

Syllabus for Introduction to Government and Politics (GVPT 100)¹

GVPT 100 (Tydings)—Fall 2015

MW 9-9:50

Office hours: By appointment

GVPT Main Office: ph.# 5-4156

Teaching Assistants:

Pavel Coronado-Castellanos (Sections 104, 105, 108)—pcoronad@umd.edu

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Discussion Sections—various times

Course Purpose and Description:

This course is an introduction to the scientific study of government and politics, so you may consider it an introduction to political science. You will be introduced to

1. key concepts in the field of political science,
2. theories of significant political phenomena,
3. and analytical tools political scientists use to answer research questions and assess the validity of hypotheses derived from theories of politics.

As in any field of endeavor—whether an academic discipline, sport, art, etc.—experts think differently than non-experts. Not only do experts tend to have more information, they actually process that information differently. While I'm a baseball fan, I'm no expert. So what Buck Showalter sees on the field during the game is not, in a very meaningful way, what I see. During this course, you will be learning to think about politics the way an expert thinks about politics; you will be learning to think like a political scientist. More specifically, at the end of this course you should be able to do the following:

1. Articulate a rationale for the scientific study of politics.
2. Explain the role of theory in political science and use the criteria for theory building to assess the analytical consistency and substantive quality of existing theories of politics.
3. Derive testable hypotheses from existing theory.
4. Systematically gather data to test hypotheses derived from existing theory.
5. Evaluate the empirical evidence for/against particular hypotheses.
6. Draw defensible inferences about a particular theory based on empirical tests.
7. Apply theoretical inferences to novel political dynamics or policy problems

¹ I reserve the right to modify the syllabus as changes become necessary.

This class is also intended as preparation for subsequent courses in political science.

Books:

W. Phillips Shively. 2013. *The Craft of Political Research*. Ninth Edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson. **Required.** (S)

Lori M. Poloni-Staudinger and Michael R. Wolf. 2016. *American Difference: American Politics from a Comparative Perspective*. Washington, DC: CQ Press. **Required.** (PS & W)

Ellen Seljan with Peter Galderisi. 2015. *Understanding Political Science Statistics Using Stata*. New York: Routledge. **Required.** (S & G)

The books should be available in the Campus Bookstore and online. You are also expected to read a newspaper of record (e.g. the Washington Post or the New York Times) on a regular basis. If you have a question about a specific paper, please see me. When necessary, additional readings—both those required and those recommended—will be available online or posted to ELMS.

Software:

We will be using STATA in this class. While you can use the University labs to conduct your analyses using STATA, **be warned that STATA is not widely available.** [One lab option is in Lefrak Hall.] We are working on trying to change this, but it won't change this semester. You can also purchase the software to use on your own computer. You can purchase it here:

www.stata.com/order/new/edu/gradplans/student-pricing/

NOTE: you **MUST** buy the STATA/IC 14 version of the software. Getting the 6-month license is more than fine. You **SHOULD NOT** buy the "small STATA". You won't be able to do the analyses required for the course. If you buy it online, you **MUST** use your UMD email address so STATA can verify that you are a student. This is the only way to get the (substantial) student discount.

Neither your TA nor I are tech support. While we can provide assistance with how to *use* STATA, we cannot help you figure out why STATA may have a problem on your machine. We don't anticipate any problems, but if you have installation issues (or some similar problem), those need to be directed to STATA tech support.

Requirements and Grading:

Your course grade will be determined by homework assignments, two midterm exams, participation in discussion sections, contribution to the class survey project, and your final write-up. Note that the homeworks, midterms, and the final write-up of the research project are designated as Major Scheduled Grading Events.

The weight of each component is as follows:

Homework: 20%

Midterm 1: 25%

Midterm 2: 25%

Survey and Research Project: 20% (total)

Section Attendance and Participation: 5%

Subject Pool Participation: 5%

In general, my grading scale reflects the following:

“A” denotes **excellent mastery** of the subject and **outstanding scholarship**.

“B” denotes **good mastery** of the subject and **good scholarship**.

“C” denotes **acceptable mastery** of the subject matter and **competent scholarship**.

“D” denotes limited understanding of the subject and substandard scholarship. This grade indicates marginal performance, and it does not represent satisfactory progress toward a degree.

“F” denotes failure to understand the subject and unsatisfactory performance.

Homework:

Homework assignments are related to the survey project. In general, they provide an opportunity for you to draft components of the final research project—in advance—and receive feedback from your teaching assistant. The more time and effort you put in to the homework assignments, the stronger your final paper is likely to be. Note that late homework will not be accepted—no exceptions.

