

Political Science 450 | Research in Political Psychology

(Seminar in Biology, Psychology, and Politics)

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Spring Semester 2017

Tuesdays & Thursdays 9:30-10:45am | 108 CBA

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Course website:	Accessible through http://blackboard.unl.edu

INTRODUCTION

This course acts as the capstone for the “Biology, Psychology, and Politics” area of emphasis in the Political Science Department. The goals of the course are two-fold: expose students to current research on the psychological and biological underpinnings of political behavior, and train students to design, conduct, and analyze research in this interdisciplinary area. We will divide our time between reading contemporary theory and research from political science and psychology, discussing research design and methods, and preparing for and conducting original research projects over the course of the semester. Projects will be conducted in small groups of students. The course format will be a mix of lectures, student presentations, and group workshops. In this course all student projects are developed around a focused area of investigation. This semester, the topic will be “Political Attitudes.”

Note: This course is open to political science majors and minors, as well as any other interested student. The only prerequisite for the course is POLS 286 (Political Analysis), but I am waiving it this term.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

In successfully completing this course, students will:

1. Identify and apply the scientific methods that are used by researchers in political psychology.
2. Understand the steps involved in good research: beginning with asking good questions and ending with dissemination of results.
3. Gain confidence in their ability to conduct research.
4. Improve their ability to think critically about research encountered in daily life.

ACE (GENERAL EDUCATION) PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

By passing this course, you will fulfill ACE Learning Outcome 6: “Use knowledge, theories, methods, and historical perspectives appropriate to the social sciences to understand and evaluate human behavior.” Through this course, you will have several opportunities to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve the ACE Learning Outcome. Your work will be evaluated by the instructor according to the assignments described in this course syllabus. You may be asked to provide samples of your work for ACE assessment as well.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK

Morling, B. (2015). *Research Methods in Psychology: Evaluating a World of Information* (2nd ed.). New York: Norton. [ISBN: 9780393936933]

Required textbooks are available for purchase or rental from the UNL Bookstore, and (when possible) will be placed on course reserve for use in Love Library. Additional readings will be posted on Blackboard.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Reaction Papers

On the days that we discuss research articles, you will be assigned to read the two assigned papers for that particular day. You will be asked to write a 1-2 page reaction paper relating to this reading. **Reaction papers must be uploaded to Blackboard by NOON the day before the discussion occurs (see course schedule).** These reaction papers should briefly summarize the readings, offer your own thoughts on the readings (what did you like? not like? problems with the research? ideas for follow-up research?). You should also offer some questions for discussion. These questions should not be of the variety that can be answered with a simple “yes” or “no”; rather they should be ones that stimulate discussion. So, send in questions that you’d like to hear others’ reactions to. Good discussion questions will be ones that require your fellow students and discussion leaders to think critically about the material, consider how it relates to other articles we have read, and/or generate novel research hypotheses.

Short Assignments

There are five short assignments to be completed during (when time permitting) or after class. These are designed to reinforce concepts discussed in class. These are to be done INDIVIDUALLY, unless otherwise noted.

Midterm Exam

There will be an open-book, open-notes, take-home midterm in this class to assess how well you have learned the basic concepts discussed in class, in the text, and practiced in the assignments.

Research Project

The ultimate goal in this class is to perform a research study. To do so, you will need to generate a hypothesis, design a study, collect & analyze data, and then present the work to others in both verbal and written formats. Your performance on this project will be evaluated at various stages in a number of ways.

Study Materials & Ethics Application. You will be responsible for generating your own study materials and procedures, whether they are observations of natural behavior, surveys, computer programs, and/or physiological measurements. Part of your grade will be determined by both the creativity and appropriateness of the materials and procedures you decide to use. You will also be responsible for maintaining the highest ethical standards and practices. As such, you will be expected to document ethical safeguards.

Group Presentation. You will be asked to present your research idea and study materials as a group to the class. All members of the group will be expected to contribute in some way to this presentation. The presentation should present the theoretical and conceptual ideas behind the

study, the study hypotheses, and proposed methods. The other members of the class will be expected to provide feedback to the presenters, asking questions to help them clarify their thinking and improving their study materials.

