

PSC 269: Research Methods for Political Science
Spring 2025 / TR 8-9:50am / KBB 214

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Office Hours: Wednesday Noon-3p, Thursday 10a-noon

Objective:

The course introduces students to a variety of research methods used regularly by social scientists. Over the next four months we 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 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 tentative agreement between you and your professor that lists both what you can expect from class and what is expected of you. Check it regularly. You are expected to read everything assigned on the syllabus, which can be 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 expected to attend and pay attention to 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 and put yourself in a good position to do well in PSC270 and your 300- and 400-level PSC courses. 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 most 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 (50%) – Over the course of the semester you are given two opportunities to demonstrate mastery of concepts covered in the readings, lectures, and discussions. Together these exams constitute half of your final course grade. Exams may be a mix of multiple choice, short answer, and essay formats. They are administered in class and require a laptop. 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 exam during my next office hours.

Participation (10%) – Eight times throughout the semester 1) a pop quiz on that day's assigned reading, 2) an in-class exercise, or 3) an opportunity to engage in discussion is graded. These participation checks are unannounced and designed to measure whether you are in class, prepared, and engaged. Only your five highest scores count. Because you get to drop your lowest three participation grades, make-up opportunities are NOT offered.

Hands on Methods Assignments (10%) – During the course, we try our hand at a number of short scholarly assignments and data-gathering exercises. You should be an active participant in these eight assignments both in class and outside of class. If you turn in the assignment on time and meet expectations, you receive full credit (1 point). Expectations are that you have put in the time, effort, and reflection the assignment requires to earn a passing mark. If you turn in a document that is late or does not meet expectations, you receive no credit for the assignment. Your lowest Hands on Methods assignment grade is dropped. Seven of these assignments are due via SpartanLearn and the eighth is due via Qualtrics. IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO UPLOAD THE ASSIGNMENTS TO SPARTANLEARN AND HAVE YOUR COLLEAGUES SUBMIT SURVEYS TO QUALTRICS. IT IS ALSO YOUR

RESPONSIBILITY TO VERIFY THAT UPLOADING HAS BEEN SUCCESSFUL. I WILL NEITHER CONSIDER NOR RESPOND TO EMAIL OR LATE SUBMISSIONS. 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. Because you get to drop your lowest grade and know about these assignments well in advance, late assignments are not accepted.

Research Proposal (30%) – There are three components to the Research Proposal portion of your grade: RP Meeting/Outline, RP Bibliography, and Research Proposal.

- RP Outline – This component requires you to complete an RP Outline (worksheet available on SpartanLearn) about your proposed project and bring it to your assigned small group meeting before Week 7. This worksheet MUST be turned in at this meeting as a hard copy to receive credit. Though the outline and meeting are ungraded, they are invaluable opportunities to solicit critical feedback from your professor and peers before the written assignment is due. Failure to turn in your outline or have this meeting results in a 20-point deduction on your research proposal. Late assignments will not be accepted without an excuse. Excused late assignments will not be accepted more than a week beyond deadline.
- RP Bibliography –We will discuss this annotated bibliography assignment in class and there is a worksheet available on SpartanLearn for you to fill out. This assignment asks you to produce an annotated bibliography with 5 citations produced using AI and 5 citations produced with only Internet searches and your own reading and writing talents. You should turn in this assignment via SpartanLearn and are expected to use at least half of these sources in your Research Proposal. Though you will not receive a grade on the annotated bibliography or use of the sources in your paper, they are important steps in the process. Failure to turn in your annotated bibliography or use at least five of the annotated bibliography's sources in your final paper results in a 20-point deduction on your research proposal. Late assignments will not be accepted without an excuse. Excused late assignments will not be accepted more than a week beyond deadline.
- Research Proposal - The written proposal includes 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 SpartanLearn 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 a) Fulbright proposal as this proposal format is virtually identical to theirs or b) 400-level paper as this assignment is a good preliminary step. Your final Research Proposal is due via SpartanLearn. Unexcused late proposals are penalized at a rate of 10 points per day.

Important Due Dates*:

Exam #1	Tuesday 18 February
Exam #2	Tuesday 6 May
Research Proposal	
Meeting/Outline	Weeks 5-6 as assigned
Bibliography	Sunday 23 March
Proposal	Sunday 20 April
Hands on Methods Assignments	
#1 Posner Article Critique	Sunday 9 February
#2 CITI Training	Sunday 23 March
#3 Dataset Review	Sunday 6 April
#4 Interview Notes	Sunday 6 April
#5 Participant Obs. Notes	Sunday 13 April
#6 Survey Hypotheses	Sunday 13 April
#7 Survey Enumeration	Sunday 27 April
#8 Biruk Review	Sunday 20 April

* Assignments due on Sundays are due by 11:59pm Tampa time on their due date.

