Political Inquiry

PLSC 2901-1 // Winter 2024 // Sturm 234 //
WF 10:00 – 11:50 AM // Professor Philip Chen // philip.chen@du.edu
Office: Sturm Hall 474 // Office Hours: Tuesdays 12:30 PM – 2:30 PM

Land Acknowledgement

The University of Denver and the city of Denver reside within the traditional territories of Hinonoeino (Arapaho), Tsitsista (Cheyenne), and Nunt'zi (Ute). I recognize the descendant communities of the Northern Cheyenne Tribe of Montana, the Northern Arapaho Tribe of Wyoming, the Southern Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma, the Southern Ute Indian Tribe, and the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe. I also acknowledge that over 40 different Indigenous nations continue to be in relation with the lands currently called Colorado.

Denver is home to many different citizens of Indigenous nations, and I recognize their enduring presence on this land by paying respects to their elders, both past and present. In class and throughout your time at the University of Denver, I ask that we consider the legacies of violence, displacement, migration, and resettlement perpetrated against Indigenous nations and reflect upon and reconcile how the genocidal acts against Indigenous communities intersect with our learning, collaboration, and sharing of knowledge.

Course Description

This course introduces data analytics methods used by social scientists to make inferences to explain social and political outcomes.

Course Objectives

By the end of this quarter, you should be able to:

-Understand and apply basic statistical concepts to the study of political science
-Analyze data and communicate findings in written and oral formats
-Identify the proper statistical analysis for a set of data and run that analysis using Stata

Structure of the Class

This class follows a slightly different format that many classes you might take at the University of Denver. There will be a mix of lecture and/or guided discussion on the various topics, which is necessary to make sure everybody is familiar with the statistical concepts covered in the class. However, note that I don't expect you to memorize statistical formulae or know how to calculate statistics by hand. What I want you to leave this class with is an understanding of where to look for information and how to apply it.

Therefore, the course outcomes are practical. How do you write a literature review? Where and how do you find good academic sources? How do you run an analysis in R? How do you interpret the results of that analysis? These are skills best gained through practice and repetition. Thus, portions of the class are devoted to you practicing the skills and techniques we talk about. This may take the form of small group work, individual lab time, or large group discussions. Because of this, please come to class prepared to discuss the day's readings and bring copies of the readings, either in electronic or paper form, as this is a key component of the course. If you don't understand part of a reading, that's ok! Just come prepared to ask a question about that reading.

Office Hours and Help

I strive to make this course understandable and accessible for all students. If you have any questions about the content or structure of the course or about specific assignments, please do not hesitate to contact me. I am always happy to help if you come to me before assignments or exams are due. Please do not wait to ask for help until after the due date, come talk to me before if you are struggling.

Required Texts

There is no required textbook for this class. Readings are available on the class Canvas site at:

https://canvas.du.edu/courses/171457

Grading

Grades are based on five different components, described in more detail below. 25% of your grade will come from a final paper where you propose a statistical analysis, complete the analysis, and explain the findings (1) on the topic of your choosing. An additional 20% of your grade consists of three tests given in the 3rd, 6th, and 9th weeks of the quarter (2). 25% of your grade is based off of assignments designed to engage you with Stata, the statistical software we will use in class (3). The next 20% of your grade is based on a paper where you read a political science article and identify the research design, analyze the results, and justify and critique the design (4). The final 10% of your grade consists of attendance and participation in class (5).

Tri-Weekly Tests	20%
Stata Exercises	25%
Research Design Justification	20%
Research Paper	
Research Question, Data, and Analysis Plan	2.5% (Pass/No Pass)
First Draft	2.5% (Pass/No Pass)
Final Draft	20%
Participation & Attendance	10%

Tri-Weekly Tests (20%) – Over the past couple years, I've come to dislike the concept of midterm and final exams because they place a premium on memorization and intense study

rather than a cohesive synthesis of the material we read. In essence, finals and midterms seem to encourage students to memorize minutiae instead of substance.

However, the readings for this class were chosen with intention and I believe they are important for students to get the most out of the class. I will not lecture much on the readings, as I believe classroom discussions are both more enjoyable and a better way for students to learn the ability to critique and challenge the works we read. In order for you to be prepared for these discussions, you will need to do the readings.

