

GOVT 260 Scope & Methods of Political Science Fall 2009 MWF 11:00-11:50
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COURSE OBJECTIVES:

This course provides students with the conceptual foundation and practical tools needed to assess and conduct research on topics in politics and public policy. Emphasis throughout is upon learning by doing; therefore, in addition to background readings and exercises, students will define, execute, and summarize and present the results of their own research project. Direct application of concepts to real questions will link the philosophical and pragmatic aspects of studying history and politics, and also develop the skills required to comprehend and even begin to explain social reality.

Regarding its connection to the [Mission of Campbell University](#), this course seeks to accomplish the following:

- A. transfers to students the vast body of knowledge and values accumulated over the ages
- B. encourages students to think critically and creatively
- C. forges a community of learning that is committed to the pursuit, discovery, and dissemination of knowledge

GOVT 260 Scope & Methods of Political Science. Learning Outcomes.

These Learning Outcomes accomplish the General Education Competencies (as listed below): Students completing GOVT 260 will be able to:

- *) Identify and discuss the major principles of empiricism as the philosophical foundation of the social sciences, including political science. I.(all), III.(all), IV.(all)
- *) For an empirical research question, define its main concepts, designate appropriate variables, specify indicators and identify sources of relevant data to address it. I.(all), III.(all), IV.(all)
- *) Define and discuss cause and effect regarding the relationship among independent, dependent, antecedent and intervening variables. I.(all), III.(all), IV.(all)
- *) Demonstrate understanding of hypothesis generation and testing, especially regarding the role of the null hypothesis. I.(all), III.(all), IV.(all)
- *) Identify and distinguish among the levels of measurement of variables and data (nominal, ordinal, interval, ratio). I.(all), III.(all), IV.(all)
- *) Apply mathematical and statistical tools to describe and analyze patterns and relationships among variables and data, to include descriptive statistics, tests of statistical significance, measures of association, cross-tabulation, correlation, regression and ANOVA. II.(all), III.(all), IV.(all)
- *) Apply the concepts and tools covered in designing and executing an effective research strategy on a question of their own choosing and definition. I.(all), II.(all), III.(all), IV.(all), VI.(all)
- * Effectively summarize and present in written form the results of their research, to include effective organization and presentation of ideas and information, and appropriate reference to and citation of sources used. I.(all), II.(all), IV.(all), VI.(all)

These **Campbell University General Education Competencies** are supported by this course:

I. Reading: Textual and Non-Textual:

1. Students will be able to read competently in English from a variety of source types (e.g., mathematic, scientific, literary)
3. Students will be able to read with understanding, so as to be able to apply discipline methodologies and theories in the areas of Fine Arts, Humanities, Mathematics, and the Sciences
4. While reading, students will be able to recognize logical and compositional structures of various disciplines
 - 4.1. Students will be able to comprehend various linguistic, compositional elements and processes leading from a topic sentence to a conclusion
 - 4.2. Students will be able to comprehend conclusions based on numerical and graphed data
 - 4.3. Students will be able to interpret and apply mathematical formulas

II. Mathematics: Practical, Logical and Speculative

1. Students will be able to solve problems that include basic skills necessary for life
 - 1.1. Students will be able to multiply, divide, add, subtract, and operate with fractions, decimals, and proportions
 - 1.2. Students will be able to solve real world problems based on these primary skills
2. Students will be able to think logically and organize information concerning algebraic problems
Students will be able to use formulas and equations to create graphs and derive information.
Students will be able to use appropriate mathematical terms and symbols
3. Students will be able to use statistical inferences and elementary probability to aid in decision making and problem solving
 - 3.1. Students will be able to calculate measures, determine probabilities, test hypotheses, and test correlations using their mathematic skills and logic
 - 3.2. Students will be able to apply their mathematical skills to understand scientific results of experimentation

III. Critical Thinking: Inquiry, Analysis and Solution

1. Students will be able to make discipline specific inquiries
Students will be able to use a variety of discipline-specific methods to recognize the existence of a problem
Students will be able to use the proper methodologies to form questions about a problem at hand, and the implications of the question
 2. Students will be able to solve a problem which has been discovered and defined
 - 2.1 Students will learn to form relevant and concrete questions concerning evidence of a problem
 - 2.2 Students will be able to analyze the evidence defining a problem
 - 2.3 Students will be able to construct well-supported, clearly articulated, and sustained arguments based on evidence
 3. Students will be able to reach a logical solution
 - 3.1 Through asking the right questions, students will be able to eliminate false assessments and solutions
 - 3.2 Students will be able to recognize a true solution and articulate the reasons for making that recognition

IV. Communication: Verbal and Non-Verbal

1. Students will learn to communicate verbally in written form
 - 1.1 Students will be able to write an essay with a focused purpose
 - 1.2 Students will be able to support the essay's purpose with a logical and organized sequence of ideas and evidence
 - 1.3 Students will be able to use the proper level of diction for the subject and the audience of their essay
 - 1.4 Students will be able to use proper documentation for their essay's discipline and the discipline's methodology

VI. Student Use of Technology in the Sciences, Arts, and Humanities

2. Students will learn to gather information using technology in the library and on the internet
 - 2.1 Students will learn a library's digital organization, (e.g., homepage, search tools, catalogues, etc.)
 - 2.2 Students will learn to use the library's digital resources to gain primary and secondary information
 - 2.3 Students will learn to use the resources of the internet properly in order to gain quality primary and secondary texts, images, and sounds.