Data Preparation. A lot of work goes into analyzing data. You will learn how to use statistical software (R and R Studio) to analyze and understand your data. You will be expected to bring your data to class in a way that facilitates efficient data analysis and discussion. More details of how to work with data will be provided throughout the semester. However, if you are completely new to data analysis or data analysis with the software R, you will likely need to dedicate additional time outside of class to learning the software.

Conference Style Poster Presentation. You will be expected to create a conference style research poster, a visual display of your research findings. Members of the Political Science Department will be invited to view these at the end of the quarter and ask you questions. Although there is only one poster per group, all members of the group are expected to help prepare and present the poster.

Final Paper. Each student is responsible for writing up their own final paper. This paper is to describe the research performed in an APA-style research article, detailing the conceptual background, materials and procedures, data analysis, discussion of results, and references.

Participation/Attendance

Your active involvement in discussions and at various phases of the research process will be evaluated as part of your grade. Research is challenging, and will require active participation by all group members. On a related point, as you cannot participate if you are absent, attendance in each class will be carefully monitored and evaluated. If you cannot attend a class, you **MUST** notify the instructor **IN ADVANCE** for excusal. **Unexcused absences will result in a “0” for participation on that day.**

*Note on “Free-Loading”:

Although assigning projects by groups may suggest the possibility of “free-loading” and allowing others to do your work, there are several safeguards to prevent this. First, much of the work in this class will be performed individually (i.e., assignments, critique, midterm, final paper, participation). Moreover, all members of the group will each be asked to document who did what throughout the research process and provide a final evaluation of their group members at the end of the semester. The instructor will also be observing you throughout the process to monitor individual contributions to the research effort. Lack of contribution to the group project will have a negative impact on your individual participation grade.

*Note on Missed Assignments:

You are responsible for turning in all assignments on time. The assignments in this course build upon one another very closely, so getting behind can have disastrous effects on your ability to complete the course successfully. For this reason, there is a very strict policy regarding late assignments: **late assignments (turned in after the deadline) will receive a “0”**. This penalty will be waived *only under extreme circumstances* (e.g., for severe medical reasons and/or family emergencies). **Should such circumstances arise, the student must contact the instructor immediately and submit suitable documentation.**

GRADING

Grading will be based on the various elements of the course, as listed below. All assignments will be graded on an individual basis, except for the group research proposal presentation and assignments marked “1 per group.”

Final grades will be determined using the following scale: 97-100% = A+, 93-96% = A, 90-92% = A-, 87-89% = B+, 83-86% = B, 80-82% = B-, 77-79% = C+, 73-76% = C, 70-72% = C-, 67-69% = D+, 63-66% = D, 60-62% = D-, below 60% = F. Pass/Fail grades require at least a C to pass. Incompletes are at the discretion of the instructor, and will only be considered under extreme circumstances.

Assignments (20 points each)	
Assignment 1: Variables	20 points
Assignment 2: Experiment vs. Non-Experiment	20 points
Assignment 3: References	20 points
Assignment 4: Try R	20 points
Assignment 5: Interpreting Data	20 points
Discussions	
Reaction Papers (4 x 10 points each)	40 points
Participation/Attendance in class throughout semester	100 points
Midterm Exam	80 points
Project Materials	
Research Proposal (1 per group)	40 points
Ethics Application (1 per group)	20 points
Dataset Preparation (1 per group)	20 points
Project Presentations	
Group Presentation (1 per group)	40 points
Conference Style Poster (1 per group)	80 points
Poster Presentation Participation	20 points
Paper Presentation	
Draft of Introduction & Methods	25 points
Peer Editing of Introduction & Methods	15 points
Draft of Results & Discussion	25 points
Peer Editing of Results & Discussion	15 points
Final APA Style Paper	150 points
TOTAL	770 points

COURSE POLICIES

Communication

The best way to reach me is through email. I check it often (more often than I check voicemail) and will do my best to respond to your questions within 24 hours. Please include "POLS 450" in the subject line of your email. You are also welcome and encouraged to stop by my office during office hours, or make an appointment to meet with me at another time. I will send announcements electronically, so please check your email and the course website often. Please make sure that the email address associated with your Blackboard account is one you check frequently.

