Seminar in Political Science

Course Description

This course is the capstone class for Political Science majors. This course begins with an overview of the research process, followed by a segment on professional development, and ultimately culminates with students producing an original research paper. Students will have an opportunity to apply the summary of skills, knowledge, and abilities learned in the major by the end of the course.

Learning Objectives

At the end of the semester you will be able to:
1. Design and conduct an independent research project.
2. Communicate effectively in written and verbal form.
3. Analyze, interpret, and present empirical data.
4. Prepare the appropriate materials for a job or graduate school application.
5. Demonstrate advanced knowledge in one of the major areas of political science: American institutions, American political behavior, International/comparative politics, and political theory.

Major Course Requirements

10%: Class Participation- demonstrated by attendance and thoughtful class discussion; random attendance taken throughout the semester.

10%: Participation in the Major Field Test (MFT)- exit exam for Political Science majors scheduled towards the end of the semester; allows students to gauge their progress relative to their peers at other institutions across the United States; time and registration TBD.

15%: Professional Profile- This assignment is focused on producing a resume or CV, as well as a cover letter for either an entry-level professional position or graduate school. More details regarding the expectations of this assignment will be given in class.

15%: Annotated Bibliography- This assessment requires you to analyze and provide a summary of a series of empirical journal articles provides by your professor. You will provide an evaluation of these articles and breakdown the major themes and elements of the research design.
15%: Group Presentation- Students will be paired in groups that will produce an original PowerPoint presentation outlining the history and major themes of one of the major sub-fields in Political Science.

35%: Original Research Paper- each student will generate an original research paper on a topic within one of the major sub-fields of Political Science.

I will grade the paper on the following 100 point scale:

50 points for content: The paper should be clearly written, thorough, analytical and representative of a university paper in an upper-division class. The paper must be a minimum of 12 pages (minus back matter).

40 points for research and scholarly sourcing: The paper must include a minimum of 12 scholarly sources (i.e. from peer reviewed journals found in the online databases through the TAMUCC library) and use these sources in appropriate ways, such as adding nuance and detail to the paper and backing for claims made throughout-paraphrase Wikipedia material if you must, but do not cite it.

10 points for grammar and style: The paper must use APSA style appropriate for a research paper in political science and be written in a clear and interesting manner (other sources available online as well): [http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/DocAPSA.html](http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/DocAPSA.html)

Penalty for lateness is 10 point/ day. Up to three days and then the paper will not be accepted.

*Research Paper Advice

1. This is a research paper and treat it as such. You need SCHOLARLY references for the paper. This means peer-reviewed journal articles, books, etc you find either through the scholarly databases in the elibrary or in a physical library. It is all too easy to grab a bunch on internet-based sources on a topic, paraphrase, and weave the material into a paper. That is not the goal of this assignment; it is to produce well-written paper that includes the added substance and nuance of scholarly sourcing. If you write a good paper, but do not provide any real research, you should not expect to receive a passing grade.

2. Proper citation. The majority of the writing must come from you, not paraphrased material online. You should use information online for context, but cite scholarly sources throughout the paper to verify your statements throughout. DO NOT TAKE MULTIPLE PARAGRAPHS FOR ANY SOURCE together (ESPECIALLY ONLINE) AND AT THE END SIMPLY CITE THE SOURCE; THIS IS PLAGIARISM-INTENTIONAL OR NOT. For example, if a student copies a page-or part of a page from pressrecord.com, copies it into the document and at the end cites (pressrecord.com) as such, this is of little value to me in demonstrating your understanding of the material and is not a proper way to cite the work of others. Plagiarism, intentional or not in this respect will result in you receiving a zero on the paper. Quoted material is to be used when appropriate (even often), but in proper amounts.

3. How can I tell if an article is SCHOLARLY/PEER-REVIEWED?

If the article is published in an academic journal or by an academic press, it is likely a scholarly
source. There is also a good chance that it is peer reviewed, which basically means the article went through a blind process of review where 2-4 scholars that are experts in the subject matter review the article, make comments, and provide recommendations to the journal/book editor on whether to pursue publication, provide the author an opportunity to address their comments and revise and resubmit the manuscript, or reject the manuscript. For most reputable journals, authors generally undergo 2-3 rounds of revision and 1-2 rounds of editing before publication. The best journals in a field routinely reject 90-95% of article submissions and the better journals generally reject roughly 75-85%. At present this is the best tried and true method for assuring that research is original, theoretically and empirically sound.

