

# Political Science 585: Techniques in Political Analysis

Winter Quarter 2005  
Monday/Wednesday 7:30-9:18 AM  
Derby 0125

Instructor: Corwin D. Smidt  
Office: Derby Hall 3056  
Office Hours: Monday/Wednesday 10-11 AM, and by appointment  
Mailbox: Derby Hall 2136

Email: [smidt.2@osu.edu](mailto:smidt.2@osu.edu)  
Webpage: [psweb.sbs.ohio-state.edu/grads/csmidt/classes/techpa.html](http://psweb.sbs.ohio-state.edu/grads/csmidt/classes/techpa.html)  
Phone: 614-247-6439

## 1 Course Description

*Techniques in Political Analysis* is unlike other political science courses at Ohio State. Its goal is to introduce you to the process of social scientific analysis. The social science enterprise develops theories and tools to explain how our society, culture, economy, government, and individuals function and interact with the human world around them.

Since social science tries to explain how humans and human institutions perform we need a way to verify whether our explanations are valid. One way to do this is to examine their internal consistency, examine whether our explanations, given our initial assumptions, make logical sense. This technique can only get you so far however as there can be logically consistent arguments that differ in their explanations and predictions. In order to decipher among these theories and explanations we seek to verify their predictions *empirically*, that is through observation or experience. This process involves using specific research methods, data, and techniques to test the accuracy of their predictions.

This class introduces individuals to social science empirical analysis, both how to do it yourself and how to be a wise consumer of the vast number of empirical arguments about our everyday world. In order to do this, the class will address two important topics:

1. *How you think about social phenomenon.* This class will teach you an appropriate reasoning framework for asking questions about social mechanisms. How does one translate a belief about the world into a testable hypothesis? What is a hypothesis? How many ways can one factor influence another factor? In what ways can theories be tested? What might be other factors influencing a hypothesized relationship?
2. *How you assess your thoughts empirically.* We will also cover methodological techniques to investigate what is going on in our world. In other words, we will learn tools to address questions about social and political phenomena. How does one operationalize one's concept? How do you test whether the observed relationship between two factors is or is not a random fluke? How does the level of one factor influence the level of another factor?

If you do not quite understand what these questions mean, don't worry, you should by the end of this class.

**A Word of Caution:** Some of you might find this course more difficult than others because it feels more like a math or science class. However, I guarantee you this is not because the subject matter is more difficult, but because you are not as used to taking these courses as you are other political science courses. This class may take more work initially, but if you put in that effort it will pay off for the rest of the class.

## 2 Course Materials

### Required Book:

Philip H. Pollock III. *The Essentials of Political Analysis*. 2nd edition. 2005. CQ Press.

Philip H. Pollock III. *An SPSS Companion to Political Analysis*. 2nd edition. 2005. CQ Press.

Bundle ISBN: 1-933116-34-X.

### Recommended Books:

Larry Gonick and Woollcott Smith *A Cartoon Guide to Statistics*. Whatever edition you can find.

### Software and Computing:

Course assignments and other exercises will require the use of computers and specific types of computer software. This class concentrates mostly on using one of these programs, SPSS, but some of you may also want to learn another statistical program, R. Greater information about these programs and which one is right for you will be covered in class. Both are free to download.

SPSS is available on the lab computers but can also be downloaded from OIT and used on one's individual computer after filling out a form. Go to: <http://osusls.osu.edu/upgrades/stg2wnx.html>.

R is free to download on the web at: <http://cran.r-project.org/>.

If a student is not able to perform the assignments on a personal computer then they can use the computers within this classroom (Derby 0125) during the labs open hours. Since these computers have the required software installed all students are expected to be able to meet the software and computing resource requirements. EXCUSES FOR LATE OR INCOMPLETE WORK THAT INVOLVE A LACK OF COMPUTING RESOURCES WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

## 3 Course Requirements and Grading

The final grade will be calculated from the following components:

**Exams:** Midterm, 20 percent of your grade. Final, 30 percent of your grade. 50 percent together.

**Assignments:** 7, worth a total of 40 percent. Assignments are due, in class, on the day noted within the syllabus. If you are not able to make class you must find a way to get the assignment to me before class begins that day. All late work will be penalized by 15 percent for each working day late. That is if an assignment is due Thursday and you hand it to me on Tuesday the highest grade you can get is a 55 percent. UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES WILL EXCUSES FOR LATE WORK BE ACCEPTED.

