

## Political Science 450 I Conducting Research in Political Psychology

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Spring Semester 2020

Tuesdays & Thursdays 2:00-3:15pm | Louise Pound Hall (LPH) 101

<b>Instructor:</b>	Dr. Ingrid Haas
<b>Email:</b>	ihaas2 (at) unl.edu
<b>Office phone:</b>	402.472.2173
<b>Office location:</b>	531 Oldfather Hall / C83 East Memorial Stadium
<b>Office hours:</b>	Tues. & Thurs. 11-12 in 531 Oldfather Hall (or by appointment)
<b>Course website:</b>	<a href="http://canvas.unl.edu">http://canvas.unl.edu</a>

### 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 **candidate perception and voting behavior**.

### PREREQUISITES

Political Science 286 (Political Analysis) or approval from course instructor.

### 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, including assignments, the midterm exam, class discussions, and the group research projects. Your work will be evaluated by the instructor according to the assignments described in this course syllabus, including assessment of the final research paper and participation in class discussions. Your work may be collected through Canvas for ACE assessment as well.

## REQUIRED TEXTBOOK

Morling, B. (2017). *Research Methods in Psychology: Evaluating a World of Information* (3rd ed.). New York: Norton.

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

## REQUIRED SOFTWARE

For this course, you'll need access to data analysis software R and RStudio. These are free and can be installed on your own laptop or personal computer, and/or the instructor can direct you toward computer labs where this software is available. More detail will be provided in class.

1. R can be downloaded here: <https://www.r-project.org>
2. RStudio can be downloaded here (make sure you select the free / open source edition): <https://rstudio.com/products/rstudio/>

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### Reaction Papers

On the days that we discuss research articles, you will be assigned to read the 3 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.

### 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 on 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 semester 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 extenuating circumstances* (e.g., for 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.

<b>Assignments (20 points each)</b>	
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
<b>Discussions</b>	
Reaction Papers (4 x 10 points each)	40 points
<b>Participation/Attendance in class throughout semester</b>	100 points
<b>Midterm Exam</b>	80 points
<b>Project Materials</b>	
Research Proposal (1 per group)	40 points
Ethics Application (1 per group)	20 points
Dataset Preparation (1 per group)	20 points
<b>Project Presentations</b>	
Group Presentation (1 per group)	40 points
Conference Style Poster (1 per group)	80 points
Poster Presentation Participation	20 points
<b>Paper Presentation</b>	
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
<b>Final APA Style Paper</b>	150 points
<b>TOTAL</b>	770 points

## **COURSE POLICIES**

### **Communication**

The best way to reach me is through email (please include "POLS 450" in the subject line, or send your message through Canvas). I check it often (more often than I check voicemail) and will do my best to respond to your questions within 24 hours (Monday-Friday). I may or may not check email during the evenings and on weekends, so please plan accordingly and email me well in advance of any assignment deadlines. 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 through Canvas and submitted to Turnitin, which uses plagiarism-checking software to detect text copied from other authors. This includes published articles and books, as well as news articles and websites, and course papers submitted previously to Canvas for other courses. Further information about Turnitin can be found at <http://www.turnitin.com>. You should also feel free to ask me about it if you have any questions about Turnitin or about plagiarism and how to cite sources in general.

### **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](http://unl.mywconline.com). For more information about the Writing Center, including hours and other locations, please visit [unl.edu/writing](http://unl.edu/writing).

## READINGS

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

### Required Textbook

Morling, B. (2017). *Research Methods in Psychology: Evaluating a World of Information* (3rd ed.). New York: Norton.

### Required Readings (will be posted on Canvas)

- Bauer, N. M. (2015). Emotional, sensitive, and unfit for office? Gender stereotype activation and support female candidates. *Political Psychology, 36*(6), 691-708.
- 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.
- Flynn, D. J., Nyhan, B., & Reifler, J. (2017). The nature and origins of misperceptions: Understanding false and unsupported beliefs about politics. *Advances in Political Psychology, 38*.
- 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.
- Krupnikov, Y., Piston, S., & Bauer, N. M. (2016). Saving face: Identifying voter responses to Black candidates and female candidates. *Political Psychology, 37*(2), 253-273.
- Lau, R. R., & Redlawsk, D. P. (1997). Voting correctly. *American Political Science Review, 91*, 585-598.
- Lau, R. R., & Redlawsk, D. P. (2001). Advantages and disadvantages of cognitive heuristics in political decision making. *American Journal of Political Science, 45*, 951-971.
- Lavine, H. (2001). The electoral consequences of ambivalence toward presidential candidates. *American Journal of Political Science, 45*, 915-929.
- Lodge, M., Steenbergen, M. R., & Brau, S. (1995). The responsive voter: Campaign information and the dynamics of candidate evaluation. *American Political Science Review, 89*, 309-326.
- Marcus, G. E., & MacKuen, M. B. (1993). Anxiety, enthusiasm, and the vote: The emotional underpinnings of learning and involvement during presidential campaigns. *American Political Science Review, 87*, 672-685.
- Piston, S. (2010). How explicit racial prejudice hurt Obama in the 2008 election. *Political Behavior, 32*(4), 431-451.
- 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.
- Taber, C. S., & Lodge, M. (2006). Motivated skepticism in the evaluation of political beliefs. *American Journal of Political Science, 50*, 755-769.
- Todorov, A., Mandisodza, A. N., Goren, A., & Hall, C. C. (2005). Inferences of competence from faces predict election outcomes. *Science, 308*, 1623-1626.

