

SCOPE AND METHODS OF POLITICAL SCIENCE (POLS 2010)
FALL 2021
Mondays & Wednesdays 11:00-11:50
Howard-Tilton Library B07
[Sections on Fridays 11:00-11:50 or 01:00-01:50]

Professor: Virginia Oliveros (she/her)

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Office: Political Science Department, 311 Norman Mayer Building

Office Hours (on zoom): Mondays & Wednesdays, 1:30-2:30

Appointments: <https://virginiaoliveros.youcanbook.me>

Zoom for office hours: <https://tulane.zoom.us/my/virginiaoliveros>

Teaching Assistants:

Renzo Aurazo Diaz (he/him), raurazodiaz@tulane.edu.

Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 11:00-12:00.

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Office Hours: Thursdays, 2:00-4:00pm

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

Why do some democracies engage in more economic redistribution than others? Under what conditions do citizens punish corrupt politicians? Why some countries have more political parties than others? These are examples of the types of questions that motivate political scientists. This course asks how we can provide satisfactory answers to such questions.

This course provides an introduction to the methods that political scientists and other social scientists use to generate and answer questions about the world around us. The main goals are to provide you with the tools to evaluate critically social science research, and to improve your ability to pose and answer research questions of your own. In order to *conduct* social science research, you need to know how to (1) formulate a research question, (2) develop hypotheses, (3) design a research plan to test those hypotheses, (4) collect quantitative and/or qualitative data, and (5) analyze that data. In order to *evaluate* social science research, you need to be able to identify and critique all of these stages in someone else's research.

This course is an introduction for undergraduate students to research in political science. The analytical skills you develop in this class should help you assess the quality of information and argumentation you encounter in a variety of settings—from textbooks to scholarly research to news reports to even casual conversation. Learning to think scientifically in this manner is a skill that you will find useful in other political science courses and in your career (and life!). No background in statistics or mathematics beyond high school algebra is assumed.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After completing this course, students will be able to: 1. Identify and explain different subfields in political science, dominant research designs used in the field, and diverse methods of inquiry. 2. Compare the merits and drawbacks of different evaluative approaches to political science, and

make informed choices about how to best pursue scholarly research in topics of interest to them. 3. Synthesize a literature review, hypothesis, argument, and research methods in a semester-long research design project. 4. Apply critical perspectives to methods used in various political science papers discussed in class. 5. Identify and apply norms of ethical research, including the use of humans as research subjects.

TEACHING ASSISTANTS

On Mondays and Wednesdays, class will be a lecture with Prof. Oliveros. On Fridays, you will meet with your TA and the discussion will have a more practical approach to the topics of the week.

Your TA is the point person for this course. If you have questions or concerns about course material, class absences, your performance, or any other class-related issue, you should FIRST go to your TA. In most cases, they will be able to help you with any issue that arises, particularly as it related to class material and performance. You can come to Prof. Oliveros if you are unable to resolve the issue with your TA. If you come to Prof. Oliveros first, you will be asked to go back to your TA.

REQUIRED READINGS

Students are expected to read each of the required readings carefully before coming to class. The format of the course will combine lecture and discussion and students should be prepared to engage in discussion. There is one required textbook:

Brancati, Dawn. *Social Scientific Research* (Sage 2018)

The rest of the assigned readings are available on Canvas.

REQUIREMENTS

	Date	Percent
Attendance and Participation		5%
Assignments (group)	Various	10%
Midterm exam	October 6	20%
Annotated bibliography (group)	October 22	5%
Literature review (group)	November 5	10%
Research proposal paper (group)	December 10	20%
Final exam	December 18	30%

1. ATTENDANCE, AND PARTICIPATION (5%)

Regular attendance is required. If you miss a class or two, you do not need to tell your TA. If absences, tardiness, or under-preparation becomes a problem, your grade will suffer. You are expected to do the readings prior to class and come to class prepared to discuss the materials and class work.

2. ASSIGNMENTS (10%)

There will be a number of group assignments during the course of the semester (due on Canvas by midnight on Thursdays). These assignments are graded as satisfactory/unsatisfactory. The first exercises are designed to help you hone skills, organize your thoughts, and come up with a research question and testable hypotheses for your final paper. Later in the semester, we will be working on components to your papers and methodological skills. You are expected to bring the assignments to class and be prepared to discuss the answers. No late assignments accepted.

