

**PS 5001 Sec. 101: Scope & Methods (Fall 2015)**  
**Tuesday 6:15–9:00 PM, Room: BH 111**

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**Instructor:** Dr. William Hicks, Anne Belk Hall 351E  
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**Office Hours:** MWF 1:00PM–3:00PM

**Course Introduction & Objectives:** How do political scientists learn about the political world? How do they uncover answers to their research questions? To what extent should we be confident in their arguments and findings? In this class, we examine commonly used methodological tools that enable political scientists to generate conclusions about the political world. In doing so, students are pushed to identify the strengths and weaknesses of current political science research and to develop analytical strategies for researching empirical questions of their own interest. We focus primarily on topics that include: theory development, conceptualization and measurement, sampling, surveys, experiments, and case studies.

By the end of the semester, students will learn: (1) “data analysis” can mean a variety of things, (2) the value of a research project depends on its ability to deliver a valid and reliable set of findings in response to a research question, and (3) valid and reliable findings require an adherence to particular rules of inference. The goal of political science is to make descriptive and explanatory inferences about the political world, using explicit and replicable methods. Inferences made about political objects are considered temporary, able to be rejected given countervailing evidence, and are valid only to the extent that they adhere to a set of rules. An intimate understanding of these rules not only allows a student to develop compelling critiques of existing research, but also to generate compelling findings of their own. Being a “good” political scientist, then, requires an intimate understanding of the methods of inquiry.

**Required Books:**

- Johnson, Janet Buttolph and H.T. Reynolds. 2012. *Political Science Research Methods. Seventh Edition*. Washington, DC: CQ Press. ISBN: 978-1-60871-689-0
- King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. ISBN: 0-691-03471-0

**Optional Book:**

- Gerring, John. 2001. *Social Science Methodology: A Criterial Framework*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- This book provides a valuable framework for understanding the costs and benefits of various research strategies. I suggest it in particular for those students who might want to pursue a PhD in political science.

**Course Grades**

<i>Grading Scale</i>		<i>Grade Requirements</i>	
A+ .....	100	C+ .....	77-79
A .....	93-99	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
		E .....	0-59

- Participation

- Students are expected to attend all classes, read all assigned materials, and contribute to class discussions. Each student’s participation grade will be based on his or her fulfillment of these tasks.

- Assignments

- I ask students early in the semester to submit to me a number of research questions. Every other week thereafter, students will write a short memo documenting how they would apply a method or concept to their research questions. I will provide more information about these assignments in class.

- Research Design

- All students will write a research design. Students will develop their research designs throughout the entire semester. Each design should contain the following features: (1) a research question and introduction, (2) very brief literature review, (3) theory and hypotheses, (4) method(s), and (5) conclusion. Although each part of the design is significant, emphasis will be placed on the methods section. This is where students will put to work the knowledge they have gained throughout the semester about the adequacy and feasibility of alternative methods.

- Presentations

- During the time allotted for a final exam, each student will present his or her research design to the class.

### Course Topic Overview:

I .....	Introduction
II .....	Studying Politics Scientifically
III .....	Concepts, Propositions, & Variables
IV .....	Measurement
V .....	Experiments & Causation
VI .....	Sampling
VII .....	Surveys & Elite Interviews
VIII .....	Case Studies

## Specific Course Outline:

**August 18.** What is this class?

Course introduction

**August 25.** Scientific Study of Politics & Research Questions

Johnson and Reynolds (2012: chs 2 & 3) & King, Keohane and Verba (1994: ch 1)

**September 1.** No Class

**September 8.** Hypotheses

Johnson and Reynolds (2012: ch 4), Parker and Dull (2009) & selected readings from Gerring (2001)

**September 15.** Measurement I

Johnson and Reynolds (2012: ch 5), King, Keohane and Verba (1994: pp 150-161)

**September 22.** Measurement II

Measuring democracy:

Dahl (1971: chs 1-2), Munck and Verkuilen (2002), & Coppedge et al. (2011)

Measuring legislative productivity

Mayhew (2005: ch. 3, appendix A & B), Binder (2003: ch. 3), & Grant and Kelly (2008)