## 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 1/14	Introduction & Course Overview		
	R 1/16	Theories, Hypotheses, & Variables	Morling Ch. 1-2, Ch. 3 pp. 58-61, Ch. 5 pp. 118-124	
2	T 1/21	Research Design	Morling Ch. 3 pp. 61-68, Ch. 8, Ch. 10	<b>Assignment 1:</b> Variables due on Canvas T 1/21 11:59pm
	R 1/23	Reliability, Validity, & Replication	Morling Ch. 3 pp. 68-80, Ch. 5 pp. 124-143, Ch. 6 pp. 153-165, Ch. 14	<b>Assignment 2:</b> Research Design due on Canvas R 1/23 1:59pm
3	T 1/28	Topic Overview  Article Discussion: Candidate Perception (Information and Personality Traits)	Jordan & Zanna (1999)  Lodge, Steenbergen, & Brau (1995) Lau & Redlawsk (2001) Todorov et al. (2005)	<b>Reaction Paper 1</b> due on Canvas by noon M 1/27
	R 1/30	Article Discussion: Candidate Perception (Gender and Race)	Piston (2010) Bauer (2015) Krupnikov, Piston, & Bauer (2016)	<b>Reaction Paper 2</b> due on Canvas by noon W 1/29
4	T 2/4	Article Discussion: Vote Choice	Marcus & MacKuen (1993) Lau & Redlawsk (1997) Lavine (2001)	<b>Reaction Paper 3</b> due on Canvas by noon M 2/3
	R 2/6	Article Discussion: Motivated Reasoning	Sweeney & Gruber (1984) Taber & Lodge (2006) Flynn et al. (2017)	<b>Reaction Paper 4</b> due on Canvas by noon W 2/5
5	T 2/11	Topic Selection		Study Topic Preferences due
	R 2/13	Group Formation & Discussion		Submit <b>Midterm Exam</b> on Canvas by R 2/13 11:59pm
6	T 2/18	Ethics  Group Discussion	Morling Ch. 4	<b>Assignment 3:</b> References due on Canvas T 2/18 11:59pm
	R 2/20	Group Meetings: Design & Materials Preparation	Morling Ch. 8-13 (as relevant for project)	
7	T 2/25	Tips on Writing  Group Meetings: Design & Materials Preparation	Bem (2004)  Morling pp. 505-545 (Presenting Results)	
	R 2/27	<b>NO CLASS (SPSP Conference)</b>		Meet with your group to continue working on project design
8	T 3/3	Group Meetings: Design & Materials Preparation		
	R 3/5	Group Presentations		<b>Research Proposal and Ethics Application</b> due on Canvas by W 3/4 11:59pm

WEEK	DATE	TOPIC	READING	ASSIGNMENTS
9	T 3/10	Basics of Data Analysis	Review Morling pp. 457-505 (Statistics Review)	<b>Assignment 4:</b> Try R due on Canvas T 3/10 11:59pm
	R 3/12	Selecting Participants Peer Editing: Intro & Method	Morling Ch. 7, Ch. 14 pp. 438-453	<b>Introduction &amp; Methods draft</b> due for peer-edit (bring 1 copy to class)
10	T 3/17	Data Collection ( <i>meet with your group outside of class</i> )		Start collecting data outside of class  <b>Introduction &amp; Methods draft</b> due for grading by T 3/17 11:59pm (submit on Canvas)
	R 3/19	Experimental Design & Data Interpretation	Morling Ch. 8-13 (as relevant for project)	Continue collecting data outside of class
11	T 3/24- R 3/26	<b>NO CLASS (Spring Break)</b>		
12	T 3/31	Analyzing Data	Morling Ch. 8, 10, 12, 13, & Statistics Review pp. 457-505 (as relevant for project)	<b>Bring dataset to class!</b>
	R 4/2	Analyzing Data		<b>Assignment 5:</b> Interpreting Data due on Canvas by R 4/2 11:59pm
13	T 4/7	Analyzing Data & Poster Design		
	R 4/9	Analyzing Data & Poster Design		
14	T 4/14	Finish Analyzing Data & Finalize Poster Design		<b>Final posters</b> need to be uploaded to Canvas <u>and</u> printed / prepared for the poster session on 4/21!
	R 4/16	Peer Editing: Results & Discussion		<b>Results &amp; Discussion draft</b> due for peer-edit (bring 1 copy to class)  <b>Results &amp; Discussion draft</b> due for grading by 11:59pm on Sunday 4/19 (submit on Canvas)
15	T 4/21	Poster Session! (Location: Oldfather Hall 538)		
	R 4/23	<b>NO CLASS (MPA Conference)</b>		
16	T 4/28	Poster Session Discussion		
	R 4/30	Course Wrap-Up / Final Paper Consultations		
***	W 5/6	<b>Final APA-Style Papers due by 11:59pm on Canvas</b>		