

**PSC 269 A: Research Methods for Political Science**  
**Spring 2020 / MW 8:00-9:50am / KBB 216**

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Course Website: <http://ut.blackboard.com>  
Office Hours: Monday (10a-1p) and Wednesday (10a-12p)

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 and data collection as well as touch upon the utility of 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 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 are able to:

- Generate research questions and hypotheses appropriate to political science.
- Design and critique case selection strategies common to the discipline.
- Design and critique controlled experiments and quasi- experiments common to the discipline.
- Operationalize variables using various techniques common to the discipline.
- Understand and be able to communicate the strengths and weaknesses of the methods used in a typical political science scholarly journal article.

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 more than 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 and pay attention at EVERY lecture. Visiting me on occasion during office hours to discuss issues raised in class and/or proposal topics for your research proposal 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 good results, PSC 269 can be a brutal experience. Consider this fair warning up front.

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

Exams (60%) – Over the course of the semester you will be given two opportunities to demonstrate your mastery of concepts covered in the readings and lectures. Together these exams constitute half of your final course grade. Exams may be a mix of multiple choice, short answer, and essay formats. 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.

Hands on Methods Assignments (10%) – During the course we will try our hand at a number of short scholarly assignments and data gathering techniques. You should be an active participant in these nine exercises both in class and outside of class. If you turn in the assignment on time and meet expectations you will receive full credit (1 point). Expectations are that you will have put in the time and effort to produce a document that would receive at least an 80 percent if graded on a 100-point scale. If you turn in a document that does not meet expectations you will receive no credit for the assignment. Your lowest Hands on Methods assignment grade will be dropped. Seven of these assignments are due via Blackboard and the eighth is due via the Qualtrics survey app. IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO UPLOAD THE ASSIGNMENTS TO BLACKBOARD AND QUALTRICS. I advise saving your dropped assignment in case either of those platforms is malfunctioning for you and to immediately figure out what caused your submission problem and get it fixed. I will neither consider nor respond to email submissions.

Research Proposal (30%) – There are two components to the Research Proposal portion of your grade. The first portion requires you to complete a worksheet (available on Blackboard) about your project and bring it by my office to discuss it at an assigned meeting time before week 9. Though this worksheet and meeting is ungraded, it is an invaluable opportunity to solicit critical feedback from your professor before the written assignment is due and failure to have this meeting 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. A grading rubric and sample of this proposal is available on our course Blackboard site. 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 via Blackboard/Turnitin. Unexcused late proposals will be penalized at a rate of 10 points per day.

Important Due Dates \*:

Exam #1	Wednesday 19 February
Exam #2	Friday 8 May
Research Proposal	
Meeting	Weeks 7 or 8 as assigned
Proposal	Friday 17 April
Hands on Methods Assignments	
#1 Posner Article Critique	Wednesday 12 February
#2 CITI Training	Sunday 5 April
#3 Dataset Review	Monday 6 April
#4 Interview Notes	Wednesday 8 April
#5 Participant Obs. Notes	Monday 13 April
#6 Survey Hypotheses	Monday 20 April
#7 Survey Enumeration	Sunday 26 April
#8 Biruk Review	Monday 27 April

\* Assignments due on class days are due BEFORE CLASS. Assignments due on non-class days are due BEFORE THE END OF THE DAY (ie 11:59PM).

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:

- (JRM)** Johnson, Janet Buttolph, H. T. Reynolds, and Jason D. Mycoff. 2016. *Political Science Research Methods*, 9<sup>th</sup> ed. (Also a required text for PSC 270!)
- (KMR)** Kapiszewski, Diana, Lauren MacLean, and Benjamin Read. 2016. *Field Research in Political Science*.
- Biruk** Biruk, Crystal. 2018. *Cooking Data*.
- (☺)** 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 (January 21-24)

*Wednesday* Introduction  
Readings: ∞ syllabus

### Week 2 (January 27-31)

*Monday* 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.

*Wednesday* Foundations of Social Scientific Research  
Readings: JRM chs 1, 2, 4, and 6

### Week 3 (February 3-7)

*Monday* Asking a Research Questions and Situating Scholarship in a Literature Review  
Readings: JRM ch 3

*Wednesday* Selecting Cases: Case Studies and Comparative Methods  
Readings: JRM ch 7

### Week 4 (February 10-14)

*Monday* Selecting Cases: Large N  
Readings: JRM ch 5 and ∞ Fisman, Ray. 2008. "Cos and Effect." *Slate* (11 January).

*Wednesday* Seminar Discussion on Research Design  
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.

#### **HANDS ON METHODS Assignment 1**

Assignment: Write a short article critique of ∞ Posner using the Article Critique worksheet available to you on Blackboard and submit it for a grade before this class.

### Week 5 (February 17-21)

*Monday* Methods Jeopardy

*Wednesday* **EXAM #1**

### Week 6 (February 24-28)

*Monday* Fulbright US Student Research Program  
Readings: ∞ "Victoria Sunseri '18 Awarded 2018 Fulbright US Student Research Award to Italy." April 12, 2018. University of Tampa website.

