

**PSC 270 A: Research Methods for GWA**  
**Fall 2017 / MW 8:00-9:50 / Sykes 266**

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Office Hours: Monday (10am-noon) and Wednesday (10am-1pm)

Objective:

The course introduces students to a variety of research methods used regularly by social scientists. Over the next four months we will cover in detail the process of theory building, data collection, as well as quantitative and qualitative methods of theory testing. If you put in the effort to learn the material and are intellectually inquisitive enough to challenge some of the discipline's core assumptions you will leave this course both better prepared to read mainstream political science journals and better prepared to conduct research of your own.

Student Learning Outcomes: This course is designed to introduce you to the basics of social science research. You will learn the fundamental strategies employed by political scientists observing the world of politics and how these observations themselves lead to hypothesis testing. The overarching aim of this course is to make you a better informed consumer of information in the discipline of political science as well as a better informed consumer of information in the political world in general. By the end of this course students will have the following skills:

- how to design/conduct/critique various research techniques
- how to design/conduct/critique controlled experiments and quasi- experiments
- how to utilize SPSS
- how to analyze basic univariate and bi-variate statistics
- how to analyze correlation and regression statistics

Requirements:

Though it may be altered slightly and/or clarified by professorial edict either in class or via email, consider this syllabus a contract between you and your professor that lists both what you can expect from class and what is expected of you. Check it regularly and bring it to class with your notebook. You are expected to read EVERYTHING assigned on the syllabus, which averages around 50 pages a week. Perhaps more importantly in this class, you are also expected to play around with the concepts covered until you KNOW them!!! You are also expected to attend EVERY lecture. Visiting me on occasion during office hours to discuss issues raised in class and/or proposal topics will not hurt either. If you do these things you will do very well in the course. If you do not do these things you will not do so well in the course. Though this class is certainly manageable for conscientious students and several do quite well in it each semester, for students used to putting in a minimal amount of work at the last minute and achieving desired results, PSC 270 can be a brutal experience. Consider this fair warning up front!

You will be evaluated in this class based on your performance in five areas. These areas, along with their relative weights, are as follows:

Exams (60%) – Over the course of the semester you will be given three opportunities to demonstrate your mastery of concepts covered in the readings and lectures. Together these exams constitute nearly two-thirds of your final course grade. The first and second exams will be administered in class on Monday 25 September and Monday 23 October respectively. The third exam will be administered during our exam period on Monday 11 December. Exams are cumulative in the sense that the material we cover later in class builds on the material we cover earlier, though a strong emphasis will be placed on material covered since the previous exam. There will be NO review sheets. Excused late or early exams will only be given in extreme circumstances and only with acceptable documentation. Unexcused late exams will be penalized at a rate of 10 points per day. If you miss an exam it is YOUR responsibility to contact me as soon as possible to schedule a make-up.

Article Critiques (10%) – Using the tools of evaluation and analysis you learn throughout the course, you will critique three assigned articles. You will put your critiques of the articles into a paper of no more than two single-spaced pages which will be due before class on Wednesday 20 September (Posner - Article Critique #1), Monday 16 October (Laver *et al* - Article Critique #2), and Monday 4 December (Jacobs and Page - Article Critique #3). Assignments should be turned in via Blackboard/Turnitin. There is a worksheet available to you on Blackboard that should assist you in organizing your thoughts. A good article critique will provide a brief summary of the article, mention explicitly the article's methodological and analytical strengths and weaknesses, and suggest possible improvements with an explanation. When writing Article Critique #1 pay particular attention to research design, when writing Article Critique #2 look at data collection techniques, and when writing Article Critique #3 you should spend some time focusing on quantitative methods. Unexcused late assignments will not be accepted.

Homework (10%) – At the end of each chapter in the Pollock book you will find exercises that will help you practice the statistical/SPSS skills covered therein. After you read the chapter you should complete that chapter's exercises. These exercises, along with accompanying SPSS printouts, will be due the Monday after the chapter is assigned during class. I will randomly select two questions from each exercise to grade. If you turn in the homework assignment two days late during our Wednesday meeting your score will be reduced by half. If you turn in the homework assignment later than our next meeting you will receive no points towards your grade.