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 and above
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

*Numbers round up at .5 and above. They round down below .5.

Required Texts:

- (JRM)** Johnson, Janet Buttolph, H. T. Reynolds, and Jason D. Mycoff. 2020. *Political Science Research Methods*, 9th ed. (Also a required text for PSC 270!)
- (KMR)** Kapiszewski, Diana, Lauren MacLean, and Benjamin Read. 2015. *Field Research in Political Science*.
- Biruk** Biruk, Crystal. 2018. *Cooking Data*.
- (~0)** Article or chapter available through SpartanLearn links.

COURSE SCHEDULE

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

Week 1 (January 21 – 24)

Tuesday Introduction

Readings: √ ∅ syllabus

Thursday 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 (January 27 – 31)

Tuesday Foundations of Social Scientific Research

Readings: **JRM** chs 1, 2, 4, and 6

Thursday Asking a Research Questions and Situating Scholarship in a Literature Review

Readings: **JRM** ch 3

Week 3 (February 3 – 7)

Tuesday Selecting Cases: Case Studies and Comparative Methods

Readings: **JRM** ch 7

Thursday Selecting Cases: Large N

Readings: **JRM** ch 5 and √ ∅ Fisman, Ray. 2008. "Cos and Effect." *Slate* (11 January).

Week 4 (February 10 – 14)

Sunday **HANDS ON METHODS Assignment 1 Due**

Assignment: Write a short summary of the assigned Posner article by answering the following questions: 1) What is the article about (Abstract less than 500 words)?; 2) What is the text's research question?; 3) What hypotheses are tested in the work?; 4) What methods does the article employ to answer the research question and test the stated hypotheses (Be as specific and thorough as possible)?; 5) What are the strengths and weaknesses of the article (Justify your answers)? Make sure to identify which questions you are answering by numbering them and submit them via SpartanLearn.

Tuesday Dissecting Research Design (Discuss HOM1)

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.

Thursday Methods Jeopardy

Week 5 (February 17 – 21)

Tuesday **EXAM #1**

Thursday 8am
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.

9am
Research Proposal Meetings I (For students on the Blue Team; have worksheet completed)

Week 6 (February 24 – 28)

Tuesday 8am
Research Proposal Meetings II (For students on the Green Team; have worksheet completed)

9am
Research Proposal Meetings III (For students on the Orange Team; have worksheet completed)

Thursday 8am
Research Proposal Meetings IV (For students on the Red Team; have worksheet completed)

9am
Research Proposal Meetings V (For students on the Yellow Team; have worksheet completed)

Week 7 (March 3 – 7)

Tuesday IRB and CITI Training (Discuss HOM2)
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.

Thursday Risk/Rewards of Using AI as a University Student (Discuss RP Bibliography)
Readings: 📖 Lang, James M. 2024. "The Case for Slow-Walking Our Use of Generative AI." *Chronicle of Higher Education* (29 February).

***** Spring Break (March 10 – 14) *****

Week 8 (March 17 - 21)

Tuesday Individual work on annotated bibliography

Thursday Team work on annotated bibliography

Week 9 (March 24 – 28)

Sunday **RP BIBLIOGRAPHY Due**

HANDS ON METHODS Assignment 2 Due

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 SpartanLearn site. Failure to upload your completion certificate to SpartanLearn 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 on our course website.

Tuesday Fieldwork and the Qualitative/Quantitative Divide

Readings: KMR chs 1-4.

Thursday 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.

***** 31 March Last Day to Withdraw *****

Week 10 (March 31 – April 4)

Tuesday Finding Canned Data (Discuss HOM3)

Readings: ICPSR. “User Manual.”

Thursday Data Collection: Interviews, Oral Histories, and Focus Groups (Discuss HOM4)

Readings: KMR ch 6.

Week 11 (April 7 – 11)

Sunday **HANDS ON METHODS Assignment 3 Due**

Assignment: Register with ICPSR and search through their database. Find the one data set MOST potentially useful to your research proposal. Include the formal ICPSR citation for the data set 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 SpartanLearn.

HANDS ON METHODS Assignment 4 Due

Assignment: As a class we develop an interview tool and a strategy to collect a representative sample. You are responsible for selecting an interview subject using the strategy we choose and conducting an interview. You should upload your interview notes to SpartanLearn.