Academic Misconduct Warning

All work must be your own. Plagiarism and all other forms of cheating outlined by the University's Student Code of Conduct (Section 4.2) will not be tolerated in this class. Cheating or plagiarism will be reported through official university channels, and the consequences will be severe. The minimum punishment is usually failure in the course. No one exam or assignment is ever worth this penalty. To avoid missing out on a good college GPA, or even your degree, keep your eyes on your own test and write your own papers.

Writing assignments in this course will be submitted electronically to a SafeAssign dropbox in Blackboard. SafeAssign uses plagiarism-checking software to detect text copied from other authors. Further information about SafeAssign can be found at <http://www.safeassign.com/>.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the instructor for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to provide flexible and individualized accommodation to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to fully participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. To receive accommodation services, students must be registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office, 132 Canfield Administration, 472-3787 voice or TTY.

UNL Writing Center

The UNL Writing Center can provide you with meaningful support as you write for this class as well as for every course in which you enroll. Trained peer consultants are available to talk with you about all forms of communication, including lab reports, presentations, research papers, cover letters, and application essays. You can visit at any stage of the process, from brainstorming and organizing ideas through polishing a final draft. The UNL Writing Center is located in 102 Andrews Hall, with evening hours in the Adele Hall Learning Commons and other satellite locations. You can schedule 25- and 50-minute appointments any time by visiting unl.mywconline.com. For more information about the Writing Center, including hours and other locations, please visit unl.edu/writing.

READINGS

Additional articles may be assigned throughout the semester at the instructor's discretion.

Required Textbook

Morling, B. (2015). *Research Methods in Psychology: Evaluating a World of Information* (2nd ed.). New York: Norton. [ISBN: 9780393936933]

Required Readings (will be posted on Blackboard)

Bem, D. J. (2004). Writing the empirical journal article. In J. M. Darley, M. P. Zanna, & H. L. Roediger (Eds.), *The Compleat Academic* (pp. 185-219). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Bizer, G. Y., & Petty, R. E. (2005). How we conceptualize our attitudes matters: The effects of valence framing on the resistance of political attitudes. *Political Psychology, 26*, 553-568.

Fazio, R. H., & Williams, C. J. (1986). Attitude accessibility as a moderator of the attitude-perception and attitude-behavior relations: An investigation of the 1984 presidential election. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 51*, 505-514.

Fazio, R. H., Sanbonmatsu, D. M., Powell, M. C., & Kardes, F. R. (1986). On the automatic activation of attitudes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 50*, 229-238.

Jordan, C. H., & Zanna, M. P. (1999). How to read a journal article in social psychology. In R.F. Baumeister (Ed.). *The Self in Social Psychology: Essential Readings* (pp. 461-470). Philadelphia: Psychology Press.

Lord, C. G., Ross, L., & Lepper, M. R. (1979). Biased assimilation and attitude polarization: The effects of prior theories on subsequently considered evidence. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 37*, 2098-2109.

Lundberg, K. B., & Payne, B. K. (2014). Decisions among the undecided: implicit attitudes predict future voting behavior of undecided voters. *PLoS One, 9*(1), e85680. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0085680

Schwarz, N. (1999). Self-reports: How the questions shape the answers. *American Psychologist, 54*, 93-105.

Sweeney, P. D., & Gruber, K. L. (1984). Selective exposure: Voter information preferences and the Watergate affair. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 46*, 1208-1221.

Zaller, J., & Feldman, S. (1992). A simple theory of the survey response: Answering questions versus revealing preferences. *American Journal of Political Science, 36*, 579-616.

POLS 450 | COURSE SCHEDULE

Due dates for assignments and exams, as well as required readings, are listed below on the course schedule. All readings should be completed prior to class. Please note that this schedule represents a tentative plan and is subject to change at the instructor's discretion. Any changes will be announced in class.