GRADING AND EVALUATION:

Course grades are based on a variety of criteria, including performance on quizzes, tests and the cumulative final examination, as well as homework, class attendance and participation, and the research project. The tests and final exam have the following weights in the calculation of grades.

Test 1. **10%** Friday 11 September.

Test 2. **10%** Friday 25 September.

Test 3. **15%** Monday 3 November.

Final. **20%** Friday 4 December 12:00 Noon

The research project accounts for **25%** of the final grade. Note carefully all requirements and deadlines as detailed below. Class participation accounts for the remaining **20%** of your grade. This will include performance on unannounced quizzes on the reading and lecture material, in-class assignments, and the homework contained in the Corbett text. That homework is to be turned in on Wednesday of every week for which it is assigned.

Consult the [Undergraduate Studies Bulletin](#) (p.23) concerning official University attendance policy. Failure to attend all scheduled class meetings will adversely affect your performance in all aspects of the course. I understand that policy not to mean students may take a number of "cuts" without penalty during the semester. Rather, absences from class should occur only for reasons of illness (to be documented by a doctor's excuse) or personal emergency (to be explained to me)--all others will be subject to penalty.

Laptops, mobile phones and other electronic devices:

The use of a laptop computer is allowed with my permission for class-related purposes only, such as taking notes. Any use that is distracting from or disruptive to the classroom environment is prohibited, and will result in revocation of the privilege. The use of cell phones and other electronic devices for any purpose during class is not permitted. Violation of this policy can result in academic and/or conduct penalties. Any use of such devices during graded activities (quizzes, tests, exams) will be treated as an instance of academic misconduct. ([Student Handbook](#), pp.66-67).

All students are subject to the academic integrity and behavioral expectations of the University as described in the [Student Handbook](#).

Students with documented disabilities who desire modifications or accommodations should contact the office of [Student Support Services](#) located in the University's Hight House.

The [inclement weather policy](#) can be found in Campus section of the Campbell University webpage.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Le Roy, Michael K. [Research Methods in Political Science](#). 7th Edition. Thomson Wadsworth, 2009. Abbreviated [L] in schedule of topics.

Johnson, Janet, Reynolds & Mycoff. [Political Science Research Methods](#). 6th Edition. CQ Press, 2008. Abbreviated [J & R] in schedule of topics.

Materials placed on reserve in Carrie Rich Library. Abbreviated [R] in schedule of topics.

SCHEDULE OF LECTURE TOPICS & ASSIGNED READINGS

Section I. Concepts and Methods of Mainstream Social Science.

Week 1. (17-21 Aug.) Course Introduction. The Field of Social Inquiry.
Syllabus. [J & R] Ch.1 & 2.

Week 2. (24-28 Aug.) Epistemology, Empiricism & the Social Sciences.
[R] Smith, Popper, Skinner, Hempel.

Week 3. (31 Aug.-4 Sep.). The Research Question & its Formulation.
[J & R] Ch.3, pp. 60-70. [L] Introduction & Ch.1.

Week 4. (7-11 Sep. **No class Labor Day Monday 7 September**). Defining & Measuring Concepts.
[J & R] Ch.3, pp. 81-87. Ch.4. [L] Ch.2.

Test # 1 Friday 11 September.

Week 5. (14-18 Sep.) Relationships, Causality & Hypotheses.
[J & R] Ch.3, pp. 70-80. Ch.5. [L] Ch.4 & 5.

Week 6. (21-25 Sep.) Analyzing Relationships Using Cross-tabulation.
[L] Ch. 9. **Test # 2 Friday 25 September.**

Section II. Gathering, Presenting and Analyzing Information.

Week 7. (28 Sep.-2 Oct.) Types of Variables & Data; Levels of Measurement.
[J & R] Ch.4, pp. 105-110. [L] Ch.3.

Week 8. (5-9 Oct. **Fall Break**). Descriptive Statistics & Measures of Central Tendency.
[J & R] Ch.11, pp. 351-392. [L] Ch.8.