Data Gathering Exercises (5%) – During weeks 5, 6, and 7 we will try our hand at a number of data gathering techniques including observation, interview, and survey. You should be an active participant in these exercises both in class and outside of class.

Research Proposal (15%) – There are two components to the Research Proposal portion of your grade. The first portion is your presentation of your proposal during weeks 9 and 10. Though this presentation is ungraded, it is an invaluable opportunity to solicit critical feedback from your professor and colleagues before the written assignment is due and failure to present will result in a 20 point deduction on your research proposal. The second portion is your written proposal which will include a 1) Project Abstract, 2) Literature Review, 3) Expected Outcomes and Results, 4) Research and Methods, and 5) a Budget. The assignment should not be more than 3 single-spaced pages long. If you put a lot of thought into the assignment not only will you earn a good grade, but you will have the makings of a good Fulbright proposal as this proposal format is virtually identical

to theirs. Your final Research Proposal is due on Sunday 5 November via Blackboard/Turnitin. Unexcused late proposals will be penalized at a rate of 10 points per day.

Important Due Dates:

Article Critique #1	Wednesday 20 September
#2	Monday 16 October
#3	Monday 4 December
Exam #1	Monday 25 September
#2	Monday 23 October
#3	Monday 11 December
Research Presentation	Weeks 9 and 10
Proposal	Sunday 5 November
Data Collection #1	Monday 2 October
#2	Wednesday 4 October
#3	Monday 9 October
Homework	Mondays weeks 11-15

Grading:

The course letter grade will be determined according to the following scale:

<i>Letter Grade</i>	<i>Quality Points</i>	<i>Numeric Scale*</i>
A	4.0	93-100
AB	3.5	88-92
B	3.0	83-87
BC	2.5	78-82
C	2.0	73-77
CD	1.5	68-72
D	1.0	60-67
F	0.0	Below 60

\*I will round up at the .5 and NOT before. For example, if you earn an 87.49 you will receive a B for the class. If you earn an 87.5 you will receive an AB. The only exception to this rule concerns the line between a D and an F. If you make below 60 points, even if it is by the smallest fraction of a point, I will NOT round up.

Required Texts:

- (B) Bernard, Russell. *Research Methods in Anthropology* (5<sup>th</sup> ed).
- (P) Pollock, Philip H. *An SPSS Companion to Political Analysis* (5<sup>th</sup> ed).
- (~) Article or chapter available through UT Blackboard.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

The course schedule is subject to change at the professor's sole discretion. Any changes will be announced in class, via email, and/or via Blackboard.

### Week 1 (August 28 – September 1)

*Monday* Introduction  
Readings: ∞ syllabus

*Wednesday* Scientific Study of Politics  
Readings: ∞ Dryzek, John and Stephen Leonard. 1988. "History and Discipline in Political Science." *American Political Science Review* 82(4): 1245-1260.

### Week 2 (September 5 – 8)

*Monday* NO CLASS – LABOR DAY

*Wednesday* (1) Foundations of Social Scientific Research and (2) Asking a Research Question  
Readings: B chs 2 and 3

### Week 3 (September 11 – 15)

*Monday* (1) Situating your Scholarship through a Literature Review and (2) Selecting Cases: the Case Study  
Readings: B ch 4 and ∞ Lijphart, Arend. 1971. "Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method." *American Political Science Review* 65(3): 682-693.

*Wednesday* (1) Selecting Cases: Comparative Method and (2) Large N  
Readings: ∞ Mill, John Stuart Mill. 1988. "Two Methods of Comparison." In *A System of Logic* (New York, NY: Harper & Row); B chs 5, 6, and 7; and ∞ Fisman, Ray. 2008. "Cos and Effect." *Slate* (11 January).

