POLITICAL METHODOLOGY (PS 245)
FALL 2015 – 3 CREDIT HOURS

Instructor:	Jason Kalmbach, Asst. Prof.	Class Time:	M/W/F 9:10 – 10:10
	Department of Political Science	Location:	Clow 16C
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Office Hours:	T/Th: 11:00 to 1:00 PM		

COURSE DESCRIPTION: "Designed to acquaint students with the process of exploring political questions and conducting research. Topics include theory definition, hypothesis development, concept definition, and data collection and analysis. This course will also expose students to a variety of data sources and methods of collection such as survey research, content analysis, and experimentation."

COURSE OVERVIEW: The "science" in political science requires students to adhere to traditional scientific techniques such as developing theories to explain political events, drafting hypotheses, and testing those hypotheses through the systematic analysis of data. This course provides an introductory look at the research methods utilized not just by political scientists but other social scientists. Students will learn about the structure and components necessary for a professional academic research paper, as well as the methodological techniques used to analyze data.

COURSE READINGS

The following texts are required of all students:

Salkind, Neil J. 2014. *Statistics for People Who (Think They) Hate Statistics (6th Edition)*. Sage Publications.

Additional reading material may be circulated throughout the semester. It is important that students read the material as class time focuses on practicing and discussing material from the text.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The learning objectives for this class are divided into three categories: knowledge, analysis & communication. Students will be pushed to advance themselves in all three categories.

Knowledge: "Any fool can know. The point is to understand." – Albert Einstein

1) Describe and understand the process of writing a professional research paper.
2) Gain familiarity with SPSS and how to carry out research using data.

Analysis: "The number of those who undergo the fatigue of judging for themselves is very small indeed." – Richard Brinsley Sheridan

3) Identify and analyze data necessary to deliver professional, high-quality arguments.
4) Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of various research designs.

Communication: "The art of writing is the art of discovering what you believe." – Gustave Flaubert

5) Effectively communicate, both orally and in writing, high-quality arguments, being careful to ensure that they can withstand outside scrutiny.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

Assessments: There will be five in-class assessments which will assess the ability of students to carry out data analysis. Class time will be spent practicing for the assessments before students will complete the task for credit. The assignments constitute 30% of the final grade.

Survey Experiment Proposal: Toward the end of the semester, students will submit a proposal for a survey experiment. The proposal will include a research question, outline a theory that hypothesizes an answer to the question, offers details of how others have answered the exact or similar questions, and then proposes a survey experiment that can be used to help answer the research question. Students are expected to design the survey experiment, not carry it out. The final product is worth 40%.

Article Summaries: Periodically throughout the semester, students are required to submit a worksheet (provided by the instructor) that summarizes articles relevant to the survey experiment proposal. 10% of final grade.

Draft: A working draft of the survey experiment will be shared two weeks before the final proposal is due. At a minimum, it should include a research question, approximately 750 words of written theory, and a first draft of the proposed survey. You will share draft with colleagues, who will provide you with feedback. Having the draft complete, plus your feedback to your colleagues, is worth 10% of the final grade.

Participation: Throughout the semester, students will be asked to complete certain assignments or activities as part of class. Completion of these tasks will be used to gauge participation. Credit will be lost for inappropriate use of technology. 5% of the final grade.

Presentation Week: At the end of the semester, students will present their experiment to the class. Presentation scores will be reduced if students fail to attend class to hear others present their work. This accounts for 5% of the final grade.

Reflection: Students will reflect on the analytical and communication skills that they developed over the course, as well as their communication skills. More details will be made available later in the semester. This accounts for 5% of the final grade.

FINAL GRADES

All assignments are scored according to a 0-100% scale and weighted accordingly to the distribution outlined above. The grading scale follows the standard 93/90/87 format (e.g., 80-82% = B- … 83% to 87% = B … 87 – 89% = B+ … and so forth). For purposes of the final grade, fraction scores are rounded accordingly. That is, a final score of 91.7% is rounded to 92% while 91.3% is rounded to 91%. The rounded score is final.

