

**Political Science 300**  
**Analyzing Politics**  
**Fall 2021**  
**Tuesday, Thursday, Friday 10-10:50**  
**SCI D224**

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**Office: SCI D-337**  
**Office Hours: MW 11:30am-1:00pm, and by appointment. Zoom appointments can be scheduled too.**  
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This course is a broad introduction to some of the primary methods of research in political science and public policy. The course is designed to develop the critical thinking, research, and communication skills of students, as well provide introductory skills in political and policy analysis. Unlike other political science courses, this is primarily a skills-building course rather than a course in which you gain substantive knowledge of specific areas of political science. That is, this course focuses on how to think about problems and issues of political and social phenomena from a political science perspective and how to use political science methodologies to define appropriate research strategies to address those problems.

We will learn about various qualitative and quantitative approaches to political science and public policy. The course assumes that you have some very basic math and computer skills, but this is not a statistics course.

Finally, the course also covers types of communication in political science and public policy. We will spend time at the start of the course focusing on public policy writing skills, and then apply those skills to public policy and political issues.

**Learning outcomes associated with this course:**

Students will learn:

- distinctions and differences between *correlation* and *causation*, and the specific methods and reasoning associated with each;
- discipline specific research methodologies;
- how to properly collect and analyze data pursuant to political science methodologies; and
- how to appropriately communicate their results.

**Required Readings**

Text Rental: The Fundamentals of Political Science Research, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., by Paul Kellstedt and Guy Whitten.

Purchase: The CQ Press Writing Guide for Public Policy, by Andrew Pennock

Other required readings are in CANVAS.

All readings listed in the syllabus are **required**. Students are expected to do the readings prior to class.

## Grading

Participation	10%	Short Paper #2	15%
LinkedIn Learning Modules	30%	Paper #3/Final Project	30%
Short Paper #1	15%		

### **Grade distribution:**

A	94-100%	A-	90-93%		
B+	87-89%	B	84-86%	B-	80-83%
C+	77-79%	C	74-76%	C-	70-73%
D+	66-69%	D	60-65%	F	<60%

**Participation:** Your participation grade is based on your active and consistent participation in class discussions. The participation rubric is at the end of this syllabus.

### **Papers #1, #2, #3 (Final Paper):**

Paper #1: Due Date October 1, 11:59pm.

Paper #2: Due Date November 5, 11:59pm.

Paper #3: Due Date December 10, 11:59pm.

**Class Meetings:** The class will meet in-person on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Fridays are reserved for you to work on your LinkedIn Learning modules.

**LinkedIn Learning Modules/Courses:** You will complete FOUR LinkedIn Learning Courses as part of this POLI 300. The courses cover data and political science, publicly available databases, and Excel Statistics I and II. For each course you will receive from LinkedIn Learning a certificate of completion that you will upload to Canvas. You should keep a copy for your own records. Uploading a completion certificate for each course is Pass/Fail. If you upload the certificate you'll receive a P (100 points), otherwise the you'll receive an F (0 points).

The LinkedIn Learning courses are FREE to you as a UWSP student. You'll log into LinkedIn Learning website through the UWSP website: <https://www.uwsp.edu/Pages/logins.aspx>  
The specific course links are listed in Canvas and you can access them there.

Why use LinkedIn Learning? First, as your post-UWSP career progresses you will participate in more and more online learning. Getting experience with LinkedIn Learning now will give you vital experience later on in your career. Second, and perhaps more importantly, each LinkedIn course gives you a certificate of completion that you can list on your resume. Potential employers will find that valuable. Third, the LinkedIn courses give you valuable skills that support the objectives of POLI 300.

One final note: if you already have advanced statistical skills and consider that the LinkedIn courses on EXCEL are not beneficial to you I'm willing to work with you to identify substitute courses in LinkedIn. If you have *already* done the LinkedIn courses (which is possible since I've used this assignment in another class) then we will need to find replacement courses for you.

LinkedIn Learning course deadlines are listed below.

# September

2 Introduction to the course

7/9 What kind of thinker are you? Lecture on Hedgehogs, Foxes, and Thinking about Politics

## Section I: Writing about Public Policy and Political Science

**September 14/16/21/23**

Reading from the CQ Press Writing Guide for Public Policy

This section of the course is an intensive introduction to public policy writing. After this section students should have a basic understanding of some of the mechanics and styles of public policy writing.

For this section we will cover the following chapters from CQ Press Writing Guide for Public Policy: Chapter 1: Audiences and Audience Centered Writing in Public Policy; Chapter 2: Generating and Organizing your Argument; Chapter 3: Improving Your Writing: Sentences and Words; Chapter 4: Writing Well: Paragraphs and Sections; Chapter 7: Putting It All Together- Creating Professional Quality Work; Chapter 8: The Issue Brief; Chapter 9: The Decision Memo

## Section II: Thinking about Politics and Policy: Theories, Causality, Inferences, Measurement

This section will cover the core building blocks of political science research: identifying topics, formulating research questions, thinking theoretically and scientifically, developing theoretical explanations and testable hypotheses, understanding the current state of knowledge on an issue, and establishing causality.

