre 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 Centre at 815-753-1303 or drc@niu.edu The DRC is located on the 4th floor of the Health Services Building.

**Reading Schedule (subject to change)**

**Week 1:** Monday 8/28 – Introductions and some basics
Reading: No reading assigned

**Week 2:** Monday 9/4 – No Class in Observance of Labour Day Holiday
Reading:
- Chapters 1 and 2 in Babbie
- Mr. Perestroika, “On the Irrelevance of APSA and APSR to the Study of Political Science” (October 15th, 2000)
- New York Observer Staff, “How Cult Internet Character Mr. Perestroika Divided N.Y.U.’s Political Science Department” (January 7th, 2002)

**Week 3** Monday 9/11 – The Elements of Research Design and Measurement Issues
Reading:
- Babbie, Chapters 4 and 5
- Sears et al., “Examinations of Core Concepts and Processes - Is It Really Racism? The Origins of White American Opposition to Race-
Targeted Policies”, Public Opinion Quarterly 61 (1997), 16-53 (focus particularly on 16-28)

Exercise 1 to be given out (Experimental Design). Due by 10am the following Monday (9/18). Do the week’s reading first!

Week 4: Monday 9/18 – Pre-Experimental and Experimental Design
Reading:
- Babbie, Chapter 8
- Campbell, Donald T. and Julian C. Stanley. “Experimental And Quasi-Experimental Designs for Research (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1966), 5-23

Suggested:

Week 5: Monday 9/25 – Quasi-Experimental Design
Reading:
- Campbell, Donald T. and Julian Stanley. Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Research (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1966), 34-40
- Ghobarah, Hazem Adam, Paul Huth, and Bruce Russett. “Civil Wars Kill and Maim People – Long After the Shooting Stops”, American Political Science Review 97 (May, 2003), 189-202
Week 6: Monday 10/2 – Sampling
Reading:
- Babbie, Chapter 7
- Biernacki, Patrick, and Dan Waldorf. “Snowball Sampling”, *Sociological Methods and Research* 10 (November, 1981), 141-64

Suggested:

**Exercise 2 to be given out (Asking Questions). Due by 10am the following Monday (10/9). Do the week’s reading first!**

Week 7: Monday 10/9 – Surveys and Interviews
Reading:
- Babbie, Chapter 9

**Exercise 3 to be given out (Observing The “Real World”). Due by 10am the following Monday (10/16). Do the week’s reading first!**
Week 8: Monday 10/16 – Field Studies and Observing Phenomena in Natural Settings  
Reading:  
- Babbie, Chapter 10  

Suggested:  
- DeVolo, Lorraine Bayard, and Edward Schatz. “From The Inside Out: Ethnographic Methods in Political Research”, *PS* 37 (April, 2004), 267-72

Week 9: Monday 10/23 – Case Studies and “Intensive” Approaches  
Reading:  

Suggested:  
Week 10: Monday 10/30 – Cross-Cultural and Cross-Content Designs and Problems
Reading:

Exercise 4 to be given out (Content Analysis). Due by 10am the following Monday (11/6). Do the week’s reading first!

Week 11: Monday 11/6 – Content Analysis
Reading:
- Hawkins, Kirk, A. “Is Chavez a Populist?: Measuring Populist Discourse in Comparative Perspective.” Comparative Political Studies 42 (February 2009), 1040-1067
- Clark, Michael. Supplementary Appendix to the BJPS paper.
Week 12: Monday 11/13 – The Dreaded Statistics
Reading:
- Babbie, Chapter 16

Week 13: Monday 11/20 – Research Ethics
Reading:
- Babbie, Chapter 3

Week 14: Monday 11/27 – TBA
Reading: TBA

Final Exam to be Given

Week 15: Monday 12/4 – Concluding Remarks
Reading: TBA

Students Will Turn In Their Final Exam at the Beginning of Class