# PS 348: Political Analysis
## Dr. Chris Cooper

**Course Overview**
This course is different from most Political Science courses you have taken. Rather than reading about what others have discovered, in this course you will do your own research. Throughout this semester you will be introduced to the basics of research methodology and the quantitative analysis of politics. While some other departments offer a number of courses in methodology, we offer one that combines (1) research design, (2) philosophy of science, and (3) basic statistics. This approach means that we will gain a more complete picture of the research process in one semester, but also means that we will have to work hard to get through all of the material. Upon completing this course you will be proficient in research design, basic statistical analysis, survey research, data presentation, and appropriate computer applications for evaluating politics.

**Required Text**
Carlson, James M., and Mark S. Hyde. 2003. *Doing Empirical Political Research*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.

We will also have a number of reserve readings that you will be responsible for.

**Academic Honesty**
Academic honesty is one component of your professional and personal development, and I regard this as an extremely important matter. The university has administrative procedures and rules regarding academic honesty (listed on pgs. 7-8 of the student handbook), but there are three basic rules should help you. First, do your own work. Second, if you borrowed an idea from someone else, make certain they receive proper attribution. Third, if you are in doubt, ask me.

**Disability Statement**
If you have any special needs that will affect your ability to perform in this class, please contact Student Support Services at 828-227-7127, located in room 248 of the Killian Annex

**Course Components and Format**
There is no one approach to learning research methods and, as a result, each class period will work differently. Some meetings will be typical lecture/discussion sessions. Others will be spent working through problems in groups. Others still will be spent on the computer. Class meetings are intended to clarify or supplement information from the readings, not to summarize it. Assignments must be read prior to class!

*Attendance/Participation/In-Class Assignments*: 50 points of your final grade will rest on your attendance and performance in class. 30 of these points will depend on your participation in a class-wide research project that will require some out-of-class, hands-on research experience. Details of this will be explained in class.

*Homework:* Homework assignments are due at the beginning of class and will not be accepted late. If you miss an in-class assignment, it may not be turned in late. I reserve the right to add more homework assignments throughout the semester.

*Exams*:  There will be a midterm and a final exam.  We will discuss the details in class.

*Final Project*: Each student will complete a research project.  You may either team up with another class member, or do this project on your own.  This will be a full-fledged research paper and will include application of the concepts we've learned throughout the semester.  The topic of the paper is up to you, and I suggest that you begin thinking about it now.  I have a number of very specific requirements for this paper that we will discuss in class.

| | |
|---|---|
| Homework assignments (20 pts x 5) | 100 points |
| Midterm Exam | 100 points |
| Final Exam | 100 points |
| Final Project | 100 points |
| Attendance/Participation/in-Class assignments | 50 points |
| **Total** | **450 points** |

**Dates of General Importance**
August 30- Drop/Add ends
September 5- Labor Day Holiday
October 19- Last day to drop an UG course with an automatic W
October 21- Last day for students completing programs in May to file degree application in Dean's office
October 24-Nov. 11- Academic advising for Spring
November 18- Last day to drop a course for mental health, medical, legal or administrative reasons
December 9- Last day of regular class meetings
December 10-16- Final Exams
December 17- Commencement, 2:00 PM

