CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL ANALYSIS
POLS 3301.001
MWF 2:00-2:50
Dr. Jeff Dillard

Office: Bay Hall 303
Office Hours: MWF 1:00-2:00pm
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Course Description

This course is an introduction to political analysis and research methodology. The central objective of this course is to teach students to think probabilistically and give them the tools they need to analyze and communicate empirical relationships among political phenomena. Throughout the semester, we will cover research design elements, including concept construction, variable measurement, and hypothesis framing. We will also learn the logic of control in relationships among variables and how to make comparisons. Finally, we will cover the foundations of statistical inference, exploring sampling, tests of statistical significance, correlations, and linear regressions.

Student Learning Objectives

In this course you will be able to:

1. Describe data in statistical terms.
2. Analyze patterns and correlations among variables
3. Communicate data analysis in written form

Required Materials

The course textbook and companion SPSS text are both required. You are also responsible for using the course Blackboard website.


Course Assignments and Grades

Course Grades

Course grades are based on the following:

Grades will be assigned as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Grade Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Exam 1</td>
<td>A = 89.5 – 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Exam 2</td>
<td>B = 79.5 – 89.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Exam 3</td>
<td>C = 69.5 – 79.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Statistical Analysis Assignment</td>
<td>D = 59.5 – 69.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30%</td>
<td>Homework</td>
<td>F = 59.4 and below</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Exams

There are three exams in the course; each of which can be considered cumulative, as the concepts learned will build upon one another. Shown above, Exam 1 covers less material and is therefore worth only 10% in comparison to your second and third exams, which are worth 20%. The date and time for each exam is found on the course schedule.

Statistical Analysis

A key part of political analysis is communicating what data and the relationships among variables substantively mean. As an exercise in communication, you will turn in a written statistical analysis at the end of the semester. This analysis will describe the data, expound on variable measurement, introduce a method, present statistical results, and discuss the results of the findings. We will cover these components as we progress through the course.

Specific instructions, including the assignment of the dataset and a rubric outlining the expectations of this assignment, will be distributed in November. Note that this analysis should be 4 to 6 pages, double spaced with 12-point font, and a bibliography is required. This assignment is worth 20% of your final grade and is due in-class on December TBD before your final exam. You may submit drafts of this assignment for review.

Homework

You will have weekly homework assignments, and to complete these you will work in pairs, turning in one assignment per group. You are expected to coordinate schedules and meeting times with your partner. If you feel you are disproportionately contributing to your group’s work, see me.

Homework assignments comprise 30% of your final grade and must be turned in at the beginning of class (on due date). It is in your best interest to complete and turn in your homework on time so that you may keep up with the progression of the course. I strongly
encourage you to set aside times to meet with your partner each week and honor those times as you would a class commitment.

Attendance

You will notice that attendance is not a component of your final course grade. Because this is an upper division course, you are expected to act professionally and attend all class meetings. If you fail to attend class your grade will not be officially reduced, but I assure you that you will see that your performance in class will suffer. This is the type of course that requires your full attention and attendance. The components we cover in the first part of the semester are critical for understanding later elements. If you cannot commit fully to this class, I suggest you take it in another semester.

Grading Policies

Make-up exams and assignments will be given only if you have an excused absence or documented emergency. Excused absences include: participation in a university-affiliated activity that requires you to miss class, a religious holiday, death or major illness in your immediate family, illness of a dependent family member, participation in legal proceedings that require your presence, injury or illness too severe to allow you to attend class, or required participation in military duties. To be excused, you should notify me by email. If that’s not possible, you should provide legitimate documentation explaining your absence.

Late Assignments

Late assignments will be penalized one letter grade per day late. In the event of an emergency or excused absence, a student may be given additional days to complete the assignment without penalty if we discuss it and agree that additional time is necessary.

Extra Credit

Extra credit is given periodically. Only students who are present in class are eligible for extra credit.