Assignment 1: Written: to be handed out in class (available on webpage)

Assignment 2: *Companion* Chapter 2: Exercises 1-5

Assignment 3: *Companion* Chapter 3: Exercises 1-10

Assignment 4: *Companion* Chapter 5: Exercises 1-4

Assignment 5: *Companion* Chapter 6: Exercises 1-3

Assignment 6: *Companion* Chapter 7: Exercises 1-4, plus handout

Assignment 7: *Companion* Chapter 8: Exercises 1-5, plus handout

**Attendance:** One free skip day (not counting tests or assignments), no excuses accepted otherwise, 1 point off for each class missed. 10 percent. Note: you need to go to the Midterm and Final Exam times listed. No excuses or alternative times accepted unless for extreme circumstances and the instructor reserves the right to require official documentation.

**Scale:** Scores within 100-97 are an A; 97-91: A-; 91-87: B+; 87-83: B; 83-80: B-; 80-77: C+; 77-73: C; 73-70: C-; 70-67: D+; 67-60: D; and everything else is an E. No rounding!

## 4 Class Outline and Schedule

Dates	Subject	Reading
January 4	Introduction: Why is it called Political <i>Science</i> ?	<i>Essentials</i> Introduction
January 9	Theories and Hypotheses	<i>Essentials</i> Chapter 2, <i>Companion</i> Chapter 1 and Handouts
January 11	Research Design	<i>Essentials</i> Chapter 2 and Handouts
January 16	NO CLASS; MLK JR. DAY	
January 18	Measurement	<i>Essentials</i> Chapter 1 <b>Assignment 1 Due</b>
January 23	Summary Statistics: Central Tendency	<i>Essentials</i> Chapter 3
January 25	Summary Statistics: Measures of Dispersion	Handout (available on webpage) <b>Assignment 2 Due</b>
January 30	Crosstabs I	<i>Essentials</i> Chapter 4
February 1	Crosstabs II	<i>Essentials</i> Chapter 4, <i>Companion</i> Chapter 4 <b>Assignment 3 Due</b>
February 6	SPSS Time and Midterm Review	Review Your Notes
February 8	MIDTERM	<b>Assignment 4 Due</b>
February 13	Sampling and Inference I	<i>Essentials</i> Chapter 5
February 15	Sampling and Inference II	<i>Essentials</i> Chapter 5
February 20	Statistical Significance I	<i>Essentials</i> Chapter 6 <b>Assignment 5 Due</b>
February 22	Statistical Significance II	<i>Essentials</i> Chapter 6
February 27	Measures of Association	<i>Essentials</i> Chapter 6 <b>Assignment 6 Due</b>
March 1	Linear Regression	<i>Essentials</i> Chapter 7
March 6	Linear Regression II	<i>Essentials</i> Chapter 7 <b>Assignment 7 Due</b>
March 8	Final Review	

FINAL EXAM: MONDAY, MARCH 13 7:30-9:18AM; DERBY 0125

The listings above are subject to change and additional readings may also be assigned.

## 5 The Fine Print: Disclaimers and Warnings

### 5.1 Academic Misconduct

Academic misconduct will not be tolerated. Examples of misconduct include violating rules stated in this syllabus, cheating, plagiarism, dishonesty, and alteration of grades or forms. All of the work you hand in within this course is expected to be your own. Cheating or plagiarism is an insult to me, your peers, and yourself; it is not to be tolerated. Instances of cheating will be handled according the school's *Code of Student Conduct*. For more information, and a complete definition of Academic Misconduct see: <http://www.osu.edu/offices/oa/procedures>.

### 5.2 Special Needs

Any student who feels he/she may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss your specific needs within the first two weeks of class. If you are unsure of whether you have special needs please contact OSU's Office for Disability Services (<http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu>) at 614-292-3307 or 150 Pomerene Hall. Course materials are available in alternative formats upon request. For such materials, please contact Mr. Wayne DeYoung, 2140 Derby Hall, 154 North Oval Mall, 292-2880. If you have any questions please feel free to ask me, all information and documentation will be confidential.

### 5.3 University Mandated Language for GEC Courses: Rationale and Learning Objectives

"Courses in quantitative and logical skills develop logical reasoning, including the ability to identify valid arguments, use mathematical models, and draw conclusions based on quantitative data.

**Data Analysis.** Students understand statistics and probability, comprehend mathematical methods needed to analyze statistical arguments, and recognize the importance of statistical ideas."

### 5.4 Final Caveat

This course hopefully will not deviate from what is written above, but I reserve the right to modify anything within it as I see needed to improve your learning experience.