**September 28/30**     Fundamentals of Political Science Research  
Chapter 1: The Scientific Study of Politics  
Chapter 2: The Art of Theory Building

# October

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**October 5/7**     Fundamentals of Political Science Research  
Continue with Chapters 1 and 2

**October 12/14**     Fundamentals of Political Science Research  
Chapter 3: Evaluating Causal Relationships

**October 19/21/26/28**

Fundamentals of Political Science Research  
Chapter 4: Research Design and Literature Review  
Chapter 5: Measuring Concepts of Interest  
Chapter 6: Getting to Know Your Data

## November

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**November 2/4** As Above

### Section III: Methods of Political Research

This section will survey several prominent methods of research in political science such as case studies, interviews and surveys, and quantitative statistics. These represent different approaches to understanding, making causal arguments about, and generating knowledge on important questions in public policy and political science. We will discuss what each approach is, how it is used to generate evidence and address policy and political questions, the strengths and weaknesses of specific methods, and how you can apply the methods to your research topic.

**November 9/11** Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches: Large-N and Small-N Research Design

**November 16/18** Surveys, Polls, and Focus Groups  
Readings to be assigned in Canvas  
Katherine Cramer Walsh, "Putting Inequality in its Place: Rural Consciousness and the Power of Perspective."

### Quantitative Methods

**November 23/30** Fundamentals of Political Science Research  
Chapter 7: Probability and Statistical Inference  
Chapter 8: Bivariate Hypothesis Testing  
Chapter 9: Two-Variable Regression Models

## December

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**2/7/9** As above

# ASSIGNMENTS

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## LinkedIn Learning Modules/Courses

You will complete the LinkedIn Learning courses listed below. Each course requires you to watch several short videos and then take a short quiz. The videos and quiz are administered by LinkedIn Learning. You will receive a certificate of completion for each course. You must upload your certificate to the Canvas assignment dropbox in POLI 300. There will be an assignment page for each of the LinkedIn courses.

**YOU MUST UPLOAD THE LINKEDIN COURSE CERTIFICATE AS A PDF. SCREENSHOTS OF YOUR COMPLETED CERTIFICATE WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED BY CANVAS; ONLY PDF FILES WILL BE ACCEPTED.**

The specific LinkedIn Learning courses are listed as assignments in Canvas and there is a link to each course on each assignment page. You'll need to log-in to LinkedIn Learning, and you may need to set up a LinkedIn account if you haven't done so already.

Once you have completed the course DOWNLOAD your certificate and save it. Then upload it to Canvas. The certificate should be available whenever you log into LinkedIn as well.

### The Data Science of Government and Political Science

- By: Barton Poulson
- **DEADLINE: Friday September 17 11:59pm.**

### Learning Public Data Sets

- By: Curt Frye
- **DEADLINE: Friday October 15 11:59pm.**

### Excel Statistics Essential Training: 1

- By: Joseph Schmuller
- **DEADLINE: Friday November 12 11:59pm.**

### Excel Statistics Essential Training: 2

- By: Joseph Schmuller
- **DEADLINE: Friday December 3 11:59pm.**

## Writing Assignments

*All three writing assignments are integrated.* In general, you will identify a research question in paper #1. For paper #2 you will identify a data set that you will analyze for that research question. For paper #3 you will write a basic analysis of your research question and data analysis. **You must continue with your initial research question identified in paper #1. My comments on that paper will help you narrow down and refine that initial research question. Thus, each assignment builds on developing your initial research question into a short analysis at the end of the course.**

### Paper Assignment #1

Due Date: Friday October 1, 11:59pm.

1000 words. This will be approximately 5 pages, but your paper is graded based on word count. For Assignment #1, you will:

- identify a public policy question or political science research question;
- explain why you are interested in the question;
- identify the policy audiences involved in your issue area or question, and the concrete individuals and/or groups that are interested in your topic and how you identified them;
- assess what your audience already knows about the policy or political issue;
- determine what crucial knowledge they might be missing; and
- explain why your audience cares about your topic.

You must describe carefully and clearly how you compiled the information above. For instance, to determine your policy audience, did you search specific websites? If so, which ones? How did you identify your policy audience and its state of knowledge?

## **Paper Assignment #2**

Due Date: Friday November 5, 11:59pm.

Word Count: 1000 words

NOTE: this assignment follows the LinkedIn Learning course “Learning Public Data Sets.” For this assignment, you will apply what you learned in “Learning Public Data Sets” and define which data set you will download and study for your final project. You may also choose to analyze the data through an online data analysis portal or app. If so, you will need to define the process through which you will do that.

***You will continue with the research question you identified in paper #1. THEN*** you will provide the following:

- a description of the data set and where it is located;
- a description of some of the variables in the data set, including those variables that you will analyze;
- identify at least one hypothesis that can be measured to help answer your policy or political question;
- identify a dependent variable to be measured;
- present a theory that clearly links independent variables to your dependent variable; AND
- discuss ways that your data will be analyzed.

## **Paper Assignment #3**

Due Date: Friday December 10, 11:59pm.

Word Count: At least 2000 words.

In this assignment you will complete your data analysis project with a final paper.

***You will provide a basic answer to your initial research question from paper #1.***

Write EITHER a Policy Brief or Decision Memo, per the specific chapter in [The CQ Press Writing Guide for Public Policy](#).

Your paper must apply one or more of the research approaches studied in class, and you should use one or more of the bivariate statistical techniques to address correlations and perhaps causation between variables in your study.

You should also address the following:

- how your chosen data set facilitates research on the policy issue;
- how your dependent and independent variables are measured, and if needed their basic distributions and/or summary statistics;
- a clear hypothesis if appropriate that suggests how your independent variable should be associated with your dependent variable(s);
- the statistical tests you will use and justify why they are appropriate; and
- the results and their statistical significance and any preliminary findings.

More details about each of the writing assignments will be posted in Canvas.

Finally, there are several examples of A level final papers posted in Canvas. You should review some of them as a guide to what your final paper/project should look like.