
PSC 201

Political Inquiry

Fall 2009

11:05-12:20 T/Th

Goergen Hall 101

Professor:

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Harkness 317

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PURPOSE

This course provides undergraduates with the analytical, conceptual, and statistical foundation necessary for developing the ability to read and perform empirical research in political science. Topics include experiments and observational studies, concepts and measurement, descriptive data analysis, and statistics. Emphasis is on the use of statistics to evaluate empirical evidence.

PREREQUISITES

Working knowledge of high school algebra is the only course prerequisite. Note that this course fulfills the Political Science department's techniques of analysis requirement.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Evaluation is based on problem sets (25% of your grade) and three midterm exams (25% of your grade each). Students may work together on problem sets, but each must turn in his or her own write-up. You will be allowed to use a calculator on all exams. The exams are given as scheduled and are not given early — make any travel plans accordingly.

We will make solutions to the problems sets available. Consequently, late problem sets will receive a grade of zero.

A web page for this course is to be found here:

<http://www.rochester.edu/College/PSC/clarke/201/201.html>

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Be familiar with the University's policies on academic integrity and disciplinary action (<http://www.rochester.edu/College/CCAS/AdviserHandbook/AcadHonesty.html>). Violators of University regulations on academic integrity will be dealt with severely, which means that your grade will suffer, and I will forward your case to the Chair of the College Board on Academic Honesty.

Remember that the same technology that has made plagiarism easier to accomplish has also made it easier to detect. If you do not cite a source, it is plagiarism. If you do cite it, it is scholarship.

TEXTS

The following book should be in the bookstore:

Freedman, David, Robert Pisani, and Roger Purves (2007). *Statistics*, 4th ed. New York: Norton. (FPP)

COURSE SCHEDULE

Readings can be found in one of three places: the required texts, online at JSTOR (<http://www.jstor.org>), or online at the course web site. Readings available on JSTOR are marked with a †.

I. Observational Studies and Measurement

September 1: Introduction

- None (first day of class)

September 3: No Class

- None

September 8: Controlled Experiments and Observational Studies

- FPP: 3-30

September 10: Concepts, Variables, and Measurement

- Judd *et al.* Ch. 2, 3, & 7

II. Describing and Summarizing Data

September 15: Frequency Distributions

- FPP Ch. 3

September 17: Measures of Central Tendency

- FPP Ch. 4: 1-4
- †Mann and Wolfinger (1980). “Candidates and Parties in Congressional Elections.” *American Political Science Review* 74(3): 617-623.

September 22: Measures of Dispersion

- FPP Ch. 4: 5-9

September 24: The Normal Approximation I

- FPP Ch. 5

September 29: Measurement Error

- FPP Ch. 6

October 1

Midterm exam 1 — no exceptions.

III. Analyzing Relationships

October 6: Correlation I

- FPP Ch. 8

- †Hokenmaier (1998). “Social Security vs. Educational Opportunity in Advanced Industrial Societies: Is There a Trade-Off?” *American Journal of Political Science* 42(2): 709-711.

October 8: Correlation II

- FPP Ch. 9
- †Segal and Cover (1989). “Ideological Values and the Votes of the United States Supreme Court Justices.” *American Political Science Review* 83(2): 557-565.

October 13: Regression I

- FPP Ch. 10

October 15: Regression II

- FPP Ch. 11 and 12
- †Hurwitz and Peffley (1997). “Public Perceptions of Race and Crime: The Role of Racial Stereotypes.” *American Journal of Political Science* 41(2): 375-401.

IV. Probability

October 20: Probability I

- FPP Ch. 13

October 22: Probability II

- FPP Ch. 14

October 27: The Law of Averages

- FPP Ch. 16

October 29: Expectations

- FPP Ch. 17

November 3: The Normal Approximation

- FPP Ch. 18

November 5

Midterm exam 2 — no exceptions.

V. Sampling

November 10: Surveys

- FPP Ch. 19
- Judd *et al.* Ch. 6, 9

November 12: Errors in Sampling

- FPP Ch. 20

November 17: The Accuracy of Percentages

- FPP Ch. 21

November 19: The Accuracy of Means

- FPP Ch. 23

November 24: Paradoxes

- None

November 26: Thanksgiving

- None

VI. Tests of Significance

December 1: Hypothesis Testing

- FPP Ch. 26

December 3: Hypothesis Tests for Means

- FPP Ch. 27
- †Matland (1994). “Putting Scandinavian Equality to the Test — an Experimental Evaluation of Gender Stereotyping of Political Candidates in a Sample of Norwegian Voters.” *British Journal of Political Science* 24(2): 273-292.
- †Wood *et al.* (1998). “Acclimation Effects’ for Supreme Court Justices: A Cross-Validation, 1888-1940.” *American Journal of Political Science* 42(2): 690-697.

December 5: Review

- None

December 10

Midterm exam 3 — no exceptions.