### Week 4 (September 18 – 22)

*Monday* CLASS CANCELED

*Wednesday* **ARTICLE CRITIQUE #1**  
Readings: ∞ Posner, Daniel N. 2004. "The Political Salience of Cultural Difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas are Allies in Zambia and Adversaries in Malawi." *American Political Science Review* 98 (4): 529-545.

### Week 5 (September 25 – 29)

*Monday* **EXAM #1**

*Wednesday* (1) Collecting Data: Observation and (2) Historical/Textual Analysis  
Readings: B chs 12, 13, 14, 18, and 19

### Week 6 (October 2 – 6)

*Monday* Collecting Data: Interviews  
Readings: B ch 8

*Wednesday* Collecting Data: Surveys  
Readings: B ch 9

### Week 7 (October 9 – 13)

*Monday* Collecting Data: Our Survey

*Wednesday* Research Proposal Meetings

### **Week 8 (October 16 – 20)**

*Monday*      **ARTICLE CRITIQUE #2**

Readings: Laver, Michael, Kenneth Benoit, and John Garry. 2003. "Extracting Policy Positions from Political Texts Using Words as Data." *American Political Science Review* 97 (2): 311-331.

*Wednesday*      (1) The Qualitative/Quantitative Divide and (2) Doing Qualitative Analysis

Readings: B ch 15 and 17

### **Week 9 (October 23 – 27)**

*Monday*      **EXAM #2**

*Wednesday*      **RESEARCH PROPOSAL PRESENTATIONS (Last Name A-L)**

### **Week 10 (October 30 – November 3)**

*Monday*      **RESEARCH PROPOSAL PRESENTATIONS (Last Name M-Z)**

*Wednesday*      Doing Quantitative Analysis: An Introduction to SPSS

Readings: P chs "Getting Started" and 1

**\*\*\* 6 November is the last day to withdraw from 14 week courses \*\*\***

### **Week 11 (November 6 – 10)**

*Sunday*      **RESEARCH PROPOSAL due**

*Monday*      Doing Quantitative Analysis: Describing Data

Readings: P ch 2

Homework Due: P ch 1 exercises

*Wednesday*      Doing Quantitative Analysis: Univariate Analysis

Readings: P chs 3, 4, and 5

### **Week 12 (November 13 – 17)**

*Monday*      Methods Jeopardy I

Homework Due: P chs 2, 3, 4, and 5 exercises

*Wednesday*      Doing Quantitative Analysis: Bivariate Analysis I

Readings: P chs 6 and 7

### **Week 13 (November 20 – 21)**

*Monday*      Doing Quantitative Analysis: Bivariate Analysis II

Readings: P ch 8

Homework Due: P chs 6 and 7 exercises

*Wednesday*      NO CLASS – HAPPY THANKSGIVING

### **Week 14 (November 27 – December 1)**

*Monday*      Doing Quantitative Analysis: Multivariate Analysis I

Readings: P ch 9

Homework Due: P ch 8 exercises

*Wednesday*      Doing Quantitative Analysis: Multivariate Analysis II

Readings: P ch 10

**Week 15 (December 4 – 8)**

*Monday*      **ARTICLE CRITIQUE #3**

Readings: ~Ø Jacobs, Lawrence and Benjamin Page. 2005. "Who Influences U.S. Foreign Policy?"  
*American Political Science Review* 99 (1): 107-123.

Homework Due: P chs 9 and 10 exercises

*Wednesday*      Methods Jeopardy II

**\*\*\* EXAM #3 in class from 8:30am-10:30am on Monday 11 December \*\*\***

## General Classroom Information:

These are a few things every student should know.

Emergency Conditions - In case of any adverse condition or situation which could interrupt the schedule of classes, each student is asked to access [www.ut.edu](http://www.ut.edu) for information about the status of the campus and class meetings. In addition, please refer to Blackboard for announcements and other important information. You are responsible for accessing this information.