3. IN-CLASS MIDTERM EXAM (20%)

The midterm exam will take place on **October 6th**. The format of the exam will be discussed before the exam. There will be no make-up exams unless you have a documented medical excuse. The exam will include material presented both in the readings and in the lectures and will cover the material discussed up to (and including) Week 6.

4. ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY (5%)

An annotated bibliography on your intended research topic. Detailed instructions will be provided. Due on **October 22nd**.

5. LITERATURE REVIEW (10%)

A literature review on your intended research topic. Detailed instructions will be provided. Due on **November 5th**.

6. RESEARCH PROPOSAL PAPER (20%)

This requirement consists on a series of assignments that culminate in the writing of a research proposal paper. The paper will be on a topic of interest to you in political science and will build on established research on that question in the field. To develop this assignment, students are first required to submit an initial summary of a few possible topics/questions of interest. Once the TA has approved the question (by October 1st), you will work in groups of 2-3 to (1) write an annotated bibliography on that topic, (2) create a literature review, (3) discuss your tentative research plan, and (4) write an original research proposal paper (due on **December 10th**). *It is my expectation that all members of a group will receive the same grade for their group assignments; however, I reserve the right to give distinct grades based on differential individual contributions to the group project.*

The final research proposal should include a statement of the question, why it is of interest (to academics and/or the “real world”), a revised and focused (brief) literature review, a hypothesis or hypotheses, a description and justification of the methodology you propose to use, and how it can be reasonably carried out. This final research proposal should incorporate comments and suggestions received from the TAs and your classmates. More details to come.

7. IN-CLASS CUMULATIVE FINAL (30%)

The cumulative final exam will be a closed-book exam covering material from the entire semester. The format of the exam will be discussed the last day of classes. The final exam, as set by the registrar, will take place on **Saturday, December 18, at 12:00pm**

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE

1. Please, do not eat during class. Due to COVID, would be better not to drink either.
2. I used to have a strict no-laptops policy in class, but things have changed with COVID. For details on why I prefer no laptops, see:
<http://www.npr.org/2016/04/17/474525392/attention-students-put-your-laptops-away>.
There is a lot of evidence that laptops in class can reduce attention and learning, so please be responsible. For you and those seated around you.
3. Make sure your cell phone is turned off and do not text during class.
4. Attendance is mandatory. If you missed a class, please get the notes from another student.

CLASS POLICIES

Attendance. Attendance is mandatory and extremely important to succeed in this class. During class, we will cover material that is not in the readings and will be part of the exams. If you missed class, ask another student for the notes. If absences, tardiness, or under-preparation becomes a problem, your grade will suffer. That said, there is a pandemic and your well-being is more important than any class, so please let us know if you are having trouble keeping up.

Recording of Class Sessions. It's hard to predict how the semester will go. The current policy for this class is recording class only for those students that are missing class for any COVID related event. Please, email the Professor and your TA to let us know at least 2 hours before class. If no one is missing class due to COVID, there will be no recording. The class recording will only be available to those under COVID quarantine. If you miss class for any other reason, please ask another student for the notes.

Make-up Exams. There will be no make-up exams unless you have a documented medical emergency. Make travel plans accordingly.

Late Work: All assignments should be turned in on time. On the **annotated bibliography**, **literature review** and **final paper**, for each day the assignment is late, one-third of a letter grade is deducted from the final grade on the assignment *up to five days late*. After that, they will not be accepted. I strongly encourage you to discuss any problems with your TA *before* the due date.

Grading. This course will be graded according to the following scale:

A	>=93	B+	87-89	C+	77-79	D+	67-69	F= 59 & below
A-	90-92	B	83-86	C	73-76	D	63-66	
		B-	80-82	C-	70-72	D-	60-62	

Disputing grades. Teaching assistants will be happy to go over any exam or assignment with you to help you to improve for the following assignment or the final. Indeed, I encourage you to go to office hours to do so, especially if you think that you studied hard but did not get the expected results. Request for re-grading, though, must be done in writing. Students requesting re-grading should describe (based on the class' materials) what they feel constitute the correct answer and how their work meet the standard described.

FINAL NOTE: THIS SYLLABUS CAN BE AMENDED AT ANY TIME. THIS IS ALWAYS TRUE, BUT MORE SO UNDER THE CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 [August 23-27]: Introduction

Monday: Introduction

Syllabus!

Wednesday: The Science of Political Science

Brancati, Chapter 1: What is Social Science Research?

Drutman, Lee. "Clouds, Clocks, and the Unexpected Rise of Donald Trump." *Vox*. February 23, 2016.

