

Introduction to Political Science Research

Number POLS 209
Term Summer 2017
Location Allen 1016
Day and Time MTWRF 12:00-1:35

Instructor Carlisle Rainey
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Office Allen 2051
Office Hours* **MTWRF 10:35-11:35am**

*Please make an appointment during office hours using the link at the course webpage. This helps me be prepared.

Description

This course provides an introduction to political science research methods. We examine concepts, computation, and applications alongside one another.

Course Website

I post all materials for this course to carlislerainey.com/teaching/pols-209. I recommend bookmarking this page.

Outcomes

In taking this course seriously, you will:

1. Acquire and/or further develop knowledge of...
 - a. basic statistical tools, such as the histograms, average, standard deviation, normal approximation, scatterplot, correlation, simple and multiple regression, sample survey, and hypothesis tests.
 - b. basic concepts in probability theory, such as conditional probability, the law of averages, the expected value, and the standard error.
2. Acquire and/or further develop the ability to...
 - a. evaluate empirical arguments.
 - b. use R to implement basic statistical tools.
 - c. clearly explain data and analysis in an honest and compelling manner.

Textbooks and Software

You need to obtain the following items for this class:

1. Freedman, David, Robert Pisani, and Roger Purves. 2007. *Statistics*. 4th Edition. W. W. Norton and Company. New York. ISBN: 0393929728.
 - **It is important to get the 4th Edition**, and I recommend a hardcopy rather than an eTextbook.
 - I had originally planned to use an eTextbook, but changed my mind, partly due to cost. As a result, the bookstore does not have copies of the book. However, you should find online sellers cheaper.

- Barnes and Noble prices: \$149 new, \$112 used, \$120 new rental, and \$67 used rental.
 - Amazon Prices: \$145 new, \$45 used, and \$58 rental.
 - You should have the textbook by **July 11**.
2. A pocket calculator. I bought mine at Walmart for about \$3. I do not allow graphing calculators on the exams, so if you have any questions, please ask. [Here](#) is an example from Amazon. You should have your calculator by **July 11**.
 3. R and R Studio. These are free pieces of software. First, download and install R from cran.r-project.org, then download and install RStudio (Desktop) from rstudio.com. If you need a little help, there are helpful videos on the web for [Windows](#) and [Mac](#) or you can ask me. You should have these programs downloaded and installed by **July 7**. If you happen to use a Chromebook, see me.

Grading

Below is a summary of the graded assignments in the course, their due dates, and their weights:

Category	Component	Due Date	Component Weight	Category Weight
Exams	Exam 1	Monday, July 17	10%	35%
	Exam 2	Monday, July 24	10%	
	Cumulative Final Exam	Tuesday, August 8, 1-3pm	15%	
Legislator Ideology Paper (1,400 wds.)	Initial Submission	Thursday, July 20	15%	25%
	Peer Review	Wednesday, July 26	5%	
	Final Submission	Tuesday, July 31	5%	
Data Collection Paper (600 wds.)	Only Submission	Friday, August 4	10%	10%
Preparation	Attendance	Daily	10%	30%
	Participation	Daily	10%	
	Homework	Daily	10%	
Total			100%	

- By university rule, **if you do not pass the writing portion of the class, then you do not get credit for a W course**. This means you must earn at least 25 of the 35 possible points from the two writing assignments to receive credit for a W course.
- **Exams**. There are three multiple-choice exams throughout the semester. The exams are cumulative and focus on all of the material covered up to the exam, including the readings, lectures, and exercises. The assigned exercises should serve as excellent preparation for the exams.
- **Writing Assignments**. The first (longest, most points) writing assignment has three stages: initial submission, peer review, and final submission. Do not think of the initial submission as a “first

draft.” The initial submission should be a carefully-written, polished paper. After the initial submission, you will receive written comments from two of your peers. (You will also offer comments on two of your classmates’ papers.) You will improve the paper in light of the comments and respond to these comments in a short memo to me. The second writing assignment (shortest, fewest points) has a single, final submission.