Special Needs - If there is a student who requires accommodations because of any disability, please go to the Academic Success Center in North Walker Hall for information regarding registering as a student with a disability. You may also call (813) 257-5757 or email [disability.services@ut.edu](mailto:disability.services@ut.edu). Please feel free to discuss this issue with me, in private, if you need more information.

Classroom Disruption Policy – Every student has the right to a comfortable learning environment where the open and honest exchange of ideas may freely occur. Each student is expected to do his or her part to ensure that the classroom (and anywhere else the class may meet) remains conducive to learning. This includes respectful and courteous treatment of all in the classroom. According to the terms of the University of Tampa Disruption Policy, the professor will take immediate action when inappropriate behavior occurs.

Mental Health Counseling – College can be a stressful time in a young person's life. The American Psychiatric Association published a recent study of college students observed over the course of a single academic year. Over 60% of students reported feeling things were hopeless one or more times, almost 40% of the men and 50% of the women reported feeling so depressed that they had difficulty functioning one or more times, and 10% of the students reported seriously considering attempting suicide at least one time. If at some point during your time at UT you begin to feel depressed or out of control for any reason you should realize that you are not alone and there is help available to you. Your professors are happy to counsel you on the problems you are having coping with academic life, but there are dedicated mental health counselors available to you through UT's Health and Counseling Center located at 111 North Brevard Ave. (behind Austin Hall) who you may feel more comfortable disclosing certain types of non-academic problems to. The time to deal with mental health issues is when they arise and not after your grade has deteriorated. Their email is [healthcenter@ut.edu](mailto:healthcenter@ut.edu) and their phone numbers are 813-253-6250 (during business hours) and 813-257-7777 (outside of business hours for emergencies).

Title IX Statement - Sexual violence includes nonconsensual sexual contact and nonconsensual sexual intercourse (which is any type of sexual contact without your explicit consent, including rape), dating violence, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation, domestic violence, and stalking. You may reach out for confidential help or report an incident for investigation. If you choose to write or speak about an incident of sexual violence and disclose that this violence occurred while you were a UT student, the instructor is obligated to report the incident to the Title IX Deputy Coordinator for Students. The purpose of this report is to provide a safe and nondiscriminatory environment for all students. The Deputy Coordinator or his or her designee will contact you to let you know about the resources, accommodations, and support services at UT and possibilities for holding the perpetrator accountable. If you do not want the Title IX Coordinator notified, instead of disclosing this information to your instructor, you can speak confidentially with the following individuals: - The Victim's Advocacy Hotline 813.257.3900; Dickey Health & Wellness Center ([wellness@ut.edu](mailto:wellness@ut.edu)) 813.257.1877; Health and Counseling Center ([healthcenter@ut.edu](mailto:healthcenter@ut.edu)) 813.253.6250. They can connect you with support services and discuss options for holding the perpetrator accountable.

Academic Assistance – The Academic Success Center ([academicsuccess@ut.edu](mailto:academicsuccess@ut.edu)) in North Walker Hall offers free peer tutoring, credited academic skills courses, national testing services, and services for students with disabilities. The Saunders Writing Center (323 Plant Hall, x6244) aids students with their

writing projects. The Public Speaking Center (KBB 200, [speakingcenter@ut.edu](mailto:speakingcenter@ut.edu)) offers students help with presentations. You pay for these services through your tuition and there is no shame in using them if you need help with your course work. I am more than happy to discuss any academic issues you might have during office hours but if I think one of these services can help you be more successful I will not hesitate to recommend it.