*Wednesday* Research Proposal Brainstorming

### Week 7 (March 2-6)

*Monday* Research Proposal Meetings I

*Wednesday* Research Proposal Meetings II

**\*\*\* Spring Break (March 9-13) \*\*\***

## Week 8 (March 16-20)

*Monday* Research Proposal Meetings III

*Wednesday* Research Proposal Meetings IV

## Week 9 (March 23-27)

*Monday* IRB and CITI Training

Readings: Oakes, J. Michael. 2002. "Risks and Wrongs in Social Science Research: An Evaluator's Guide to the IRB." *Evaluation Review* 26 (5): 443-479.

### **HANDS ON METHODS Assignment 2**

Assignment: ALL students MUST pass the CITI "Social and Behavioral Sciences" Training at University of Tampa for the IRB. You will need this research clearance in this class and many of your upper-level PSC and IST courses. This training should be completed and your certificate of completion uploaded to our course Blackboard site before Week 11. Failure to upload your completion certificate to Blackboard will result in you forfeiting all credit for data gathering assignments assigned prior to upload. Instructions on how to complete the training can be found behind the Bb Assignments tab.

*Wednesday* Fieldwork and the Qualitative/Quantitative Divide

Readings: KMR chs 1-4.

## Week 10 (March 30-April 3)

*Monday* LAST DAY TO WITHDRAW

Data Collection: Archival Research and Text Analysis

Readings: KMR ch 5 and Bernard, H. Russell and Gery Ryan. 1998. "Text Analysis: Qualitative and Quantitative Methods." In *Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology*, ed. H. Russell Bernard. Altamira Press: Walnut Creek, CA.

*Wednesday* Finding Canned Data

Readings: ICPSR. "User Manuel."

### **HANDS ON METHODS Assignment 3**

Assignment: Register with ICPSR and search through their database. Find the one data set MOST potentially useful to your Fulbright proposal. On a piece of paper put the formal ICPSR citation for the data set at the top and then write a paragraph about what is in the data set and another about how this is potentially useful to your research. This assignment is due via Blackboard before our next class.

## Week 11 (April 6-10)

*Monday* Data Collection: Interviews, Oral Histories, and Focus Groups

Readings: KMR ch 6.

### **HANDS ON METHODS Assignment 4**

Assignment: As a class we will develop an interview tool and a strategy to collect a representative sample. Before our next meeting you will be responsible for selecting an interview subject using the strategy we choose and conducting an interview. You should upload your interview notes to Blackboard.

*Wednesday* Data Collection: Ethnography and Participant Observation

Readings: KMR ch 7.

### **HANDS ON METHODS Assignment 5**

Assignment: As a class we will develop a participant observation data collection tool. Before our next meeting you will be responsible for collecting data using this strategy. You should upload your observation notes to Blackboard.

## **Week 12 (April 13-17)**

*Monday* Data Collection: Surveys

Readings: KMR ch 8.

### **HANDS ON METHODS Assignment 6**

Assignment: As a class we will develop a survey tool and a strategy to collect a representative sample. For this meeting you will be responsible for selecting AT LEAST three hypotheses we can test with a survey of your UT peers. In addition to identifying your independent and dependent variables in each hypotheses, offer a brief explanation of why your hypothesis deserves to be one of the hypotheses tested. You should upload your hypotheses to Blackboard before next class.

*Wednesday* Class Cancelled (Away at MPSA Conference)

*Friday* **RESEARCH PROPOSAL DUE**

## **Week 13 (April 20-24)**

*Monday* Developing Protocol for Respondent Selection and Field Testing our Survey

### **HANDS ON METHODS Assignment 7**

Assignment: As a class we will develop a survey tool and a strategy to collect a representative sample. Once we have a survey developed you will be charged with interviewing ten of your peers following our chosen randomization protocol. You should upload your results via the Qualtrics telephone app on or before Week 14.

*Wednesday* Data Collection: Experiments in the Field

Readings: KMR ch 9.

## **Week 14 (April 27-May 1)**

*Monday* Seminar Discussion on the Limits of Survey Data

Readings: Biruk

### **HANDS ON METHODS Assignment 8**

Assignment: Write a short (1500 words or less) book review of Biruk following the guidance of the “How to Write an Academic Book Review” flier available to you on Blackboard and submit it for a grade before coming to class.

*Wednesday* Looking at our survey data

## **Week 15 (May 4)**

*Monday* Methods Jeopardy

**\*\*\* EXAM #2 in class from 8:30-10:30am on Friday 8 May \*\*\***

### 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.

Audio and Video Recording – 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 and may have a stifling impact on conversation if your peers suspect they are being recorded on such a device. Unless you are given permission by the instructor in writing prior, you may NOT record video or audio of lectures or discussions. Violating this policy will result in your removal from class.

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 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 NOT send me an email unless it's absolutely necessary – 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 and for general points of inquiry it is inefficient as emails regularly get lost in my Inbox. So how can you decide if an email must be sent to me? 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. If you answer all of the questions in the negative, feel free to send the email. Make sure, however, to send it from your @spartans.ut.edu email account and keep in mind that I only check email during office hours. Also if you submit an assignment by email I will NOT grade it. Most assignments I have submitted via Blackboard/Turnitin and for those few which require hardcopies there is a drop box on the outside of my office door.

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 know the university policy on “excused” absences – I do not take roll so the only time you need an excused absence is when there is an assignment due. The UT catalog has a detailed 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 written assignments. 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.