



Scope & Methods for Political Science Research

GVPT 201
Spring 2018

Learning Outcomes

This course teaches you how to think scientifically about politics. It will provide an introduction to research design and the use of quantitative methods in political science. You will learn how to formulate questions and theories about politics and then test them in a rigorous manner. A central element to this is statistics. This course will combine teaching the principles of statistics as used in political science with hands-on data analysis—that is, it will involve both theory and practice.

The class has two principal aims. The first is preparation for other political science classes. To this end we will discuss a large number of examples from contemporary political science research done by professors in the Department of Government & Politics at the University of Maryland and other universities. The second, and larger, purpose is preparation for life. In virtually every domain of professional life, the ability to evaluate causal arguments and use statistics to analyze data is helpful for doing a good job. The research methods you learn in this course will help you understand the world (political and otherwise) and become a more informed participant in political debate and discussion.

The centerpiece of this class will be a survey project. Students will design an online survey and distribute it to as many people as possible. We will then analyze it as a class in the second part of the semester. Finally, students will write a series of policy memos using the survey data. 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. The survey will unfold over several phases, which I describe in more detail below.

Required Resources

This term we will be using Piazza for class discussion. The system is highly catered to getting you help fast and efficiently from classmates, the TA, and myself. Rather than emailing questions to the teaching staff, I encourage you to post your questions on Piazza. If you have any problems or feedback for the developers, email team@piazza.com.

Find our class page at: <https://piazza.com/umd/spring2018/gvpt201/home>

Dr. William Reed
wlr@umd.edu

Class Meets

Monday & Wednesday
1:00pm – 1:50pm
LEF 2166
or
2:00pm – 2:50pm
LEF 2205

Office Hours

2107 Chincoteague
By Appointment

Teaching Assistants

Seungjun Kim

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Course Communication

Time-sensitive information to students will appear on Piazza. To discuss questions, absences, or accommodations please contact me via email (wlr@umd.edu). Helpful guidance on writing professional emails may be found here (ter.ps/email).

Textbooks

Please make sure that you obtain the correct editions of these books. And please purchase the hard copy of the text rather than an electronic copy. In the past students using the electronic version of the textbook have been confused by the workflow and had a difficult time completing the homework.

- Philip H. Pollock III. *The Essentials of Political Analysis*. Fifth Edition. Washington, DC: CQ Press (Required).
- Philip H. Pollock III. 2018. *An R Companion to Political Analysis*. Second Edition. Washington, DC: CQ Press (Required).

Software

We will be using R in this class.

The R software is FREE and works with any computer. There are instructions on how to download R and the associated data files/packages for the homework in the workbook. I would also highly recommend you download R-Studio. I'll be talking about this in class. You can get the free version (R-Studio Desktop). It's the first option on this page.

<https://www.rstudio.com/products/rstudio/download/>

Your TA and I are not tech support. While we can provide assistance with how to *use* R, we cannot help you figure out why R may have a problem on your machine. We don't anticipate any problems, but if you can't get it to install correctly (or some similar problem), that needs to be directed to R tech support. Or just ask a classmate. Chances are, they've figured it out.

Campus Policies

It is our shared responsibility to know and abide by the University of Maryland's policies that relate to all courses, which include topics like:

- Academic integrity
- Student and instructor conduct
- Accessibility and accommodations
- Attendance and excused absences
- Grades and appeals
- Copyright and intellectual property

Please visit www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html for the Office of Undergraduate Studies' full list of campus-wide policies and follow up with me if you have questions.

Activities, Learning Assessments, & Expectations for Students

Your course grade will be determined by homework assignments, two midterm exams, participation in discussion sections and, most importantly, contributing to the class survey project. Note that the exams are designated as Major Scheduled Grading Events. If you are going to miss class (or section) on a day that homework is due or on

exam day and would like your absence to be excused, you are required to email me regarding your absence in advance of the class and to bring documentation to support your excused absence on the day you return. The new absence policy (one sick absence without a health center note) does not apply to days where we have scheduled exams.

Course-Specific Policies

No computers, phones or tablet devices are permitted during our class meetings. I understand and have considered arguments for permitting laptop and tablet computers in the classroom. However, in my experience (and based on the research evidence) the reality is that they present an irresistible distraction and detract from the cooperative learning environment. Researchers have found that these distractions do in fact interfere with learning and active participation. For that reason, the use of computers and phones will not be permitted during class meetings (except when required for ADS accommodations). If a computer is needed to accomplish a class objective for the day I will provide it or give you advanced notice to bring one with you.

I expect you to make the responsible and respectful decision to refrain from using your cellphone in class. If you have critical communication to attend to, please excuse yourself and return when you are ready. For more information about the science behind the policy watch: <http://youtu.be/WwPaw3Fx5Hk>

Get Some Help!

You are expected to take personal responsibility for your own learning. This includes acknowledging when your performance does not match your goals and doing something about it. Everyone can benefit from some expert guidance on time management, note taking, and exam preparation, so I encourage you to consider visiting <http://ter.ps/learn> and schedule an appointment with an academic coach. Sharpen your communication skills (and improve your grade) by visiting <http://ter.ps/writing> and schedule an appointment with the campus Writing Center. Finally, if you just need someone to talk to, visit <http://www.counseling.umd.edu>.