Midterms:

The midterms will be based on material covered in the books, lectures, and sections. Lectures may not overlap directly with the readings and many key concepts and cases will be discussed in lectures only. Strictly speaking the midterms are not cumulative (that is, the first midterm emphasizes material covered from the beginning of the class up to the first midterm and the second midterm covers material covered after the first midterm but before the second). However, the nature of the material is cumulative. Therefore, there may be some overlap between the two tests.

Class Survey:

A key component of this class will be a survey project. We will work together to design the survey and distribute it to as many people as possible. Then we will analyze the results during the second part of the semester. Finally, students will choose questions from the survey that they have a particular interest in to focus on in their final paper. This survey will not only give students “hands on” experience in the art of crafting a survey instrument, but will also allow them to explore public opinion in “real time” on issues of their choosing. By working through all the steps required to design a survey instrument, students will gain a detailed understanding of how political scientists approach questions related to public opinion. There are four main parts of the survey design: 1. Pilot drafting, 2. Pilot analysis, 3. Redrafting and distribution and 4. The final write up. Parts 1-3 will take place in lecture and discussion sections. Part 4 will be done by students individually. The dates of each are noted in the table below.

Part 1: Pilot drafting: Students will work with me and the TA’s to design a battery of questions. Students will workshop these questions with each other and will read questions designed by other sections to form a complete draft of what they want the survey to look like. Once this is complete, I will distribute this draft as the “pilot” survey.

Part 2: Pilot analysis: After the pilot survey has been in the field for about a week, I will release the data to the students. In addition to the respondents’ answers to the questions, the survey will also include their feedback on the instrument itself. Did they find any questions confusing? Offensive? Needlessly complicated? Etc. Based on this feedback, students will work with me and one another to determine if any questions need to be rewritten or dropped in favor of new ones. Students will also do a preliminary set of analyses on the pilot data (e.g., sample means, etc) to get a sense of how responses are distributed.

Part 3: Redrafting and distribution: After discussing the results of their preliminary analyses in both lecture and discussion, students will determine what they want the final survey instrument to look like. Once the sections have agreed on the final question wording, *students* will be responsible for distributing the survey to as wide a range of people as possible via social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, and other means of communication. The survey will be in the field for approximately 7-10 days. Students are expected to promote and distribute the survey during this time.

Final write up:

The final write up will be a 10 page, double spaced (including tables) analytical paper. The paper must include:

1. A theoretically-derived hypothesis.
2. A brief description—with appropriate citations—of the theoretical foundation for the hypothesis.
3. A description of the data and methods used to evaluate the hypothesis.
4. An analysis of the empirical results that includes an assessment of the implications for the theory on which the hypothesis is based.

Students may pick any set of questions (i.e., variables) to analyze, so long as they can provide a theoretical justification for their argument and the variables meet some basic requirements. The paper must be written in 12 point Times New Roman with the standard margins (1.25 inches left and right and 1 inch bottom and top). Students are expected to keep the papers within assigned lengths; TA's will not read past 10 pages. Grades will be based on consistency of the analytical argument, demonstration of cumulative mastery of the material from the course, and clarity of writing. While it is my expectation that these papers will be based on data from the survey produced in class, with prior approval, students may choose to use alternative data for their analysis.

Section Attendance and Participation:

Students are expected to have completed all of the assigned readings and homework for each section and be prepared to discuss them. Teaching assistants take attendance in section and section grades will be based on a demonstrated ability to discuss topics covered in lectures and section.

Subject Pool Participation

Scholarly discovery depends, in large part, on research methods. Exposure to research methods is a valuable learning tool for students trying to understand research in political science. Some of the most exciting and cutting-edge research is being conducted right here at Maryland, so there's no better opportunity to learn about research in political science than by participating in research studies. The Government and Politics department encourages students to gain hands on research experience and knowledge. To support students in gaining this knowledge, our **Scope and Methods for Political Science Research** undergraduate course (GVPT 100) will give participation credit to students who take part in studies conducted by GVPT faculty and graduate students.

Each study will take about 20-30 minutes to complete. If you prefer not to serve as a participant, you may elect to satisfy the requirement by writing a 3-5 page review of a research article. However, you must notify the Research Administrator (Heather Hicks) before the last day of schedule adjustment for the semester if you wish to register for the research alternative. You will have to either participate in

all of the studies or write the review paper. Papers cannot be used to make up for a study at the end of the semester.

Students who are under 18 years of age must obtain parental permission to participate in research. If you are under 18, please contact Heather Hicks and she will provide you with instructions on how to participate in the research studies.