**September 29.** Experiments I

Johnson and Reynolds (2012: pp. 165-194), King, Keohane and Verba (1994: pp. 75-95), & Morton and Williams (2010: ch. 2 & 3)

**October 6.** Experiments II

Survey Experiments:

Peffley and Hurwitz (2007), Knoll, Redlawsk and Sanborn (2011), & Harbridge and Malhotra (2011)

Field experiments:

Green, Gerber and Nickerson (2003), Gerber, Green and Larimer (2008), & Bergan (2009)

**October 13.** Sampling I

Johnson and Reynolds (2012: ch 7)

**October 20.** Sampling II

Non-probability Samples:

Haider-Markel (2006), Heaney and Rojas (2007) & Koger, Masket and Noel (2010)

Tricky Probability Samples:

Banducciand, Donovan and Karp (2004), Lupia and Philpot (2005), & Druckman, Kifer and Parkin (2009)

**October 27.** Surveys & Interviews I

Johnson and Reynolds (2012: ch 10) & Aberbach and Rockman (2002)

**November 3.** Surveys & Interviews II

Elites:

Williams (2005), Carey et al. (2006), & Miler (2007)

Citizens:

Ansolabehere and Jones (2010), Gerber et al. (2010), & Campbell, Green and Monson (2012)

**November 10.** Case Studies I

Gerring (2001: ch. 9), Gerring (2004), & King, Keohane and Verba (1994: ch. 6)

**November 17.** Case Studies II

From the states

Voss and Miller (2001), Chamberlain (2012), Masket and Shor (2015)

To beyond

Jones (2013), Kam (2014), & Branton et al. (2015)

**November 24.** University Holiday

**December 1.** Last Day of Class - Research Designs

**December 8.** Exam Period, 6:00pm

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**Academic Integrity:** As a community of learners at Appalachian State University, we must create an atmosphere of honesty, fairness, and responsibility, without which we cannot earn the trust and respect of each other. Furthermore, we recognize that academic dishonesty detracts from the value of an Appalachian degree. Therefore, we shall not tolerate lying, cheating, or stealing in any form and will oppose any instance of academic dishonesty. This course will follow the provisions of the Academic Integrity Code, which can be found on the Office of Student Conduct Web Site:

[www.studentconduct.appstate.edu](http://www.studentconduct.appstate.edu)

**Statement on Student Engagement with Courses:** In its mission statement, Appalachian State University aims at “providing undergraduate students a rigorous liberal education that emphasizes transferable skills and preparation for professional careers” as well as “maintaining a faculty whose members serve as excellent teachers and scholarly mentors for their students.” Such rigor means that the foremost activity of Appalachian students is an intense engagement with their courses. In practical terms, students should expect to spend two to three hours of studying for every hour of class time. Hence, a fifteen-hour academic load might reasonably require between 30 and 45 hours per week of out-of-class work.

**Disability Services:** Appalachian State University is committed to making reasonable accommodations for individuals with documented qualifying disabilities in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Those seeking accommodations based on a substantially limiting disability must contact and register with The Office of Disability Services (ODS) at <http://www.ods.appstate.edu/> or 828-262-3056. Once registration is complete, individuals will meet with ODS staff to discuss eligibility and appropriate accommodations.

**Religious Observances Policy:** Faculty members are required to make reasonable accommodations for students requesting to miss class due to the observance of religious holidays. All ASU students are allowed a minimum of two absences per year for religious observances. Up to two absences for such observances will be excused, without penalty to the student, provided that the student has informed the instructor in the manner specified in the syllabus. Notice must be given by the student to the instructor before the absence occurs and no later than three weeks after the start of the semester in which the absence(s) will occur. Arrangements will be made to make up work missed by these religious observances, without penalty to the student. For the purposes of this policy, ASU defines the term “religious observance” to include religious holidays, holy days, or similar observances associated with a student’s faith that require absence from class. Faculty, at their discretion, may include class attendance as a criterion in determining a student’s final grade in the course. On the first day of class, faculty must inform students of their class attendance policy and the effect of that policy on their final grade; both policies must be clearly stated in the class syllabus.

## References

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