Everything is free because you have already paid for it, and **everyone needs help**... all you have to do is ask for it.

Names/Pronouns and Self Identifications

The University of Maryland recognizes the importance of a diverse student body, and we are committed to fostering equitable classroom environments. I invite you, if you wish, to tell us how you want to be referred to both in terms of your name and your pronouns (he/him, she/her, they/them, etc.). The pronouns someone indicates are not necessarily indicative of their gender identity. Visit trans.umd.edu to learn more.

Additionally, how you identify in terms of your gender, race, class, sexuality, religion, and dis/ability, among all aspects of your identity, is your choice whether to disclose (e.g., should it come up in classroom conversation about our experiences and perspectives) and should be self-identified, not presumed or imposed. I will do my best to address and refer to all students accordingly, and I ask you to do the same for all of your fellow Terps.

Grades

Grades are not given, but earned. Your grade is determined by your performance on the learning assessments in the course and is assigned individually (not curved). If earning a particular grade is important to you, please speak with me at the beginning of the semester so that I can offer some helpful suggestions for achieving your goal.

All assessment scores will be posted on the course ELMS page. If you would like to review any of your grades (including the exams), or have questions about how something was scored, please email me to schedule a time for us to meet in my office.

Late work will not be accepted for course credit so please plan to have it submitted well before the scheduled deadline. I am happy to discuss any of your grades with you, and if I have made a mistake I will immediately correct it. Any formal grade disputes must be submitted in writing and within one week of receiving the grade.

Learning Assement	Number	Points	Weight
Chapter Homework	9	10	15%
Subject Pool	1	10	5%
Midterm I	1	100	15%
Midterm II	1	100	20%
Section Attendance & Participation Survey	13	10	10%
Pilot Design	1	10	2%
Pilot Analysis	1	10	3%
Redrafting	1	10	3%
Distribution	1	10	2%
Memo Practice I	1	10	5%
Memo Practice II	1	10	5%
Memo	1	10	15%
Total			
Points		500	100%

Final letter grades are assigned based on the percentage of total assessment points earned. To be fair to everyone I have to establish clear standards and apply them consistently, so please understand that being close to a cutoff is not the same thing as making the cut ($89.99 \neq 90.00$). It would be unethical to make exceptions for some and not others.

Final Grade Cutoffs									
+	97.00%	+	87.00%	+	77.00%	+	67.00%		
A	94.00%	B	84.00%	C	74.00%	D	64.00%	F	<60.0%
-	90.00%	-	80.00%	-	70.00%	-	60.00%		

Course Schedule

Note: This is a tentative schedule, and subject to change as necessary – monitor the course ELMS page for current deadlines. In the unlikely event of a prolonged university closing, or an extended absence from the university, adjustments to the course schedule, deadlines, and assignments will be made based on the duration of the closing and the specific dates missed.

Date	Day	Topics	Homework	Survey
24-Jan	Wednesday	Class Intro		
29-Jan	Monday	Chapter 1		
31-Jan	Wednesday	Chapter 1		
5-Feb	Monday	Chapter 2	C1 HW Due	Discuss Survey
7-Feb	Wednesday	Chapter 2		Discuss Survey
12-Feb	Monday	Chapter 3	C2 HW Due	
				Submit Pilot Questions
14-Feb	Wednesday	Chapter 3		
19-Feb	Monday	Chapter 4	C3 HW Due	
21-Feb	Wednesday	Chapter 4		Pilot in field
26-Feb	Monday	Chapter 5	C4 HW Due	Pilot in field
28-Feb	Wednesday	Chapter 5		Pilot in field
5-Mar	Monday	Review 1-5	C5 HW Due	Pilot in field
7-Mar	Wednesday	Review 1-5		Pilot in field
12-Mar	Monday	EXAM 1		Pilot in field
		Review Exam		
14-Mar	Wednesday	1		Pilot in field
		SPRING		
19-Mar	Monday	BREAK		Pilot in field
		SPRING		
21-Mar	Wednesday	BREAK		Pilot in field
26-Mar	Monday	Chapter 6		
				Pilot Data Analysis Due
28-Mar	Wednesday	Chapter 6		
2-Apr	Monday	Chapter 7	C6 HW Due	Pilot Revisions Due
4-Apr	Wednesday	Chapter 7		
9-Apr	Monday	Chapter 8	C7 HW Due	Distribute Survey
11-Apr	Wednesday	Chapter 8		Survey in field
16-Apr	Monday	Chapter 9	C8 HW Due	Survey in field
18-Apr	Wednesday	Chapter 9		Survey in field
23-Apr	Monday	Special Topic	C9 HW Due	Survey in field
25-Apr	Wednesday	Special Topic		Survey in field

30-Apr	Monday	Review		
2-May	Wednesday	Review		
7-May	Monday	EXAM 2		
			Submit online by 5pm	
16-May	Wednesday	Final Paper	EST	Policy Memo Due

Government and Politics Department Subject Pool

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 201) 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 quantitative research article. (If you are under 18 years old, you must have parental assent on file for you to participate in a research study or you may choose to write the paper instead.) 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 your TA that you participated in the study.