Academic Integrity – Cheating, plagiarism, copying and any other behavior that is contrary to University standards of behavior will not be tolerated. Students caught violating any aspect of the University of Tampa’s Academic Integrity Policy will be penalized in all cases. Penalty ranges from “0” on an assignment to “F” for the course without regard to a student’s accumulated points. Students may also face expulsion. It is the student’s responsibility to become familiar with the policies of the university regarding academic integrity and to avoid violating such policies. Policy information is found at: <http://ut.smartcatalogiq.com/en/current/catalog/Academic-Policies-and-Procedures/Academic-Integrity-Policy>

### Class Rules, Etiquette, and Advice:

I like my job a lot. There are few things I can imagine doing more satisfying than providing inquisitive minds with an atmosphere conducive to thinking more critically about their own assumptions and the world in which we live. The image of students leaving my classroom just a bit more prepared to make their society better is sustaining. Following is a list of things you can do to help me maintain this image as well as some things you can do to reveal it as a mirage. Doing more of the former and less of the latter will make me happy whereas the converse will make me sad!

DO read the assigned texts – The amount and content of the reading assignments are well within the realm of reasonable for a class at this level. I have looked at syllabi from many different institutions of higher learning to come confidently to this conclusion. Do the assigned readings before each class and you will get the most out of the lectures. Though there are some things covered in the assigned readings that will not be covered in lecture, and vice versa, the lectures and readings build off each other. I will not hesitate to pull exam questions from readings not covered in class and from lectures not covered in the readings.

DO engage in class discussions in an intelligent way – There will be lots of opportunities for you to contribute to conversations in the classroom. Most of my lectures have a built in component for student input because I think it is important that you not only read and hear the information, but have to reconstitute and challenge it. I am also delighted to entertain questions when you have them and follow tangents that you would like to explore. Class periods when students are engaged and contributing seem to go by much faster than class periods when students are checked out. Students who regularly contribute to the classroom conversation do significantly better than students who do not on exams. So pretend the information we are covering is really interesting and jump at the opportunity to challenge the material. After a while you will find that you do not have to pretend any more. If you are shy this is good practice for you. Use the class to build your confidence and public speaking skills. If you are worried about your peers’ impressions of you forget about it. Those who value education will find your contributions useful and those who roll their eyes are dull and uninteresting.

DO NOT be tardy or leave class early – If you come in late to class enter quietly and sit somewhere where you will not disturb other students. Classes will begin promptly as scheduled so you will need to copy notes from one of your colleagues on lecture days if you feel like you have missed something important. On assignment days you will not be given extra time for your tardiness. If you show up without an excuse 5 minutes before an exam is finished, you will only have 5 minutes to finish the assignment. If you miss an assignment because of tardiness you will need to consult that assignment’s make-up policy.

Class is done when I say something to the effect of “see you next class” and not before. I will do my best to end class on time if not a few minutes earlier. There will, however, be some class periods where I might need to go over time by a minute or two to finish an important point. Out of respect for your fellow classmates you should NOT begin filing papers into your book bags before class has officially ended. I realize that there will be classes where you have a job interview or a club activity or a plane you need to leave early for. By all means let me know before class that you need to leave early, arrange with someone in class to take notes for you, and do not miss your important event.

DO NOT use cell phones, computers, or recording devices in class – There is a boatload of research suggesting students learn more during lectures when they take notes the old fashioned way with paper and a pen or pencil. Even if you do not buy this evidence or consider yourself an outlier, electronic devices prove distracting to your neighbors.

DO NOT ask if it is on the exam – I do not give out study guides. This is a university class and when I attended university ages ago study guides, like the iPod and indoor plumbing, were not yet invented. This experience taught me that learning things the readings and lectures cover that are not on the exam can be just as important and enlightening as learning things that will appear on the exam. Anything in the readings or lectures is fair game for an exam. Things covered in both readings and lectures, which I post online in the form of Powerpoint slides, are slightly more likely to show up on the exam.

DO NOT ask for extra credit – Rarely I give out extra credit opportunities. When I do, the opportunity is initiated by me and open to all students in class. I have never given an extra credit assignment to a student who initiated the request. Giving out extra credit opportunities to select students makes grades for my courses unreliable measures of student success and your goal should be to master the material assigned on the syllabus.