If you choose to participate in research, you will sign-up for three research studies. Throughout the semester you will be sent three separate emails of studies to participate in. There will be a link in the email in which you will click on to schedule a day and time to take the study. All studies take place in **Chincoteague Hall room 4101**.

Please treat your scheduled research appointments like any professional meetings. If you sign up for an experiment and do not show up at the time you signed up for (and do not cancel properly within 24 hours because of an emergency), you will lose the research credit. We will keep a record of your participation. At the end of each study, we will inform you TA that you participated in the study.

Grade Challenges

Any challenges to an exam grade must be submitted *in writing no sooner* than one week after the exams have been handed back. All challenges must be submitted to the section TA *first*.

Canvas (ELMS)

Important communication regarding the class is conducted via Canvas. This includes posting of the syllabus, announcements, and grades. Students are required to be proficient users of Canvas and to ensure that their emails registered with Canvas are up to date and checked regularly. *Please do not use Canvas to email me*. Please use my email provided above.

Religious Observance

In accordance with the University's policy on the observance of religious holidays, it is the student's responsibility to inform their section TA of any absences due to these holidays well in advance and **in writing** within the first two weeks of the semester.

Students with disabilities

I will make every effort to accommodate students who are registered with the Disability Support Services (DSS) Office and who provide the necessary documentation updated for the Fall 2015 semester. Please submit the appropriate documentation to me no later than September 15, 2015. I am not able to accommodate students who are not registered with DSS or who fail to do not provide me with the appropriate documentation.

Absence due to illness

As per University policy—

<http://www.umd.edu/catalog/index.cfm/show/content.section/c/27/ss/1584/s/1540>—students may submit a self-signed note for a medically necessitated absence from a single lecture or section during the semester. Such documentation is sufficient unless it coincides with a Major Scheduled Grading Event. For a definition of such events see above Requirements section. Any student missing more than one section or a Major Scheduled Grading Event is required to provide documentation from the Health Center or from an outside health care provider that verifies the dates of treatment and time frame during which the student was unable to meet academic responsibilities.

Code of Conduct

It is assumed that all students are familiar with and adhere to the code of academic integrity. The work done in this course is expected to be solely the effort of each individual student. Cheating and plagiarism (representing the words or ideas of others as one's own or copying the work of another without giving proper credit) will not be tolerated. If you are unsure about what constitutes academic dishonesty, please refer to the Student Honor Council's "Code of Academic Integrity," available at: <http://shc.umd.edu/SHC/StudentAcademicDishonesty.aspx>.

Extra Credit and Incompletes

Graded assignments in the class provide students with ample opportunity to demonstrate mastery of the materials. Therefore, **no extra credit assignments** will be assigned in the class. Do not ask if you can make up your own assignment for extra credit. *The answer is no.* The assigned material is also appropriate in scope for completion within a single semester. Therefore, incompletes will only be given in *exceptional* circumstances.

Final Details

-Be courteous in the classroom. Classroom courtesy is necessary to ensure that all students have the opportunity to learn without distractions. If you are not interested in learning, do not come to class.

-No cell phone usage, no talking during lectures, no reading newspapers, or listening to music. If you must have a cell phone for emergencies, please have it on "vibrate." I reserve the right to confiscate ringing phones until the end of lectures.

-Please be on time for class and stay until the end, unless you have made special arrangements with me. Entering late and leaving early is distracting to the instructor and to other students. If you must enter late or leave early, please take the seat nearest an exit and enter or leave as quietly as possible. Two or more disruptions of class that require me to address you directly in any form will lead to a reduction in your participation grade.

-A discussion of current political events will likely take place in both lecture and labs. These discussions can often stimulate strong feelings and heated debate. Students are expected to be respectful of the opinions of others, regardless of whether they share similar opinions or beliefs. Debates will be cut short that do not enhance understanding of course concepts. We (myself and the TA's) expect students to offer substantive comments and questions when appropriate. We also expect students to not dominate a conversation, but to allow a free discussion and exchange of ideas.

Important Note about Class Communication

The first avenue of communication for this course is with your designated teaching assistant.

All issues, problems, questions, concerns should first be addressed with him or her, unless the issue is of a sensitive nature. Please provide written documentation or notice of absence to your TA. If issues cannot be resolved or questions cannot be answered by the TA, then contact me. Please allow TA's and/or the professor 24 hours to respond to emails (48 to 72 hours on weekends).