Week 9. (12-16 Oct.) Sampling, Surveys & Problems of Data Gathering.
[J & R] Ch.7-10. [L] Ch.6.

Week 10. (19-23 Oct.) Tests of Statistical Significance & Measures of Association.
[J & R] Ch.11, pp. 393-425, Ch. 12, pp. 426-451. [L] Ch.10 & 12.

Week 11. (26-30 Oct.) Correlation & Regression.
[J & R] Ch.12, pp. 477-502. [L] Ch. 13.

Week 12. (2-6 Nov.) ANOVA.
[J& R] Ch. 12, pp. 462-476. [L] Ch. 11. **Test #3 Monday 2 November**

Week 13. (9-13 Nov.) The Construction of Social Reality.
[R] Darnton, Lakoff & Johnson.

Week 14. (16-20 Nov.) The Construction of Social Reality.
[R] Darnton, Lakoff & Johnson.

Week 15. (23-27 Nov. **Thanksgiving Break**). Student Course Evaluation & Exam Review.

Final Exam. Friday 4 December 12:00 Noon

GOVT 260 RESEARCH PROJECT

This assignment asks you to define, execute, and summarize in writing results of research done on a topic of your choosing. Since this project is designed to complement the course readings and exercises, it should be structured according to the steps outlined below. As will be explained more completely during the semester, you should:

- 1) Formulate and state explicitly a specific question of historical and/or political interest.
- 2) Define all important concepts and terms as expressed in the research question, and relate these ideas and definitions to an appropriate body of theory.
- 3) Operationalize your ideas into variables by devising indicators that are valid and reliable measures of the concepts and terms as defined.
- 4) Identify the independent and dependent variables and hypothesize possible relationships among them, specifying the likely type and direction of influence.
- 5) Identify and collect data relevant to the variables and their hypothesized relationships.
- 6) Use appropriate quantitative and/or statistical techniques on the data to test the existence, direction and strength of the hypothesized relationships among the variables.
- 7) Describe these findings, and apply them to the original research question, assessing the extent to which you have answered it.
- 8) Evaluate the theoretical and/or practical implications of your research design and its results.

SCHEDULE AND DEADLINES:

I will be working along with you throughout the semester to define and carry out a viable and informative research project, and will schedule meetings with each of you to insure progress is made. In order to encourage you to work diligently on this project, I provide the following calendar of requirements:

*) Topic Selection-- While I will provide additional materials to guide you at this crucial first step of the project, you should spare no effort to insure that you have an interesting and feasible research topic approved by me no later than **Friday 28 August**.

*) Identification and operationalization of main variables and statement of hypothesized relationships-- Very early in this process, you should be able to provide evidence that your research question has been defined meaningfully in explicit terms that can be investigated empirically. Again in consultation with me, your topic should assume this form on or before **Friday 18 September**.

*) Identification and collection of data-- At this stage, you should provide clear evidence that the data you plan to use actually exist in accessible and useful form. Therefore, you should have at your disposal relevant information adequate to represent the variables and their hypothesized relationships, and do so by **Friday 16 October**.

*) Specification, performance and interpretation of quantitative analysis-- Application of appropriate mathematical and/or statistical criteria to the data, testing the significance,

direction and strength of relationships among variables, and interpretation of the results is a crucial phase of the project. Since adequate time must be allowed for possible retesting and verification of findings, I strongly recommend that you complete this phase of the project by **Friday 30 October**.

*) The next step is to summarize your work in at least a partial draft of the report. It should include all elements of the assignment and present these in coherent form. Every effort should be made to follow rules of grammar and to make sure that all spelling and punctuation is correct. It should be typed and double-spaced with all citations in proper form, and include examples of supporting materials. Drafts can be sent to me via email for comments and revisions beginning **Monday 9 November**.

*) Final Draft-- The final draft of the written report is to be submitted completely free of errors of fact or presentation **Monday 23 November**.

WRITTEN REPORT:

This work is to be summarized in the form of a thorough and coherent report describing in detail each of the steps outlined above. It should be fully documented, and references to all sources used must be in proper form. Relevant quantitative and/or statistical data should be compiled and presented in an appropriate format and incorporated into or attached to the report. While size will vary according to the nature of the research question, the characteristics of your data, etc., I envision reports of approximately 4000-5000 words (16-20 pages) in length, with the supporting materials requiring additional pages.

NOTE: THE FINAL DRAFT OF YOUR PAPER MUST BE GIVEN BY YOU TO ME PERSONALLY IN HARD COPY, OR WILL BE COUNTED AS NOT SUBMITTED. PAPERS MAY NOT BE: TURNED IN BY ANYONE BUT YOU, PUT IN MY MAILBOX OR UNDER MY DOOR, GIVEN TO THE DEPARTMENT SECRETARY, STUDENT WORKER, OR ANOTHER PROFESSOR.