DO understand what your grade represents – I assume every student who enters my class wants to take away a greater understanding of the world and that the grade (s)he receives is but a formal, and somewhat abstract and imprecise, reflection of the knowledge (s)he has gained. The average student in my courses typically earns a low B (3.0) or a high C (2.0). This grade represents both effort and skill so students that put in more effort than average and/or are more skilled than average will do better than this, whereas students who put in less effort than average and/or are less skilled will do worse. It is not easy to earn an A in my course and few will. On the other hand it is even more difficult to earn an F in my course but a few students every semester put in nearly no effort and/or do not have the skills necessary for a college-level course in Political Science. I have given failing marks to students who I think are wonderful people and given A grades to students who I would rather never see again. Grades are not personal statements on your character, they are a professional opinion of the work you submit.

DO learn how to question grades respectfully – I do my best to communicate expectations and make sure my comments on graded assignments pinpoint areas where you did well and areas where you needed to put in some more work. There will, however, occasionally be questions about the grade you receive. I will NOT change a grade or let you resubmit an assignment simply because you want a better grade. If, however, you think I have made a mistake I will consider changing a grade only after the following conditions have been met: 1) You must wait at least 24 hours but no more than ten days after receiving your graded assignment to file a complaint. 2) You must submit in writing (*typed* and *printed* out) a detailed explanation of why you think you deserve a different grade. I will review your submission and give you my final decision within a week of receipt at which time I will consider the “negotiation” complete and any further appeals on the issue will be directed to the department chair. Challenges that resemble “I’m an A student so there is no way this paper is a B,” “I was making a good argument it just did not come across in my paper,” “I was having a bad day can you cut me some slack,” or “I need to pass this class to graduate” will be summarily dismissed as they do not speak to the quality of the work.

DO NOT send me an email unless it's an emergency – With several classes and nearly 100 students a semester emails can become burdensome. While I know email seems convenient from the student point of view because it is more instantly gratifying and relatively labor free, I have found the method of communication a poor way to convey the complex concepts we deal with in class. So how can you decide if an email is an emergency? I would encourage you to ask yourself the following three questions:

- 1) Can I find the answer on the syllabus, in a text, or online?
- 2) Is it something one of my colleagues in class can answer?
- 3) Can it wait until next class or office hours?

If you answer any of these questions in the affirmative, PLEASE fight against the temptation to hit send. Also if you submit an assignment by email I will NOT grade it. Most assignments I have submitted via Turnitin and those few which require hardcopies there is a drop box on the outside of my office door.

DO visit me during office hours – If you have a question about something we covered in class, need feedback on an assignment, want to discuss something you discovered outside of class that you think connects to course content in an interesting way, or just want to chat FEEL FREE to drop by my office during office hours. I keep five hours per week and these hours are for you. You are not pestering me or taking me away from something more important. It is nice to talk with students outside of our regular classroom setting.

DO know the university policy on “excused” absences – The UT catalog has a section on “excused absences.” It falls under the heading “Class Attendance and Participation” in the Academic Policies and Procedures section. There are no excuses for late papers. You know about them well in advance and a last minute illness or death in the family should not affect your ability to turn in the assignment or have a colleague do so on your behalf. Excuses for missed exams or presentations are granted following university procedures. The best way to be granted an excused absence is with prior approval. If you will miss an exam or presentation due to a previously scheduled event, let me know at least two weeks in advance and you will almost always be allowed an early exam or presentation. In the event that prior approval is not possible, you must provide acceptable documentation detailing the reasons for your excuse as soon as possible. Be thorough with this documentation as the burden of proving an absence is excusable falls on the student. For each assignment listed in this syllabus there is a detailed policy regarding late penalties. Many of these policies grant an exception for “excused” absences. Whether an absence is “excused” or not is up to the discretion of your professor based on the guidelines outlined above.

DO understand that I am interested in discussing your progress in the course with you – If you have a parent, coach, drill sergeant, etc. who is interested in learning about your status in this course feel free to share it with them. I post grades on Blackboard and the syllabus explains in detail my weighting formula so you have access to all the information I do regarding your current standing in the class and may share it with anyone you want.