**Political Science 450 | Research in Political Psychology**  
(Seminar in Biology, Psychology, and Politics)  
University of Nebraska-Lincoln  
Spring Semester 2017  
MW 9:30-10:45am | 538 Oldfather Hall

| Instructor: | Dr. Ingrid Haas |
| Email:      | ihaas2 (at) unl.edu |
| Office phone: | 402.472.2173 |
| Office location: | 531 Oldfather Hall / C83 East Memorial Stadium |
| Office hours: | MW 2-3pm in 531 Oldfather Hall (and by appointment) |
| Course website: | [http://canvas.unl.edu](http://canvas.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.”

**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.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Reaction Papers
On the days that we discuss research articles, you should read the 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 Canvas 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.

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 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. 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.

**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.

**Final Research Presentation.** At the end of the semester, you will give a presentation on your research findings. Although there is only one presentation per group, all members of the group are expected to help prepare and present the presentation.
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.

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<th>Assignments (20 points each)</th>
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<td>Assignment 1: Variables</td>
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<td>Assignment 2: Experiment vs. Non-Experiment</td>
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<td>Assignment 3: References</td>
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<td>Assignment 4: Try R</td>
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<td>Assignment 5: Interpreting Data</td>
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<th>Discussions</th>
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<td>Reaction Papers (4 x 10 points each)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Participation/Attendance throughout semester</th>
<th>50 points</th>
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<tr>
<th>Project Materials</th>
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<td>Research Proposal (1 per group)</td>
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<td>Ethics Application (1 per group)</td>
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<td>Dataset Preparation (1 per group)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Project Presentations</th>
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<tr>
<td>Research Proposal Presentation (1 per group)</td>
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<td>Final Research Presentation (1 per group)</td>
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<th>Final APA Style Paper</th>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>500 points</td>
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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 Canvas account is one you check frequently. You may also want to make sure that Canvas is set to email you when course announcements are posted, and get into the habit of checking Canvas on a regular basis.

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 final paper.

Plagiarism-Checking Software
Writing assignments in this course will be submitted electronically to a Turnitin drop box in Canvas. Turnitin uses plagiarism-checking software to detect text copied from other authors. Further information about Turnitin can be found at turnitin.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.

Optional Background Reading


Required Readings (will be posted on Blackboard)


POLS 450 | COURSE SCHEDULE

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

Week 1 (M 1/8): Introduction and Course Overview

Reading:
- Syllabus and Course Schedule

Assignments (deadline F 1/12):
- Complete Student Information Survey (link on Canvas)

Week 2 (W 1/17): Research Methods and Research Ethics

Reading:
- Research Methods lecture slides (posted on Canvas)
- Research Ethics lecture slides (posted on Canvas)
- (Optional) Morling textbook
  - Theories, Hypotheses, & Variables: Ch. 1-2, Ch. 3 pp. 55-60, Ch. 14 pp. 414-424
  - Research Design: Ch. 3 pp. 60-66, Ch. 5 pp. 121-129, Ch. 10
  - Reliability & Validity: Ch. 3 pp. 66-78, Ch. 5 pp. 129-150
  - Research Ethics: Ch. 4

Assignments (deadline T 1/16 11:59pm):
- Assignment 1: Variables
- Assignment 2: Research Design

Week 3 (W 1/24): Attitude Function

Reading:
- Jordan & Zanna (1999)
- Katz (1960)
- Fazio et al. (1986)
- Bizer & Petty (2005)

Assignments (deadline T 1/23 noon):
- Reaction Paper 1

Week 4 (W 1/31): Attitude Measurement

Reading:
- Wilson & Schooler (1991)
- Schwarz (1999)
- Zaller & Feldman (1992)
Assignments (deadline T 1/30 noon):
- Reaction Paper 2

**Week 5 (W 2/7): Impact of Attitudes on Perception and Judgment**

Reading:
- Lord, Ross, & Lepper (1979)
- Sweeney & Gruber (1984)
- Flynn, Nyhan, & Reifler (2017)

Assignments (deadline T 2/6 noon):
- Reaction Paper 3

**Week 6 (W 2/14): Impact of Attitudes on Behavior**

Reading:
- Fazio & Williams (1986)
- Lundberg & Payne (2014)

Assignments (deadline T 2/13 noon):
- Reaction Paper 4

**Week 7 (W 2/21): Discuss Research Project Goals**

Reading:
- (Optional) Morling textbook Ch. 6, 8, 10, 13 (as relevant for project)

**Week 8 (W 2/28): Writing an APA-Style Paper**

Reading:
- Tips on Writing lecture slides (posted on Canvas)
- (Optional) Morling textbook pp. 487-527 (Presenting Results)

Assignments (deadline T 2/27 11:59pm):
- Assignment 3: References

**Week 9 (W 3/7): Selecting Participants**

Reading:
- Selecting Research Participants lecture slides (posted on Canvas)
- (Optional) Morling textbook Ch. 7, Ch. 14 pp. 424-433

**Week 10 (W 3/14): Research Proposal Presentation**

Assignments (deadline T 3/13 11:59pm):
- Research Proposal
- Ethics Application
Week 11 (W 3/21): No meeting – Spring Break

Week 12 (W 3/28): Preparation for Data Collection

Assignments (due T 3/27 11:59pm):
- Create Qualtrics account
- Draft survey on Qualtrics (bring to meeting)

Week 13 (W 4/4): Discussion of Data Analysis

Reading:
- Planning Your Analysis lecture slides (on Canvas)
- Interpreting Patterns of Data lecture slides (on Canvas)
- (Optional) Morling textbook Ch. 8, 12, Statistics Review: pp. 441-487

Assignments (due T 4/3 11:59pm):
- Assignment 4: Try R

Week 14 (W 4/11): Data Analysis for Project

Reading:
- (Optional) Morling textbook Ch. 8, 10, 13, & Statistics Review pp. 441-487 (as relevant for project)

Assignments (deadline T 4/10 11:59pm):
- Assignment 5: Interpreting Data
- Bring final dataset to our meeting! (and submit on Canvas)

Week 15 (W 4/18): Data Analysis for Project

Week 16 (W 4/25): Final Research Presentation and Course Wrap-Up

Final APA-Style Papers due by W 5/2 11:59pm