There really aren't key words associated with separating scholarly sources although you might include terms such as "study", "research", "data", and the like. We focus on empirical research because it provides more valid and reliable information than relying on sources that are based on single observations or personal experiences. When a researcher takes the time to conduct a valid and reliable study and then has his/her study reviewed by his/her peers, the study holds more weight than if the article was based on personal opinion. Journal in Political Science/Public Policy of note include-this is representative and by no means exhaustive: American Political Science Review, American Journal of Political Science, Political Behavior, Journal of Politics, Political Research Quarterly, Public Administration Review, Review of Policy Research, Policy Studies Journal, etc.

Format:
Participation is encouraged and expected. The class will be structured around instructor lectures.

Attendance policy:
You should attend every class. Poor attendance will impact your participation grade considerably.

Required Readings
There is no required text for this course. You should consider purchasing one of the books on writing in the field below. Moreover, you must have access to a copy of the Pollock book below that was assigned in your Contemporary Political Analysis course, which is a prerequisite for this class. Required readings will be available in your course Blackboard shell.

RECOMMENDED
Class Schedule:

Segment I: Review of the Field and Research Process

Week 1: Introduction (21)
Introduction to the Class

Week 2: Political Science as a Discipline (26 & 28)
Overview of the field
*Read Article #1

Week 3: Generating Research Ideas (2 & 4)
Finding sources, data, and coming up with research topics
*Read Article #2

Week 4: Understanding Empirical Research (9 & 11)
Overview of the research process
*Read Articles 4-5
*Annotated Bibliography assignment distributed on 2/9 and due in the BB dropbox by 5:00 PM on 2/18. Late penalty after 5:00PM-10 points per day.

Week 5: Research Workshop-Generating Paper Ideas (16 & 18)
Monday-In class workshop for first ½ of class
Wednesday-In class workshop for second ½ of class
*Read Article 6

Segment II: Professional Development, Careers, and Graduate Programs

Week 6: Graduate Programs and Law School (23 & 25)
Discussing career options with a Political Science degree
*Read Article 7

Week 7: Create a Professional Profile (2 & 4)
Professional Profile assignment distributed on 3/2 and due on 3/11 in the BB dropbox by 5:00PM; late penalty-10 points per day.
*Read Article 8

Week 8: Research Workshop- Securing a Data Set (9 & 11)
Monday-In class workshop for first ½ of class
Wednesday-In class workshop for second ½ of class
Week 9: Spring Break-No Class! (16& 18)
(No readings)

Segment III: Generating Original Research

Week 10: Research Workshop-Final Research Designs (23 & 25)
Monday-In class workshop for first ½ of class
Wednesday-In class workshop for second ½ of class
*Read Article 10

Week 11: Analyzing and Interpreting Data Part 1 (30 & 1)
Using a software program and inputting data
*Read Article 11

Week 12: Analyzing and Interpreting Data Part 2 (6 & 8)
Statistical modeling and interpreting data
*Read Article 12

Week 13: Final Research Workshop-Analyzing your Data (13 & 15)
Monday-In class workshop for first ½ of class
Wednesday-In class workshop for second ½ of class

Week 14: Group Presentations (20 and 22)
Monday, 4/20: Group 1
Wednesday, 4/22: Group 2

Week 15: Group Presentations (27 & 29)
Monday, 4/27: Group 3
Wednesday, 4/29: Group 4

Week 16: Group Presentations (4)
Monday, 5/4: Group 5

**Final Research Papers Due on University-Approved Day/Time**
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Student Responsibilities:
TURN OFF CELL PHONES!!!
Pay attention during class. Private conversations, sleeping, and reading non-class related material will not be tolerated.
Learn something! Participate in class discussions.

Grade Appeals
Students who feel that they have not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in this class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, cla.tamucc.edu/students/studentinfo.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean’s Office.

DISABILITY SERVICES
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, Room #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.
**Academic Honesty:**
University students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic misconduct for which a student is subject to penalty includes all forms of cheating, such as illicit possession of examinations or examination materials, forgery, or plagiarism. (Plagiarism is the presentation of the work of another as one’s own work.) If unsure of what honesty entails or if for more information regarding the penalties for academic dishonesty, please refer to the University Catalog. Instances of plagiarism will be handled on an individual basis, but generally speaking the first offense will result in a zero for the assignment; subsequent plagiarism will result in failing the course and/or reporting chronic plagiarism to the university administration for disciplinary action. Reuse of previous work, even if that work is original, is known as academic recycling; such work is not accepted in this course and instances of recycling will receive the same treatment as plagiarism.

**Academic Advising**
The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. The Academic Advisor will set up a degree plan, which must be signed by the student, a faculty mentor, and the department chair. The College's Academic Advising Center is located in Driftwood 203E, and can be reached at 825-3466.