WEEK	DATE	TOPIC	READING	ASSIGNMENTS
1	T 1/10	Introduction & Course Overview		
	R 1/12	Theories, Hypotheses, & Variables	Morling Ch. 1-2, Ch. 3 pp. 55-60, Ch. 14 pp. 414-424	
2	T 1/17	Research Design	Morling Ch. 3 pp. 60-66, Ch. 5 pp. 121-129, Ch. 10	Assignment 1: Variables due on Blackboard 11:59pm
	R 1/19	NO CLASS (SPSP Conference)		
3	T 1/24	Reliability & Validity	Morling Ch. 3 pp. 66-78, Ch. 5 pp. 129-150	Assignment 2: Research Design due on Blackboard 11:59pm
	R 1/26	Topic Overview Article Discussion: Attitude Function	Jordan & Zanna (1999) Fazio et al. (1986) Bizer & Petty (2005)	Reaction Paper 1 due on Blackboard by noon W 1/25
4	T 1/31	Article Discussion: Attitude Measurement	Schwarz (1999) Zaller & Feldman (1992)	Reaction Paper 2 due on Blackboard by noon M 1/30
	R 2/2	Article Discussion: Impact of Attitudes on Perception and Judgment	Lord, Ross, & Lepper (1979) Sweeney & Gruber (1984)	Reaction Paper 3 due on Blackboard by noon W 2/1
5	T 2/7	Article Discussion: Impact of Attitudes on Behavior	Fazio & Williams (1986) Lundberg & Payne (2014)	Reaction Paper 4 due on Blackboard by noon M 2/6
	R 2/9	Topic Selection		Study Topic Preferences due
6	T 2/14	Group Formation & Discussion		Submit Midterm Exam on Blackboard by 11:59pm
	R 2/16	Ethics Group Discussion	Morling Ch. 4	Assignment 3: References due on Blackboard 11:59pm
7	T 2/21	Group Meetings: Design & Materials Preparation	Morling Ch. 6, 8, 10, 13 (as relevant for project)	
	R 2/23	Tips on Writing Group Meetings: Design & Materials Preparation	Bem (2004) Morling pp. 487-527 (Presenting Results)	
8	T 2/28	Group Meetings: Design & Materials Preparation		
	R 3/2	Group Presentations		Research Proposal and Ethics Application due on Blackboard by Wed. 3/1 11:59pm
9	T 3/7	Basics of Data Analysis	Review Morling pp. 441-487 (Statistics Review)	Assignment 4: Try R due on Blackboard 11:59pm
	R 3/9	Selecting Participants Peer Editing: Intro & Method	Morling Ch. 7, Ch. 14 pp. 424-433	Introduction & Methods draft due for peer-edit (bring 1 copy to class)
10	T 3/14	Data Collection (<i>meet with your group outside of class</i>)		Start collecting data outside of class Introduction & Methods draft due for grading by 11:59pm (submit on Blackboard)

WEEK	DATE	TOPIC	READING	ASSIGNMENTS
	R 3/16	Factorial Designs & Data Interpretation	Morling Ch. 8, 12	Continue collecting data outside of class
11	3/20-3/24	NO CLASS (Spring Break)		
12	T 3/28	Analyzing Data	Morling Ch. 8, 10, 13, & Statistics Review pp. 441-487 (as relevant for project)	Bring dataset to class!
	R 3/30	Analyzing Data		Assignment 5: Interpreting Data due on Blackboard by 5pm
13	T 4/4	Analyzing Data & Poster Design		
	R 4/6	Analyzing Data & Poster Design		
14	T 4/11	Finish Analyzing Data & Finalize Poster Design		Final posters need to be uploaded to Blackboard <u>and</u> printed / prepared for the poster session on 4/18!
	R 4/13	Peer Editing: Results & Discussion		Results & Discussion draft due for peer-edit (bring 1 copy to class) Results & Discussion draft due for grading by 11:59pm on Friday 4/14 (submit on Blackboard)
15	T 4/18	Poster Session!		
	R 4/20	NO CLASS (MPA Conference)		
16	T 4/25	Poster Session Discussion		
	R 4/27	Course Wrap-Up		
***	T 5/2	Final APA-Style Papers due by 11:59pm on Blackboard		