Angelo State University  
Department of Political Science and Philosophy  

Spring 2018  
POLS 4361 Scope and Methods of Political Science  

Section 10  
Location: RAS 110  
Time: MWF, 11am-11:50am  

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Course Synopsis  
The aim of this course is to introduce you to different methods for conducting scientific research in political science, and to guide you through the various stages of the research process. This process begins with identifying an interesting political concept and question and then advances to setting up a valid and constructive approach to investigating possible answers to that question. We will also be exploring the nature and psychological demands of scientific inquiry in the political arena, as well as the strengths and limitations of prevailing methodological approaches in political science research. We will review some of the current trends in the discipline. The course culminates in your presenting and submitting a finalized version of your own sophisticated research paper that applies lessons learned throughout the course.  

Required Text  
*The Essentials of Political Analysis, 5e*, Pollock (EPA)  
Additional readings will be posted on the course Blackboard  

Course Goals  
There are 4 Student Learning Objectives listed on p. 7 of this document that have been developed by the political science program and will be assessed in this capstone course. These focus on development of (1) skills relating to political science, (2) awareness of ethical dilemmas in political science research, and (3) comprehension of political phenomena. Your progress towards these objectives will be assessed through your performance on the end of chapter exercises, the oral presentation, and final paper (see below). Importantly, assessment score data is *collected for program development and does not factor into your course grade.*
Course Format and Expectations

Readings and Exercises: Our main task during class time will be to work through the first 8 chapters of EPA. Three additional readings have been assigned that will help us connect what is going on in the textbook to the broader discipline of political science. The course can be divided into two halves, before and after spring break. Before spring break, we will work through the basics of political analysis with little time spent on statistics. We will move into the basics of statistical inference after spring break, finishing with basic regression analysis as it is presented in Chapter 8 of EPA. There will be end of chapter exercises assigned from each chapter.

Class Discussion. Some sections of class time will be devoted to lecture, while others will involve in-class exercises and/or focused discussion. Everyone is expected to come prepared to class ready to listen, to think, to write, and to participate in class discussion.

Exams: There are no exams in this course.

The Research Paper: For each student, the fruit of this course is a sophisticated research paper that clearly identifies and investigates an interesting political question. Before spring break I will ask you to submit several (small) sections of this paper. After spring break, if your sections are approved, you will be tasked with taking your paper to the next level -- conducting a literature review, integrating and revising all sections of your paper.

Presentations: The last week of class we will have research presentations, during which you will present the current stage of your research paper.

Extra Credit: Opportunities will arise over the course of the semester. Keep an eye out!

Attendance Policy—Please Read Carefully

Attendance is mandatory and roll will be taken each class. You are allowed 2 weeks’ worth of “free” absences (4 absences)—these are for any reason—after which I will subtract two points per absence from your final grade point total. There are no “excused” or “unexcused” types of absences in this course, except in very serious and/or emergency circumstances. Please be present and on time as much as possible.

Assignments and Grading

Grade Distribution

- 5 Paper Sections @ 4% each 20%
- 5 Exercise Assignments @ 4% each 20%
- Research Presentation 20%
- Final Paper 40%
**Grading Scale**
A  100-90  
B  89-80  
C  79-70  
D  69-60  
F  59 & below

**Academic Honesty**
*This class strictly adheres to the university’s policy on academic honesty.* Please consult the following website for guidelines on the proper citation of sources and for avoiding plagiarism: http://www.angelo.edu/student-handbook/code-of-student-conduct/misconduct.php. *Sanctions for a violation of Academic Policy can include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and a notation on the academic record, and suspension from the university.*

**Religious Observances**
Every effort will be made to accommodate all forms of religious observance in compliance with ASU OP 10.19. Students who require additional arrangements to be made should make these known in good time in order that arrangements can be made.

**Students with Disabilities**
Students that feel that they may need special assistance for any reason should contact the Student Life Office, Rm 112 University Center.
Readings, Assignments, and Due Dates

Week 1 – What is political knowledge?
17-Jan  Introduction to the course
        Intro to qualitative method
19-Jan  Discuss reading

Week 2 – What is political science?
22-Jan  Discuss reading
24-Jan  Discuss reading
26-Jan  Collecting a bit of data

Week 3 – Does Weberian political science produce political knowledge?
29-Jan  Discuss reading
31-Jan  Discuss reading
2-Feb   Dataset due

Week 4 -- Concepts
5-Feb   Discuss reading
7-Feb   Discuss reading
9-Feb   Practice Ch. 1 exercises

Week 5 -- Variables
12-Feb  Discuss reading
14-Feb  Discuss reading and select exercises
        Chapter 1 and 2 exercises due
16-Feb  Concept assignment due
        Asking a research question

Week 6 – Research example: Partisans & Independents
19-Feb  Discuss reading
21-Feb  Discuss reading
23-Feb  Research question assignment due
        Constructing a hypothesis

Week 7 -- Hypotheses
26-Feb  Discuss reading
28-Feb  Discuss reading
2-Mar   Hypothesis assignment due
        Practice Ch. 3 exercises
Week 8 -- Research Design
5-Mar  Discuss reading  Chapter 4
7-Mar  Discuss reading and select exercises  Chapter 4, cont.
9-Mar  **Chapter 3 and 4 exercises due**, Review the project handout

Spring Break, March 12-16

Week 9 -- Controlled Comparisons
19-Mar  Discuss reading  Chapter 5
21-Mar  Discuss reading and select exercises  Chapter 5, cont.
23-Mar  Project handout workshop, practice Chapter 5 exercises

Week 10 -- Foundations of Statistical Inference
26-Mar  Discuss reading  Chapter 6
28-Mar  Practice Chapter 6 exercises  Chapter 6, cont.

Week 11 -- Tests of Significance and Measures of Association
2-Apr  Discuss reading  Chapter 7
4-Apr  Discuss reading  Chapter 7, cont.
6-Apr  **Research design assignment due**
       **Chapter 5 and 6 exercises due**
       Engaging with the literature

Week 12 -- Continue from previous week
9-Apr  Discuss reading  Chapter 7, cont.
11-Apr  Discuss reading  Chapter 7, cont.
13-Apr  Catch up / review day  Chs. 1-7

Week 13 -- Correlation and Linear Regression
16-Apr  Discuss reading  Chapter 8
18-Apr  Discuss reading  pp. 183-200
20-Apr  **Literature review assignment due**
       Practice Chapter 8 exercises

Week 14 -- Continue from previous week
23-Apr  Discuss reading  Chapter 8
25-Apr  Discuss reading  pp. 183-200
27-Apr  **Chapter 7 and 8 exercises due**
Week 15 -- Presentations
30-Apr  Group A
2-May    Group B
4-May    Paper workshop

**Final Paper due May 9th @ 11:59pm**
Political Science Program Student Learning Objectives

(SLO 1) Students will demonstrate critical reading and critical writing skills relating to Political Science subjects.

(SLO 2) Students will demonstrate technical and analytic skills that are appropriate to Political Science and applicable to their future academic and career aspirations.

(SLO 3) Students will demonstrate awareness of ethical and moral dilemmas relating to Political Science.

(SLO 4) To demonstrate comprehension of significant political phenomena at either the sub-national, national, or inter-national level.