| PSC 348: Course Schedule | | |
|---|---|---|
| Date | Topic | Reading Due |
| Thursday, August 25 | Introduction | |
| Tuesday, August 30 | What is scientific | *Moneyball* |
| Thursday, September 1 | **No Class: American Political Science Association Conference** | |
| Tuesday, September 6 | The research process | *Freakonomics*, Chapters 1 & 2 in C&H |
| Thursday, September 8 | Philosophy of science and measurement | Popkin and McDonald; C&H chapter 7 |
| Tuesday, September 13 | Research Design | Dogs That Know When Their Owners are Coming Home |
| Thursday, September 15 | Research Design | C&H chapter 6 |
| Tuesday, September 20 | Experiments | Page article |
| Thursday, September 22 | Experiments | C&H, pgs. 276-290 |
| Tuesday, September 27 | Surveys | C&H, chapter 10 |
| Thursday, September 29 | Surveys | |
| Tuesday, October 4 | Workshop: survey research | |
| Thursday, October 6 | Case studies and other nonexperimental research designs | |
| Tuesday, October 11 | Data preparation and entry | |
| **Thursday, October 13** | **No Class: Fall Holiday** | |
| Tuesday, October 18 | Data preparation and entry workshop | |
| Thursday, October 20 | Sampling and review for exam | |
| Tuesday, October 25 | **Midterm Exam** | |
| Thursday, October 27 | A little bit of math, presenting data | |
| Tuesday, November 1 | Univariate statistics | C&H, chapter 13 |
| Thursday, November 3 | More univariate statistics | |
| Tuesday, November 8 | Start multivariate statistics | C&H, chapter 14 |
| Thursday, November 10 | Cross tabs/chi square | C&H, pgs. 287-400 |
| Tuesday, November 15 | Chi square and measures of association | |
| Thursday, November 17 | Measures of association | |
| Tuesday, November 22 | Measures of association and data manipulation | |
| **Thursday, November 24** | **No Class: Thanksgiving Holiday** | |
| Tuesday, November 29 | Regression | C&H, chapter 15 |
| Thursday, December 1 | Regression | C&H, chapter 16 |
| Tuesday, December 6 | Catch-Up | |
| Thursday, December 8 | Paper presentations | |
| **Thursday, December 15** | **Final Exam 3:00-5:30** | |

**PS 348 Paper Details**

You need to be clear on your research question, hypotheses, independent variable(s), dependent variable, unit of analysis, and where you will be getting your data. Over the next few weeks, you should be (1) finding your data and getting it into a useable form (2) Researching your topic—what have others found?

Although each paper will be slightly different, your paper should roughly follow the following form:

1) **Introduction**- Here you will give a brief (1-3 paragraph) introduction to your paper. What is your research question? Why is this question important?

2) **Literature review**- In this section, you will review what others have written on this subject.

3) **Hypotheses**- Your literature review will lead to at least one (and potentially many) hypothesis/hypotheses. Present them here.

4) **Data and Methods**- Describe where you are getting your data—for example if it's from a survey you should describe the survey methodology. If it's an experiment, you should describe how the experiment is done. You should discuss operational definitions here. If you are trying to measure racism, how are you doing it? The purpose here is to give the reader enough information to decide for themselves whether the data were collected in a reasonable way.

5) **Results**- You will apply some statistical test to see if your hypothesis is true. You might also present some descriptive information.

6) **Conclusions**- Briefly review what your paper showed. Try to look back at the big picture. What does this small paper tell us about the bigger picture? For instance, if you find that those with more money are more likely to get into Harvard than those without much money, this has major implications for the distribution of resources in American society. It would provide a suggestion that we don't all truly have an equal opportunity to succeed. Here you should also present the limitations of your study. Is your study high in internal validity, but low in external validity? Is the opposite true? Can there be other unobserved factors that are driving the relationship you found (or did not find)? Is your method of data collection failed in some way?

*A good way to get started on this project is to find an article from a political science, psychology, or sociology journal to use as a model. A brief list of journals is on the following page. I can also suggest more if you ask.

**Appendix 1: Academic Journals by Subject**

General Political Science:
- *American Political Science Review* (JSTOR and print)
- *American Journal of Political Science* (JSTOR and print)
- *Journal of Politics* (JSTOR and print)
- *Political Research Quarterly*[*] (JSTOR and print)

General American Politics
- American Politics Research[†] (Print and EbscoHost)

General International politics
- *International Studies Quarterly* (JSTOR and print)
- *Journal of Peace Research*
- *International Organizations*

Media and politics
- *Political Communication* (print)

State politics
- *State Politics and Policy Quarterly* (print)
- *State and Local Government Review* (print)

Local politics
- *Urban Affairs Review*
- *State and Local Government Review* (print)

Gender and Politics
- *Women and Politics*

Congress
- *Legislative Studies Quarterly* (JSTOR and print)

The Presidency
- *Presidential Studies Quarterly*

Comparative Politics
- *Comparative Political Studies*

General Social Science
- *Social Science Quarterly* (print)

Public Law and Judicial Behavior
- *Judicature*

---

[*] Formerly *Western Political Quarterly*
[†] Formerly *American Politics Quarterly*