While I would love to be able to simply ask "did you do the reading?" and grade you on this, it seems unrealistic. During the 3rd, 6th, and 9th weeks of the quarter, we will have tests that cover the previous three weeks' worth of readings. These tests will consist of a few multiple choice or short answer questions, as well as longer (1-3 paragraph) questions that ask you to synthesize the readings in some way. These tests will also include some analyses where you are asked to apply the readings and techniques from the previous three weeks to some type of problem.

These tests will be posted on Canvas and available for a week for you to take when they are convenient to you. You are welcome to use both class and reading notes and the readings to answer the questions.

Stata Exercises (25%) – A major component of this course is learning to apply and interpret the statistical techniques using a computer program called Stata. To help with this, you will complete a variety of homework assignments.

Now here's a bit of truth about research methods and Stata: The program takes a while to get comfortable with and the only way to do this is to sit at the computer and try things. I will give you time during class as a lab to work on the assignments, but you will also likely need to spend additional time out of class to finish the work. And here's another thing: research rarely occurs as a single individual in isolation. What this means is that I encourage you to talk with your classmates and work through problems together if you are confused or having problems.

Research Design Analysis (20%) – For this assignment, you will read a political science paper that I assign. Based on this paper, you will identify the research design and key components of the research and interpret the results in the paper. Following this, you will justify the choices the author made and offer suggestions for improving the design or extending this work in the future. I will hand out a more detailed assignment sheet and rubric for this later in the quarter.

Research Paper (25%) – For this course, a major component of your grade is an original quantitative research paper that uses the data analysis skills that you learn throughout the quarter. This is not a full research paper, but it does involve you proposing an original research question and actually conducting the analysis. The full assignment will be about 5 pages long.

This is not an easy assignment, and it is likely a format that you have not written extensively before. That's ok! Struggling with this assignment is normal, but it is a key component of growing as a college student in the social sciences. However, this is most definitely <u>NOT</u> an assignment that you should wait until the last minute to write. This will be incredibly stressful

and result in a very poor paper. Writing with data is difficult, but you will be a better writer and student after practicing these skills.

You'll notice a number of components marked "Pass/No Pass." These pieces of the research paper can be thought of as low stakes requirements. In order to receive full credit on your research paper, you must turn in all of these components. If you turn in the component on time, you will receive a passing grade. If you turn these assignments in late, you will still receive feedback from me on them, but you will not receive the credit towards your grade.

Participation and Attendance (10%) – The participation portion of your grade includes regular attendance in class, completion of in-class activities, participation in class discussions, and asking questions during class.

Half of this grade is based purely off of attendance. I will hand out a sheet for everyone to sign in at the start of class. If you are late to class, please check with me after class to make sure I've recorded your attendance for the day. I will use the following scale to determine your attendance grade:

A (100%)	0 – 1 absences
B (86%)	2 – 3 absences
C (76%)	4 – 5 absences
D (66%)	6 – 7 absences
F (60%)	8 or more absences

NOTE: This count does NOT include excused absences. If you miss class because of an approved college activity, illness, or prior arrangement with me, this will not count against your attendance grade. But you do need to let me know!

The other half of this grade is based on in-class participation. I'll advise you that I take the participation portion of the class seriously. I give very few A grades for participation. Thus, you shouldn't assume that simply attending class regularly is enough to get full participation. I grade participation holistically. If you are attentive in class, offer opinions and reactions to readings, and are engaged in discussion, you will do fine. But these are not simply "free" points for the class.

Grade Scale:

A	93-100		C	73-76
A-	90-92		C-	70-72
B+	87-89		D+	67-69
B	83-86		D	63-66
B-	80-82		D-	60-62
C+	77-79		F	<60

Grading – On some assignments, you may receive a grade of B+/A- or something like that. This is just my shorthand way of assigning a number grade between two letter grades. Thus, an A grade is recorded in the grade book as 100 points while an A- grade is recorded as 92 points. If I think your work fell between these points, you may get an A-/A, which would be recorded as 96

points. So a A-/A is technically an A grade, but in the middle of the A range instead of the high end.

When calculating final grades, I always round up. So an 88.7% in the class becomes an 89% (B+), but an 89.1% would be rounded up to a 90% (A-).