Friday

Farrell, Henry (2010) "Good Writing in Political Science"

Week 2 [August 30 - September 3]: Research Questions

Monday

Brancati, Chapter 3: Identifying a Research Question

Wednesday

Baglione, Lisa A. 2012. *Writing a research paper in political science: a practical guide to inquiry, structure, and methods*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications. Chapter 2

Putnam, Robert. 1995. "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital," *Journal of Democracy* 6(1): 65-78.

**Assignment 1 (Questions) is due by Thursday night. Could be done in groups (2-3 people) or individually. During class, we will workshop these questions. Students working alone or in groups of fewer than 3 students will have an opportunity to find students with similar interests.*

Friday

Bring your assignment to class and be prepared to discuss the answers.

Week 3 [September 6-10]: Hypotheses, Concepts, and Variables

MONDAY: LABOR DAY- NO CLASS

Wednesday

Brancati, Chapter 6: Making Strong Arguments, skip sections "Types of Conditions" and "Problems in Causal Arguments"

**Assignment 2 (Research Questions II) is due by Thursday night. Bring your assignment to class on Friday and be prepared to discuss the answers. In groups.*

Friday

Fisman, Raymond and Edward Miguel. 2007. "Corruption, Norms and Legal Enforcement: Evidence from Diplomatic Parking Tickets," *Journal of Political Economy* 115(6): 1020-1048 (Read pages 1-8 carefully; feel free to read/skim the rest).

Week 4 [September 13-17]

Monday: Hypotheses, Concepts and Variables II

Brancati, Chapter 5: Building Effective Concepts

Dahl, Robert. 1971. *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*. New Haven: Yale University Press, Chapter 1

Wednesday: Literature Review

Brancati, Chapter 4: Conducting a Literature Review

Friday: Library Session - Literature Review

Conducting a Literature Review in Practice

Week 5 [September 20-24]

Monday: Conceptualization and Measurement

Brancati, Chapter 15: Quantitative measures

Paxton, Pamela. 2000. "Women's Suffrage in the Measurement of Democracy: Problems of Operationalization," *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 35(3): 92-111.

Wednesday: Causal Inference

Brancati, Chapter 6: Making Strong Arguments, read section "Problems in Causal Arguments"

Friday

Kastellec, Jonathan P. 2013. "Racial diversity and judicial influence on appellate courts." *American Journal of Political Science* 57(1): 167-183.

Week 6 [September 27- October 1]

Monday: Causal Inference II

Freedman et al. 2007. *Statistics*, 4th Edition. (Norton). Chapter 2: Observational Studies, pages 12-20

Humphreys, Macartan. 10 Things to Know About Causal Inference <https://egap.org/resource/10-things-to-know-about-causal-inference/>

WEDNESDAY: NO FORMAL MEETING – PROFESSOR AT APSA

Additional office hours to finalize questions for the research design. Make an appointment with your TA if your question has not been approved yet.

FRIDAY: NO FORMAL MEETING

Additional office hours to finalize questions for the research design. Make an appointment with your TA if your question has not been approved yet.

**Revised version of Assignment 2 (for those who need to revise it). In groups. This is the last chance to get approval for your question. Questions cannot be changed after this day.*

Week 7 [October 4-8]: EXAM!

MONDAY: REVIEW FOR MIDTERM

WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 6: IN-CLASS MIDTERM

FRIDAY: FALL BREAK – NO CLASS

Week 8 [October 11-15]: Forms of Data: Observational Data and Experiments

Monday

Brancati, Chapter 19: Experiments

Dunning, Thad. 2012. *Natural experiments in the social sciences*. New York: Cambridge University Press: Chapter 1.

Watch: Social Experiments to fight poverty (Ted talk by Esther Duflo, Feb 2021)

https://www.ted.com/talks/esther_duflo_social_experiments_to_fight_poverty#t-49912

Wednesday

Bertrand, Marianne and Sendhil Mullainathan. 2004. “Are Emily and Greg More Employable than Lakisha and Jamal? A Field Experiment on Labor Market Discrimination.” *The American Economic Review*: 991-1013.

Friday: Post Midterm Review – DO NOT MISS THIS ONE!

Week 9 [October 18-22]: Qualitative Methods

Monday: Single Case Study method and Process Tracing

Gerring, John. 2006. “What is a case study?” In *Case Study Research*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 2: 17-36.