Grade Appeals

As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in
the process, see University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. These documents are accessible through the University Rules Web site at http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Dean’s office in the college in which the course is taught or the Office of the Provost.

Disabilities Accommodations

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall 116.

If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.

Statement of Academic Continuity

In the event of an unforeseen adverse event, such as a major hurricane and classes could not be held on the campus of Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi; this course would continue through the use of Blackboard and/or email. In addition, the syllabus and class activities may be modified to allow continuation of the course. Ideally, University facilities (i.e., emails, web sites, and Blackboard) will be operational within two days of the closing of the physical campus. However, students need to make certain that the course instructor has a primary and a secondary means of contacting each student.

SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 27</td>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 29</td>
<td>Definition and Measurement of Concepts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep. 1</td>
<td>Labor Day: No Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep. 3</td>
<td>Measuring and Describing Variables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Essentials, Chapter 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep 5</td>
<td>Measuring and Describing Variables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Essentials, Chapter 2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Sep. 8: **Lab 1: SPSS Basics**  
Companion, Chapters 1-3

Sep. 10: **Lab 1 Continued**  
Companion, Chapters 1-3

Sep. 12: **Lab 1 Continued**  
Companion, Chapters 1-3

Sep. 15: **Exam 1**

Sep. 17: **Explanation, Hypotheses, and Comparisons**  
Essentials, Chapter 3

Sep. 22: **Explanation, Hypotheses, and Comparisons**  
Essentials, Chapter 3

Sep. 24: **Explanation, Hypotheses, and Comparisons**  
Essentials, Chapter 3

Sep. 26: **Explanation, Hypotheses, and Comparisons**  
Essentials, Chapter 3

Sep. 29: **Research Design**  
Essentials, Chapter 4

Oct. 1: **Research Design**  
Essentials, Chapter 4

Oct. 3: **Lab 2: Making Comparisons**  
Companion, Chapter 4

Oct. 6: **Lab 2: Making Comparisons**  
Companion, Chapter 4

Oct. 8: **Lab 3: Making Controlled Comparisons**  
Companion, Chapter 5

Oct. 10: **Lab 3: Making Controlled Comparisons**  
Companion, Chapter 5

Oct. 13: **Lab 3: Making Controlled Comparisons**  
Companion, Chapter 5

Oct. 15: **workday**

Oct. 17: **Exam 2**
Oct. 20:  
   Foundations of Statistical Inference  
   Essentials, Chapter 6

Oct. 22:  
   Foundations of Statistical Inference  
   Essentials, Chapter 6

Oct. 27:  
   Foundations of Statistical Inference  
   Essentials, Chapter 6

Oct 29:  
   Foundations of Statistical Inference  
   Essentials, Chapter 6

Oct. 31:  
   Lab 4: Making Inferences about Sample Means  
   Companion, chapter 6

Nov. 3:  
   Lab 4: Making Inferences about Sample Means  
   Companion, chapter 6

Nov. 5:  
   workday

Nov. 7:  
   Tests of Significance and Measures of Association  
   Essentials, chapter 7

Nov. 10:  
   Tests of Significance and Measures of Association  
   Essentials, chapter 7

Nov. 12:  
   Tests of Significance and Measures of Association  
   Essentials, chapter 7

Nov. 14:  
   Lab 5: Tests of Significance  
   Companion, Chapter 7

Nov. 17:  
   Lab 5: Tests of Significance  
   Companion, Chapter 7

Nov. 19:  
   Lab 5: Tests of Significance  
   Companion, Chapter 7

Nov. 21:  
   Correlation and Linear Regression  
   Essentials, Chapter 8

Nov. 24:  
   Correlation and Linear Regression  
   Essentials, Chapter 8
Nov. 26:  
Lab 6: Correlation and Linear Regression  
Companion, Chapter 8

Nov. 27 – 28: Thanksgiving, no class

Dec. 1:  
Final Class - Review

Final Paper Due: TBD