Course Schedule:

<u>Introduction to Research and Design</u>

Wednesday, January 10   First Class – No Readings

Friday, January 12   Read: Political Science (MUTT)*
                               Research Design (MUTT)*
                               Baglione Ch 3*

Wednesday, January 17   Read: Shively Ch 1*
                               Shively Ch 2*
                               Baglione Ch 4*

<u>What are we looking at and what does it tell us?</u>

Friday, January 19   Read: Levels of Measurement (MUTT)*
                               Johnson & Reynolds Ch 4*

Wednesday, January 24   Read: Jaisingh Ch 2*
                               Jaisingh Ch 3*

Friday, January 26   Open Lab – No Readings
                               Test #1 Opens on Canvas

<u>Getting Complex: Comparing and controlling for other factors</u>

Wednesday, January 31   Read: Varieties of Data (MUTT)*
                               Pollock Ch 4*

Friday, February 2   Read: Pollock Ch 5*
                               DUE: Stata Assignments #1 & #2
                               DUE: Test #1

<u>Statistical Inference</u>

Wednesday, February 7   Read: Pollock Ch 6*

Friday, February 9   Read: Baglione Ch 5*
                                 Pollock Ch 7*
                               DUE: Research Question, Data, and Analysis Plan

<u>Correlation & Regression</u>

Wednesday, February 14   Read: Johnson & Reynolds Ch 13* (ONLY pages 428-490)

Friday, February 16   Open Lab – No Readings
DUE: Stata Assignments #3 & #4
Test #2 Opens on Canvas

Wednesday, February 21   Read: Johnson & Reynolds Ch 13* (ONLY pages 490-521)

Friday, February 23   Read: Johnson & Reynolds pg. 527 – 568*
DUE: Research Design Analysis
DUE: Test #2

Wednesday, February 28   Read: Johnson & Reynolds pg. 568 – 593*

Friday, March 1   Open Lab – No Readings

<u>Extensions and Understanding</u>

Wednesday, March 6   Read: Baglione Ch 8*

Friday, March 8   Read: Rothschild & Malhotra 2014*
        Brady et al 2001*
Test #3 Opens on Canvas
DUE: Rough Draft Due
DUE: Stata Assignments #5, #6, & #7

Wednesday, March 13   Extra Credit Poster Presentations
Open Lab – No Readings

Friday, March 15   Final Class – No Readings

Wednesday, March 20   **Final Draft Due by 11:50 AM**

Attendance: Regular attendance is vital for your success in this course. I understand, however, that sometimes circumstances prevent you from coming to class. Missing one class will not destroy your grade; missing several will.

Late Work: Assignments are due by the end of the day they are listed as due, unless otherwise specified in the syllabus. Any assignments turned in after this time will be subject to the following late penalty: For each day late, I will deduct a third of a letter grade. So if an assignment is due Friday and you turn it in on Saturday, a B+ paper would receive a B. If you turn it in Sunday, it would be a B-, Monday would be a C. Assignments should be turned in using the Canvas system.

Grade Changes: Any appeals of a grade must be made at least **24 hours after** I hand back an assignment or exam. If you would like to appeal the grade you got on an assignment, prior to meeting with me you must submit a written statement (email is fine) detailing why you think your grade should be changed. I will then meet with you to discuss your statement and why you think your grade should be changed. If I make a mistake in totaling your grade for an exam or assignment (e.g. I added the points up incorrectly) then you do not need to write a statement or wait 24 hours. Just talk to me after class or during office hours and I'll double check and fix the mistake.

Contacting the Professor: I encourage you to contact me with questions and concerns about the course, readings, and assignments. In general, quick clarification questions can be handled over email. More in-depth questions are best discussed in person during my office hours, where we can have an actual conversation. If my office hours conflict with your class or work schedule, I am available by appointment as well. Please allow a full 24 hours for an email response. Often, my responses will be quicker than this, but do not send multiple emails about the same request until 24 hours have passed. I cannot guarantee that if you email me right before an assignment or exam that I will be able to answer your question in time, so please make sure and email me early if you have a time-specific question.

Extra Credit and Retakes: There is no scheduled extra credit in this course. You may not retake quizzes. There may be opportunities for extra credit, however.

Disability Services and Accommodations: Students with diverse learning styles, backgrounds, and needs are welcome in this course. Students who have disabilities (i.e., physical, medical, mental, emotional, and/or learning) and who want to request accommodations should contact the Disability Services Program (DSP); (303) 871-3241; 1999 E. Evans Ave.; 4th floor of Ruffatto Hall. Information is also available online at www.du.edu/dsp; see Handbook for Students with Disabilities