Copyright

The lectures I deliver in this class and the course materials I create and distribute are protected by federal copyright law as my original works. You are permitted to take notes of my lectures and utilize course materials for your use in this course. You may not record, reproduce, or distribute my lectures/notes or course materials for any commercial purpose without my written consent. Persons who sell or distribute copies or modified copies of my course materials, possess commercial copies of

my notes (i.e. Terpnotes), or assist another person or entity in selling or distributing those materials may be considered in violation of the University Code of Student Conduct, part 9 (k).

Course Evaluations

I welcome your feedback about this course. Your participation in the campus-wide, online evaluation at the end of the semester is particularly important. **CourseEvalUM** will open for Fall 2015 courses on November 30, 2015. Students may go directly to the website (www.courseevalum.umd.edu) to submit their evaluations.

General Course Outline

You are expected to complete the readings for a particular day prior to class that day.

Date	Topic/ Reading	Survey	Homework
Week 1			
Mon, Aug 31	Intro to class		
Weds, Sept 2	Political Basics		
Fri, Sept 4			
Week 2			
Mon, Sept 7	NO CLASS (Labor Day)		
Weds, Sept 9	Political Basics, Part 2 --Chapters 1 and 2, PS & W		
Fri, Sept 11	Getting Started with STATA—Chapter 1, S&G		
Week 3			
Mon, Sept 14	Political Basics, Part 3 --Chapter 3, PS & W		
Weds, Sept 16			
Fri, Sept 18	Setting up Data Files in STATA—Chapter 2, S&G	Introduce survey	
Week 4			
Mon, Sept 21	The Practice of Political Science--Chapter 1, S		
Weds, Sept 23	Theory in Political Science--Chapters 2 and 3, S		
Fri, Sept 25		Discuss pilot questions	
Week 5			

Mon, Sept 28	Theory in Political Science, Part 2-- Chapters 2 and 3, S		
Weds, Sept 30	Exam 1		
Fri, Oct 2	Data Management in STATA, Chapter 3, S&G	Pilot finalized	Homework 1
Week 6			
Mon, Oct 5	Political Beliefs, Part 2--Chapter 4, PS & W	Pilot goes into the field	
Weds, Oct 7	Political Beliefs-- Chapter 4, PS & W		
Fri, Oct 9			
Week 7			
Mon, Oct 12	Political Institutions-- Chapter 5, PS & W	Pilot data are back	
Weds, Oct 14	Political Institutions, Part 2--Chapter 5, PS & W		
Fri, Oct 16		Discuss pilot	Homework 2
Week 8			
Mon, Oct 19	Interest Groups-- Chapter 6, PS & W		
Weds, Oct 21	Political Parties-- Chapter 7, PS & W		
Fri, Oct 23		Final questions due	
Week 9		Survey goes in the field	
Mon, Oct 26	Elections, Electoral Institutions, and Electoral Behavior-- Chapter 8, PS & W	Final survey reviewed by Morris	
Weds, Oct 28	Catch-up and review	Survey in the field	
Fri, Oct 30		Survey in the field	
Week 10		Survey in the field	
Mon, Nov 2	Exam 2	Survey in the field	
Weds, Nov 4	Reliability and Validity—Chapters 4 and 5, S	Survey in the field	
Fri, Nov 6	Data Analysis in STATA—Chapter 4.1-4.2, S&G	Survey in the field	
Week 11			
Mon, Nov 9	Causal Thinking and Sampling—Chapters 6 and 7, S	Survey results distributed	

Weds, Nov 11	Causal Thinking and Sampling, Part 2— Chapters 6 and 7, S		
Fri, Nov 13	Data Analysis in STATA—Chapter 4.3-4.5, S&G	Discuss results in section	Homework 3
Week 12			
Mon, Nov 16	Measuring Relationships— Chapter 8, S		
Weds, Nov 18	Measuring Relationships, Part 2—Chapter 9, S		
Fri, Nov 20		Discuss survey in section	Homework 4
Week 13			
Mon, Nov 23	Inference—Chapter 10, S		
Weds, Nov 25	Project Work Day		
Fri, Nov 25	NO SECTION (Thanksgiving Break)		
Week 14			
Mon, Nov 30	Inference, Part 2— Chapter 10, S		
Weds, Dec 2	Inference, Part 3— Chapter 10, S		
Fri, Dec 4			
Week 15			
Mon, Dec 7	Project Work Day		
Weds, Dec 9	Becoming a Political Scientist: Next Steps		
Fri, Dec 11	Project Work Day		
Week 16			
Thur, Dec 17 (8-10:00 am)		Final Write-up due	