Tuesday Data Collection: Ethnography and Participant Observation (Discuss HOM5)

Readings: KMR ch 7.

Thursday Data Collection: Surveys (Discuss HOM6)

Readings: KMR ch 8.

Week 12 (April 14 – 18)

Sunday

HANDS ON METHODS Assignment 5 Due

Assignment: As a class we develop a participant observation data collection tool. You are responsible for collecting data using this strategy. You should upload your observation notes to SpartanLearn.

HANDS ON METHODS Assignment 6 Due

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

Tuesday

Developing our Survey Instrument

Thursday

Developing our Protocol for Respondent Selection and Field Testing our Survey (Discuss HOM7)

Week 13 (April 21 – 25)

Sunday

RESEARCH PROPOSAL Due

HANDS ON METHODS Assignment 8 Due

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 SpartanLearn and submit it for a grade.

Tuesday

Data Collection: Experiments in the Field

Readings: KMR ch 9.

Thursday

Seminar Discussion on the Limits of Data (Discuss HOM8)

Readings: Biruk (yes the entire book!)

Week 14 (April 28 – May 2)

Sunday

HANDS ON METHODS Assignment 7 Due

Assignment: As a class we develop a survey tool and a strategy to collect a representative sample. Once we have a survey developed, you are responsible for administering it on a number of your peers we set in class following our chosen randomization protocol. Your selected respondents will upload results via the Qualtrics site before this meeting.

Tuesday

Looking at our survey data

Thursday

Methods Jeopardy

***** EXAM #2 administered in class from 8:30am-10:30am on Tuesday 6 May *****

UT Policies:

There are a number of policies that apply to every course taken at UT. These include policies on syllabus alterations, Title IX and reporting of sexual misconduct, ADA compliance, campus closure, academic integrity, attendance, and classroom disruptions. You should familiarize yourself with them all, both required and recommended. Each of these policies is in effect for this course. In lieu of replicating them all here, below is a link where you can read the most updated policies in their entirety.

<https://www.ut.edu/academics/center-for-teaching-and-learning/required-syllabus-disclosures>

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 policies and practices designed to help you make the most out of the course and improve the classroom experience for both of us.

DO take care of your mental health – There is a mental health crisis among college students. A recent study observed 44% of students reported feeling symptoms of depression, 37% reported anxiety disorders, and 15% reported having seriously considered suicide in the past year.¹ If at some point during your time at UTampa you begin to feel 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 discuss problems you are having with course content, but most of us are not trained mental health professionals. There are, however, dedicated mental health counselors available to you through UTampa's Health and Counseling Center located in the Dickey Health and Wellness Center directly behind Austin Hall. The best time to deal with mental health issues is when they arise and not after your personal and academic life have hit rock bottom. The Health Center's email is counseling@ut.edu and their phone numbers are 813-253-6250 (during business hours) and 833-755-0484 (outside of business hours for emergencies).

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 thoughtfully – This classroom is a collaborative learning environment that necessitates regular, in-person attendance. 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

¹ Kim North Shine, "College Students' Anxiety, Depression Higher than Ever, but so Are Efforts to Receive Care," University of Michigan News, March 9, 2023, <https://news.umich.edu/college-students-anxiety-depression-higher-than-ever-but-so-are-efforts-to-receive-care/>.

not on exams.² 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 anymore. If you are shy this is good practice for you. Use the class to build your confidence and public speaking skills.³ For these reasons, ongoing remote or hybrid attendance for individual students is incompatible with this course's curriculum.

DO take responsibility for missed classes – There are an infinite number of reasons students miss class. On exam and presentation days, you owe me an excuse if you want to avoid a late penalty. For all other class days, you do not need to ask permission to miss, nor do you owe me an explanation. You do not even need to send me an email explaining your absence. The lectures and discussions you miss, however, are testable material that may show up on an exam. I do NOT provide individualized make-up lectures to students who miss a class. It is not unusual for a handful of students to miss each class and the expectation that each will receive a personalized lecture is unreasonable. I do NOT answer questions similar to “did I miss anything important?” Answering such questions implies that a two-hour lecture/discussion can be boiled down into an email or a few-minute recitation and gives the false impression to many students that content not covered in the recap will not be on the exam. What should you do if you miss a class? First, don't make it a habit. Every semester a few students miss more than an occasional class and it rarely works out well for them grade-wise. You get a handful of dropped participation grades, but the supply is not limitless. Second, make connections with your colleagues, especially those who take good notes. When you miss, ask them to share. If you expect your colleagues to be helpful in times of need, it behooves you to return the favor. Do the readings, go through the Powerpoint slides I upload as a courtesy to students and your colleague's notes, and write down any questions you have about the content therein. Feel free to drop by during office hours to ask those questions.