Note that university policy requires progress in the course in order for the instructor to assign an "Incomplete" for the student. If problems arise during the semester, it is important to contact the instructor as soon as possible.

ADDITIONAL CLASS POLICIES

DUE DATES

This syllabus establishes timelines for the class and provides notice that assignments are due on specified dates and times. Timely completion of the assignments is expected. There will be a 10% penalty if an assignment is late. No work will be accepted beyond the two days of the original due date without a detailed, documented explanation.

Waivers: Extreme circumstances do occur, such as a family crisis and personal hospitalization. The instructor will work with students on a case-by-case basis to determine whether a waiver to the makeup policy above is warranted. Under all circumstances, students are expected to show progress toward their assignment in order to receive a waiver.

EARLY ALERT

The instructor will utilize "Early Alert" to notify students of their class grade approximately one month into the course. The purpose of the alert is to notify students of their progress early in the semester. There will be ample opportunity for students to make adjustments and receive a satisfactory grade even if Early Alert suggests a low score.

SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS

The Dean of Students Office coordinates accommodations for students with disabilities. If students feel they require accommodations, please make sure to coordinate with their office.

E-PORTFOLIO

The ePortfolio system allows students to store, share, and reflect on their work. Students are encouraged to upload their work associated with the simulation for reflection later in their academic career. This class is particularly important for PS 401.

CLASS COURTESY

With the class presentations, there is sufficient opportunity for students to interact with others. Under all circumstances, students are expected to respect the ideas of their colleagues. Friendly debate is encouraged, but personal attacks and other forms of incivility will not be tolerated.

Proper courtesy also means being conscious that your actions (i.e., technology usage) may be a distraction to your fellow students. Be respectful to others and understand that you are not in a private bubble when you utilize technology in the classroom. The instructor may ban technology use if it becomes too problematic as the semester progresses.

- Student conduct rules and procedures

TECHNOLOGY BAN

Technology use is prohibited in the classroom. Cell phones should be silenced and located in bags or pockets. Ear pieces are also likewise banned. Computers should be off when the material is being presented. The class will stop when technology is in use during lecture, discussions, and presentations. Students who continuously slow down class by utilizing technology will be asked to leave.

- Why technology is bad

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

All work submitted for this class is expected to be original and in the student's own voice. This policy is in accordance with the student code of conduct within the University of Wisconsin system: "[A]cademic Honesty is fundamental to the University, and academic misconduct is taken very seriously. Students are responsible for the honest completion and representation of their work, for the appropriate citation of sources, and for respect of others' academic endeavors" (UWS, 14.01). Misconduct includes, but is not limited to, cheating, the failure to follow instructions, and plagiarism. Of special emphasis is plagiarism, which consists of using the ideas, phrases, theories, and/or arguments of others without proper citation. Plagiarism may include failing to reference a source when paraphrasing the work of another, or it may include copying and pasting information straight from a source without quotations or a reference. Without proper quotations and citations, writers are claiming the work of others as their own. This behavior is unethical, possibly criminal in some contexts, and has real-world consequences.

All papers for this course will be submitted electronically through the Dropbox on D2L. The papers will undergo a plagiarism check via Turnitin. The penalty for plagiarism varies by the severity of the violation. If the offense is minor, the instructor will work with the student to correct the oversight. However, moderate to severe violations will be reported to the university. For these latter offenses, the first assignment found in violation will receive a zero. If there is a repeat offense, the student will receive a zero for the class.

The library offers further information to help students identify plagiarism.

Make sure you know your rights: disciplinary procedures

- Note on citations: The citation method is at the discretion of the student (APA, MLA, or other), although the student is expected to be consistent in the citation method throughout the paper. The Purdue Online Writing Lab has extensive information on how to properly cite references.

- Excessive quoting: Quoting a source directly is acceptable if proper citation is provided. However, quotations are used to provide emphasis or to help an author strengthen the argument. As such, quotes should be used sparingly. Papers with an originality score greater than 20% from Turnitin will be returned for a rewrite.