Brancati, Chapter 13: Process Tracing

Wednesday: Case Selection and the Comparative Method

Brancati, Chapter 9: Case Selection

Brancati, Chapter 14: Comparative Case Method

Friday:

Geddes, Barbara. 1990. “How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics.” *Political Analysis* 2(1): 131-150.

* *Annotated Bibliography is due on Canvas. In groups.*

Week 10 [October 25-29]: Strategies to collect qualitative data

Monday

Brancati, Chapter 10: Interviews

Brancati, Chapter 11: Focus groups

Wednesday

Brancati, Chapter 18: Surveys, up to page 275 (not including list experiments)

Friday

Yanilda González. 2019. “The Social Origins of Institutional Weakness and Change: Preferences, Power, and Police Reform in Latin America.” *World Politics* 71(1): 44-86.

Week 11 [November 1-5]: Strategies to Collect Quantitative Data**Monday**

Brancati, Chapter 18: Surveys, from page 277 till the end.

Kellstedt, Paul and Guy Whitten. 2013. *The Fundamentals of Political Science Research*, 2nd edition. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 6: pp. 167-170.

Wednesday

Kellstedt, Paul and Guy Whitten. 2013. *The Fundamentals of Political Science Research*, 2nd edition. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 6: pp. 170-till the end.

Holden, C. 2009. “The 2010 census: America’s uncounted millions.” *Science* 324: 1008-1009.

Friday

Oster, Emily. “We Can’t Get a Handle on the Coronavirus Pandemic without Random Testing.” *Slate*. April 17, 2020. <https://slate.com/technology/2020/04/coronavirus-research-random-testing.html>

*Literature review is due on Canvas. In groups.

Week 12 [November 8-12]: Descriptive Statistics and Statistical Inference**Monday**

Brancati, Chapter 20: Observational Studies, up to page 309.

Brancati, Chapter 16: Quantitative Data, up to page 242 (skip the “Data Distribution” section)

Ross, Michael L. 2001. “Does Oil Hinder Democracy?” *World Politics* 53(3): 325-361. Read up to page 337.

Wednesday

Ross, Michael L. 2001. “Does Oil Hinder Democracy?” *World Politics* 53(3): 325-361. Read from page 337 (Model Specification) till the end. [You may not be able to follow all the technical details, but you should be able to get a general understanding]

*Assignment 3 (Research Design) is due by Thursday night. In groups.

Friday

Bring your assignment to class and be prepared to discuss the answers.

Week 13 [November 15-19]: Bivariate and Multivariate Analysis

Monday

Wheelan, Charles. 2013. *Naked Statistics: Stripping the Dread from Data*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company. Chapter 11: Regression Analysis

Wednesday

Long, Abby. 10 Things to Know About Reading a Regression Table
<https://egap.org/resource/10-things-to-know-about-reading-a-regression-table/>

**Assignment 4 (Research Design II) is due by Thursday night. In groups.*

Friday: Library Session - Large N data

Eric Wedig, coordinator for Scholarly Resources for the Social Sciences at the Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, will join us.

WEEK 14 [NOVEMBER 22-26]: NO CLASS - THANKSGIVING

Week 15 [November 29-December 3]

Monday: Selecting the Right Method

Brancati, Chapter 7: Method Selection

Brancati, Chapter 8: Mixed Methods Research

Wednesday: Who does what? Methods across Subfields

No readings. We will use the papers we've read already as examples

**Assignment 5(Final outline) is due by Thursday night. Outline of your final paper. In groups.*

Friday

Bring your assignment to class and be prepared to give a 3-minute synopsis of your research.

Week 16 [December 6-10]

Monday: Ethics

Brancati, Chapter 2: Research Ethics

To listen: In Tuskegee, Painful History Shadows Efforts To Vaccinate African Americans (NPR, February 16, 2021)

WEDNESDAY: REVIEW FOR THE FINAL EXAM

FRIDAY: LAST DAY OF CLASSES!

Additional review for the final, if needed

*** Final paper is due on Canvas.*

DECEMBER 18 (SATURDAY): 12:00 PM. IN CLASS FINAL CUMULATIVE EXAM

ADA/Accessibility Statement

Tulane University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability, please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. I will never ask for medical documentation from you to support potential accommodation needs. Instead, to establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with the Goldman Center for Student Accessibility. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion. **Goldman Center contact information:** goldman@tulane.edu; (504) 862-8433; accessibility.tulane.edu.