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 exam or required meeting. 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 SpartanLearn submitted assignments. You know about them well in advance and a last-minute issue should not affect your ability to turn in the assignment. Excuses for missed exams, presentations, or meetings 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 usually 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 policy regarding late penalties and dropped grades. 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. Participation grades come with a generous drop policy. Students can miss a week and a half of classes and even if they are unlucky and there are participation checks on all those days, earn a perfect score in participation. Due to this fact, there are no make-ups and excuses are unnecessary.

² Alice S. N. Kim et al., “Understanding the Impact of Attendance and Participation on Academic Achievement,” *Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Psychology* 6, no. 4 (2020): 272–84, <https://doi.org/10.1037/stl0000151>.

³ Katy Y. Y. Tam, Wijnand A. P. Van Tilburg, and Christian S. Chan, “Whatever Will Bore, Will Bore: The Mere Anticipation of Boredom Exacerbates Its Occurrence in Lectures,” *British Journal of Educational Psychology* 93, no. 1 (2023): 198–210, <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjep.12549>.

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 office hours. I keep at least 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 use your laptop or telephone in class – Research consistently shows that students who use electronic devices in the classroom are more distracted and distract those around them.⁴ To help combat the temptation for distraction, laptops and telephones should be stored out of sight during class time. Individual exceptions to this policy are rare, require more than a preference for digital notetaking, and must be pre-approved by the professor. Exception requests must be made in writing no later than the end of the first month of the semester or within a week of a change in your status. In an emergency or if directed to do so as part of a classroom assignment, this rule is suspended.

DO NOT offload your education to AI - You may use AI chatbots to help brainstorm an idea or check your grammar. You should note, however, that the material generated by these programs may be inaccurate, incomplete, plagiarized, or otherwise problematic. Overuse of AI will also stifle your own independent thinking, creativity, and development as a scholar. You may NOT submit any work generated by an AI chatbot as your own. If you include material generated by AI, it should be quoted and cited like any other reference material. Uncited material that reads like it was written by AI will receive no credit.⁵

DO NOT video or audio record class without permission – Because of the chilling effect it may have on class discussions, as a rule I do not want students audio/video recording the class. If, for documented reasons of accessibility, your learning will be negatively impacted by this policy it may be waived by professor permission. Ask. In cases where permission is granted, any recordings permitted in this class can only be used for the student’s personal educational use. Students are not permitted to copy, publish, or redistribute audio or video recordings of any portion of the class session to individuals who are not students in the course or academic program without the express permission of the faculty member and of any students who are recorded. Distribution without permission may be a violation of educational privacy law, known as FERPA, as well as certain copyright laws. Any recordings made by the professor or university for this course are the property of the professor and/or the university.⁶

DO NOT send me an email unless it’s absolutely necessary – With several classes and nearly 100 students a semester emails are a burden. If even ten percent of students decide this rule does not apply to them, my Inbox will be full in no time with business better dealt with offline. 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?

⁴ Pam A. Mueller and Daniel M. Oppenheimer, “The Pen Is Mightier Than the Keyboard: Advantages of Longhand Over Laptop Note Taking,” *Psychological Science* 25, no. 6 (June 1, 2014): 1159–68, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797614524581>.

⁵ Adapted from <https://x.com/HollyLynchez/status/1614980625374580738>

⁶ Adapted from https://teaching.temple.edu/sites/teaching/files/resource/pdf/Statement%20on%20recordings_netiquette.pdf

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 don't check email every day.

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 are on the exam. Anything in the readings, lectures, or discussions is fair game for an exam. Things covered extensively across readings, lectures, and discussions are more likely to show up on the exam.

DO NOT ask for extra credit – Rarely do 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 initiates the request. Giving out extra credit opportunities to select students makes grades for the course an unreliable measure of student success and your goal should be to master the material assigned on the syllabus.

DO understand what your grade represents – I assume all students who enter my class want to take away a greater understanding of the slice of the world we are studying and that the grade they receive is but a formal, and somewhat abstract and imprecise, reflection of the knowledge they have gained. The average student in my courses typically earns a B (3.0). Grades represent 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, but several do. 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 whom I think are wonderful people and given A grades to students of whom I am not so fond. 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 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 two weeks after your grade is submitted to SpartanLearn to file a complaint and 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 university Grade Appeal procedure.