CLASS SCHEDULE

The course will proceed as follows. Adjustments will be made pending how the how the class progresses, current events, and the extent of class discussion.

Week of Sept 4

Wednesday: A quick introduction to the course, outlining its importance and the key deliverables throughout the semester.

Friday: Introduction to research questions, variables, and SPSS.

- **Read:** Salkind, Chapter 1
- **Read:** Salkind, Appendix A

Week of Sept 11	**Monday:** Continue introduction to SPSS (if necessary). Introduce descriptive statistics. ➢ **Read:** Salkind, Chapter 2 - 3 **Wednesday:** Continue discussion on descriptive statistics, if needed. Practice. **Friday:** Discuss correlations. Practice. ➢ Read: Salkind, Chapter 5.
Week of Sept 18	**Monday:** Discuss graphs and table construction. Practice. Discuss reliability and validity. ➢ **Read:** Salkind, Chapter 4 & 6 **Wednesday:** Discuss how to put together a good hypothesis, as well as how "curves" will help us test hypotheses. Practice. ➢ **Read:** Salkind, Chapter 7-8 **Friday: Assessment I with "real" data.**
Week of Sept 25	**Monday:** Begin inferential statistics. What does it mean to be statistically significant? Begin practicing with a one-sample z-test. ➢ Read: Salkind, Chapter 9-10 **Wednesday:** Discuss the various difference of means tests can be utilized to test for statistical significance. ➢ Read: Salkind, Chapter 11-14 **Friday:** Practice correlations & difference of means tests.
Week of Oct 2	**Monday:** Practice correlations & difference of means tests. **Wednesday: Assessment II with "real" data.** **Friday:** Introduce survey experiments and start brainstorming research questions.
Week of Oct 9	**Monday:** Revisit correlations and develop a theoretical basis for linear regression. ➢ Read: Salkind, Chapter 15 - 16 **Wednesday:** Practice regression. **Friday:** Practice regression.
Week of Oct 16	**Monday:** Expand idea of linear regression to multiple regression (plus interactions) **Wednesday:** Practice regression. **Friday: Assessment III with "real" data.**
Week of Oct 23	**Monday:** Expand the idea of regression to situations when the dependent variable is not continuous (e.g., yes/no observations). **Wednesday:** Practice with exercises from book **Friday: Assessment IV with "real" data.**

Week of Oct 30	**Monday:** Discuss other miscellaneous tests available for statistical testing. ➢ Read: Salkind, Chapter 17 **Wednesday:** Practice with exercises from book **Friday: Assessment V with "real" data set**
Week of Nov 6	**Monday:** Review the types of causal arguments made by scholars, as well as the research techniques utilized to support those arguments. ➢ Read: Alex Phillis student paper in Oshkosh Scholar (p. 68) **Wednesday:** Discuss the components of a good research question and how to look up professional, academic articles. Start looking for research articles. **Friday:** Developing a theory and model; rethinking the causal arguments. ➢ Read: Readings to be announced, depending on class interest. **Five article summaries due Friday by 5:00 PM**
Week of Nov 13	**Monday:** Designing a good experiment. ➢ Read: Readings to be announced, depending on class interest **Wednesday:** More than experiments. Sample other studies in American politics. ➢ Read: Readings to be announced, depending on class interest **Friday:** Sample some of the studies in comparative politics. ➢ Read: Readings to be announced, depending on class interest **Five article summaries due Friday by 5:00 PM**
Week of Nov 20	**Monday:** Research day ***Working draft of survey experiment due Monday by 5:00 PM***
Week of Nov 27	**Monday:** Final comments on constructing a good paper. Spend time in the lab working to finalize your paper. Solicit feedback from colleagues. **Wednesday:** Components of a good presentation and how to be effective. Spend time in the lab working on presentation slides. Solicit feedback from colleagues. **Friday:** Research day
Week of Dec 4	**Monday:** Research design exercises **Wednesday & Friday:** Research days ***Survey experiment write-up due Friday by 5:00 PM***
Week of Dec 11	Presentation week. Present survey experiments. ***Reflection due Friday by 5:00 PM***