Code of Academic Conduct

The Code of Academic Conduct applies to all undergraduate students, full-time and part-time, in Tulane University. Tulane University expects and requires behavior compatible with its high standards of scholarship. By accepting admission to the university, a student accepts its regulations (i.e., [Code of Academic Conduct](#) and [Code of Student Conduct](#)) and acknowledges the right of the university to take disciplinary action, including suspension or expulsion, for conduct judged unsatisfactory or disruptive.

Religious Accommodation Policy

Both Tulane's policy of non-discrimination on the basis of religion and our core values of diversity and inclusion require instructors to make reasonable accommodations to help students avoid negative academic consequences when their religious obligations conflict with academic requirements. Every reasonable effort should be made to allow members of the university community to observe their religious holidays without jeopardizing the fulfillment of their academic obligations. It is never acceptable for an instructor to compel a student to choose between religious observance and academic work. Absence from classes or examinations for religious reasons does not relieve students from responsibility for any part of the course work required during the period of absence. It is the obligation of the student to provide faculty within the first two weeks of each semester their intent to observe the holiday so that alternative arrangements convenient to both students and faculty can be made at the earliest opportunity. Students who make such arrangements will not be required to attend classes or take examinations on the designated days, and faculty must provide reasonable opportunities for such students to make up missed work and examinations. Exceptions to the requirement of a make-up examination must be approved in advance by the dean of the school in which the course is offered. A [religious calendar](#) is available.

Title IX

Tulane University recognizes the inherent dignity of all individuals and promotes respect for all people. As such, Tulane is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination including sexual and gender-based discrimination, harassment, and violence like sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or is experiencing these types of behaviors, know that you are not alone. Resources and support are available: you can learn more at allin.tulane.edu. Any and all of your communications on these matters will be treated as either "Confidential" or "Private" as explained in the chart below. Please know that if you choose to confide in me I am required by the university to share your disclosure in a Care Connection to the Office of Case Management and Victim Support Services to be sure you are connected with all the support the university can offer. The Office of University Sexual Misconduct Response and Title IX Administration is also notified of these disclosures. You choose whether or not you want to meet with these offices. You can also make a disclosure yourself, including an anonymous report, through the form at tulane.edu/concerns.

Confidential	Private
<p><i>Except in extreme circumstances, involving imminent danger to one's self or others, nothing will be shared without your explicit permission.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) (504) 314-2277 ▪ The Line (24/7) (504) 264-6074 ▪ Student Health Center (504) 865-5255 ▪ Sexual Aggression Peer Hotline and Education (SAPHE) (504) 654-9543 	<p><i>Conversations are kept as confidential as possible, but information is shared with key staff members so the University can offer resources and accommodations and take action if necessary for safety reasons.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Case Management & Victim Support Services (504) 314-2160 or srss@tulane.edu ▪ Tulane University Police (TUPD) Uptown - (504) 865-5911 Downtown – (504) 988-5531 ▪ Office of University Sexual Misconduct Response and Title IX Administration (504) 865-5611 or msmith76@tulane.edu ▪ Student Affairs Professional On-Call (24/7) (504) 920-9900

Emergency Preparedness & Response

EMERGENCY NOTIFICATIONS: TU ALERT	SEVERE WEATHER
<p>In the event of a campus emergency, Tulane University will notify students, faculty, and staff by email, text, and/or phone call. You were automatically enrolled in this system when you enrolled at the university.</p> <p>Check your contact information annually in Gibson Online to confirm its accuracy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Follow all TU Alerts and outdoor warning sirens ▪ Seek shelter indoors until the severe weather threat has passed and an all-clear message is given ▪ Do not use elevators ▪ Do not attempt to travel outside if weather is severe <p>Monitor the Tulane Emergency website (tulane.edu/emergency/) for university-wide closures during a severe weather event</p>
ACTIVE SHOOTER / VIOLENT ATTACKER	EVERBRIDGE APP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ RUN – run away from or avoid the affected area, if possible ▪ HIDE – go into the nearest room that can be locked, turn out the lights, and remain hidden until all-clear message is given through TU ALERT ▪ FIGHT – do not attempt this option, except as a last resort ▪ For more information or to schedule a training, visit emergencyprep.tulane.edu 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Download the Everbridge app from the App Store or Google Play store ▪ The Report feature allows you to silently and discreetly communicate with TUPD dispatchers ▪ The SOS button allows you to notify TUPD if you need help ▪ The Safe Corridor button serves as a virtual escort and allows you to send check-in notifications to TUPD

From: Tulane Office of emergency preparedness and response