• **Preparation.**

- *Attendance.* I will take attendance at the beginning of each class. You have two free absences. After two absences, I will deduct one point from the 10 possible attendance points for each absence. Excused absences do not deduct from your free absences. I decide what counts as excused on a case-by-case basis (I’m reasonable about it, so don’t be afraid to ask). Just talk to me *before* you miss class. **If you have more than 15 unexcused absences, then you will receive and F in the course.** While I understand that unexpected events can cause tardiness, I reserve the right to mark late arrivals as absences (especially if walking in late becomes a habit). Should you arrive to class late, be sure to let me know after class so that I can mark you as present.
- *Participation.* At the end of the semester, I will make a subjective judgment of the quality of your participation, based on the rubric below. In general, I expect students to contribute to each class. I especially value (relevant) questions.

	Excellent (5 points)	Good (3 points)	Poor (0 points)
Frequency of Participation	Asks questions and/or presents ideas in all classes.	Asks questions and/or presents ideas in some classes.	Does not ask questions or present ideas in any classes.
Quality of Participation	Always asks relevant questions and presents ideas that indicate the student is well-prepared.	Sometimes asks off-topic questions and presents ideas that indicate the student not well-prepared.	Usually asks off-topic questions and presents ideas that indicate the student not well-prepared.
Listening	Always listens attentively when others ask questions or present ideas.	Sometimes fails to listen attentively when others ask questions or present ideas.	Usually fails to listen attentively when others ask questions or present ideas.

- *Homework.* Before class starts, I will grade your assigned exercises on a S/U scale. I’m look for you to demonstrate an effort to solve the homework exercises and complete any assignments (e.g, have the textbook and pocket calculator by July 11).

• **Final grade.** Your points in the course will translate into a letter grade using the table below:

Letter Grade	Points
A	[90, 100]
B	[80, 90)
C	[70, 80)
D	[60, 70)
F	[0, 60)

Missed Classes and Late Assignments

If you are going to miss a class, notify me before the class via e-mail. Your e-mail should explain and document why you are going to miss the class. In the case of an unexpected absence, notify me within the next two working days. Your e-mail should explain and document why you missed the class and why you could not notify me beforehand. I might follow up with a request for more documentation.

If you miss an in-class, graded assignment (e.g., exam), then I usually expect you to make up the assignment during my next office hours. To avoid advantaging some students over others, I might use an alternative make-up assignment.

If you are absent on a day that an out-of-class assignment is due (e.g., writing assignment), then I usually expect you to submit the assignment early unless you have made prior arrangements with me. I do not accept assignments submitted via email except in unusual circumstances.

Any assignment turned in late, such as writing assignments or exams, are penalized 10 percentage points per class. For example, if the writing assignment is due on Thursday, I will simply subtract 10 points from your score if you turn it in by the beginning of the next class (usually Friday), 20 points if you turn it in by the beginning of the class after that (usually Monday), and so on.

Workload

Federal guidelines define a single semester credit hour as “one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a *minimum* of two hours of out of class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks.” I have made an effort to design this class following this definitions. All students are different, but as a rough starting point, you should plan to spend about **16 hours per week** outside of class on course material.

To help you with planning, here are my rough estimates for how much time to set aside for various assignments:

- **Reading the textbook.** You should spend about one to two hours reading each assigned chapter and completing the assigned exercises. That’s about 30 hours.
- **Completing the exercises for R.** The R assignments (from the notes on R) should take about one hour each. That’s about seven hours.
- **Completing the writing assignments.** You should plan to spend about 14 hours on Writing Assignment 1 and about six hours on Writing Assignment 2. That’s about 20 hours.
- **Reviewing for exams.** You should plan to spend about six hours reviewing for the first and second exams about about eight hours reviewing for the final. That’s about 20 hours.

That’s about 80 hours of work spread across five weeks or about 16 hours per week. Because of the volume of work in this course, you may want to work ahead. If you do this, which I recommend, I suggest you read the assigned chapters in the textbook and do the assigned exercises. I have listed the assigned chapters and exercises in a single document on the course webpage to make this convenient.

ADA Policy Statement

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this

legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact Disability Services, in Cain Hall, Room B118, or call 845-1637. For additional information visit <http://disability.tamu.edu>.

Honor Code

“An Aggie does not lie, cheat or steal, or tolerate those who do.” I expect that all work represented as your own throughout the semester be your own. Any work done with the help of others should clearly indicate such. The Aggie Honor Code is available at <https://aggiehonor.tamu.edu>.

Changes to Syllabus

I reserve the right to update/modify/clarify the syllabus with advance notification. Below is a list of changes made so far:

- Update office hours to 10:35am to 11:35am.