

Political Analytics – Fall 2020
PS 3590, Section 101
TR 9:30a.m.-10:45a.m.
BH Room 102

Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. William D. Hicks

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Office Hours: 11a.m.–1p.m., Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays

Course Description

This course introduces students to how political parties, political institutions, and political scientists collect, organize, and synthesize data. Although the scope of this topic is massive, we will focus primarily on learning how to manage and analyze data using so-called language environments, like [R](#). By the end of this course, you should have a good sense of how to use and interpret data using these environments. You will develop the skills to do so by repeated exposure to real-world poll data collected during recent national elections in the United States.

Course Objectives

1. Students will learn how to manage political data using language environments, including but not limited to:
 - accessing different file extensions
 - recoding, re-organizing, and labeling variables
 - and combining and building new variables from existing data
2. Students will learn to analyze political data using language environments, including but not limited to:
 - univariate, bivariate, and multivariate analyses of variables

3. Students will learn to infer from political data using language environments, including but not limited to:
- describing and explaining relationships in the population from which the data are drawn.

Required Texts and Materials

Pollock, Phillip H. and Barry C. Edwards. 2020. The Essentials of Political Analysis. Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press/Sage.

Pollock, Phillip H. and Barry C. Edwards. 2018. An R Companion to Political Analysis. Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press/Sage.

Exams & Graded Activities

Exam: 15% of each student's grade is based on his or her performance on 1 take-home exam.

Assignments: 85% of each student's grade is based on his or her performance on roughly weekly short assignments. I will provide more details about assignments as the semester proceeds.

Course Grades

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|----------------------|---------|----------|---------------------------|-------------------|-----|
| <i>Grading Scale</i> | C | 74-76 | <i>Grade Requirements</i> | | |
| A | 94-100 | C- | 70-73 | Final Exam | 15% |
| A- | 90-93 | D+ | 67-69 | Assignments | 85% |
| B+ | 87-89 | D | 64-66 | | |
| B | 84-86 | D- | 60-63 | | |
| B- | 80-83 | F | 0-59 | | |
| C+ | 77-79 | | | | |

Absence Policies

Given the prevalence of Covid-19 in our broader community, it is irresponsible to require attendance. Many of you may encounter situations where attending class puts others at risk. I ask seriously if any of you have any symptoms related to Covid-19 or more generally of a cold or flu, e.g., fever, cough, sneezing, fatigue, chest tightness, etc., or you have been in close contact with someone who has, please **do not attend**. I have designed this course so that all graded materials are available online.

Appalachian State Face Covering Policy

Appalachian State University Policy 302.8 requires that all students wear face coverings at all times that social distancing is not feasible. Even if social distancing is feasible face coverings shall be worn at all times in classrooms, conference rooms, meeting rooms, elevators, research laboratory spaces, and any other instructional areas, unless an approved modification has been provided pursuant to the policy. Appropriate face coverings include cloth face coverings and other reusable University-approved face coverings that cover the nose and mouth of the individual. Failure to comply with this policy may result in dismissal from the current class session and charges under the Code of Student Conduct.

COVID-19 Statement

We are in the midst of a global pandemic, and we must all do our best to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and work to protect each other. Appalachian State has put in place a number of measures aimed at preventing the spread of this disease. Please be aware of the following:

- Face coverings are required for students, faculty, and staff when on campus, including in all classrooms. If you do not have a face covering on, you will not be allowed to attend class. (See policy below)
 - Keep in mind: Because COVID-19 is spread through droplets when an infected person speaks, coughs, or sneezes, one of the most important tools we have in this fight are face coverings.
 - Students who seek an exception to this policy because they are unable to wear a face covering due to a medical condition should contact the [Office of Disability Resources](#).
- The symptoms of COVID-19 include the following:
 - Fever
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
 - Chills
 - Repeated shaking with chills
 - Muscle pain
 - Headache
 - Sore throat
 - Loss of taste or smell
- If you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, please call Student Health Service at **828-262-3100** or AppHealthCare at **828-264-4995**.
 - Here is a list of testing locations in [Watauga County](#)

- If you feel sick, **stay home**
 - If you have had a fever, do not return to class until you have been fever-free for a minimum of **48 hours** without the use of fever-reducing medication.
 - If you have a two or more COVID-19 symptoms, do not return to class until you are symptom-free for a minimum of **72 hours** without fever-reducing medication.
 - If you have been tested for COVID-19, do not return to class until you have received a **negative test result**.
 - If you test positive for COVID-19, do not return to class until you have **self-quarantined for 14 days**.
 - If someone you have close contact with tests positive for COVID-19, do not return to class until you have **self-quarantined for 14 days**.
 - If you have recently attended a large social event where people were unmasked, do not return to class until you have **self-quarantined for 14 days**.

Student Conduct

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

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 Support 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 Resources (ODR) at or 828-262-3056. Once registration is complete, individuals will meet with ODR 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.

Syllabus Change Policy

This syllabus is only a guide for the course and is subject to change with advanced notice.

Course Schedule

Week 1. August 17 – August 21

Course Introduction: Why do I need this class?

Week 2. August 24 – August 28

Definition & Measurement of Concepts – Essentials Ch. 1

What is R? Companion Ch. 1

Week 3. August 31 – September 4

Measuring & Describing Variables – Essentials Ch. 2, Companion Ch. 2

Assignment 1 - Histograms & Frequency Distributions - due by Sept. 6

Week 4. September 7 – September 11

Theorizing, Hypothesizing, and Making Comparisons – Essentials Ch. 3,

Transforming Variables – Companion Ch. 3

Missing data, transforming and altering data

Assignment 2 - Histograms & Frequency Distributions II - due by Sept. 13

Week 5. September 14 – September 18

Research Design: Experiments vs. Observational Data – Essentials Ch. 4

Cross-Tabs – Companion Ch. 4

Assignment 3 - Cross-Tabs and Means - due by Sept. 20

Week 6. September 21 – September 25

Controlled Cross-Tabs, Comparing Means – Essentials Ch. 5, Companion Ch. 5

Assignment 4 - Cross-Tabs and Means II - due by Sept. 27

Week 7. September 28 – October 2

Samples, Statistics, and Inference – Essentials Ch. 6, Companion Ch. 6

Assignment 5 - Confidence Intervals for Means & Proportions - due by Oct. 4

Week 8. October 5 – October 9

Null Hypotheses and Statistical Significance – Essentials Ch. 7, Essentials Ch. 7

Assignment 6 - Test of Means & Proportions - due by Oct. 11

Week 9. October 12 – October 16

Null Hypotheses and Statistical Significance II – Reading TBD

Assignment 7 - Odds, Probability, & χ^2 - due by Oct. 18

Week 10. October 19 – October 23

Correlation & Regression – Essentials Ch. 8, Companion Ch. 8

Assignment 8 - Correlation & Scatterplots - due by Oct. 25

Week 11. October 26 – October 30

Regression II – Companion Ch. 9

Assignment 9 - Bivariate Regression - due by November 1

Week 12. November 2 – November 6

Regression III – Reading TBD

Assignment 10 - Bivariate Regression II - due by November 8

Week 13. November 9 – November 13

Regression IV – Reading TBD

Assignment 11 - Regression - due by November 15

Week 14. November 16 – November 20

Research Design – How does it all fit? Reading TBD

Assignment 12 - Regression II - due by November 22

Week 15. November 23 – November 24

Review

Final Exams. December 3 – December 9

Final Exam