

Political Science 450 | Conducting Research in Political Psychology

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Spring Semester 2022

Tuesdays & Thursdays 11:00am-12:15pm | Oldfather Hall 538

Instructor:	Dr. Ingrid Haas (Dr. Haas or Professor Haas; she/her)
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Student office hours:	Tuesday/Thursday 2-4pm on Zoom/phone (schedule an appointment at https://calendly.com/ingridjhaas/pols-450-office-hours)

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS

Course Description

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.

Prerequisites

Political Science 286 (Political Analysis) with a grade of C or higher.

Course Format and COVID Guidelines

This course is scheduled to meet in person. Students should *not* attend in person classes if sick/symptomatic or advised to quarantine/isolate due to COVID exposure or positive test (see Attendance Policy in Course Policies).

You are encouraged to take advantage of (free) COVID testing opportunities on campus through the Safer Community app (<https://covid19.unl.edu/about-our-testing>), consider joining the Voluntary COVID-19 Vaccine Registry (<https://covid19.unl.edu/voluntary-covid-19-vaccine-registry>), and explore opportunities for vaccination (<https://covid19.unl.edu/vaccination-information>). All positive tests should be reported to the university for contact tracing (see <https://covid19.unl.edu/positive-test-reporting>). You should follow UNL recommended guidelines for quarantine if exposed to COVID (<https://covid19.unl.edu/quarantine-information>) and/or isolation if you test positive (<https://covid19.unl.edu/isolation-guide-students>).

Class meetings will be a mix of short lectures, class discussion, and group work. Given the unique circumstances surrounding the pandemic you should feel free to reach out to me if you are having trouble sticking to the weekly schedule. In addition to class meetings, I plan to be available through Canvas, email, and virtual student office hours (see above for details). Any changes to course format due to changing COVID guidelines, illness, childcare (or lack thereof), etc., will be announced through Canvas.

Course Goals

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 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(s). Your work will be evaluated by the instructor according to the assessments described in this course syllabus. Your work will be collected through Canvas for ACE assessment.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

Textbook

Morling, B. (2021). *Research Methods in Psychology: Evaluating a World of Information* (4th ed.). New York: Norton.

Electronic textbooks (e-textbooks) for the course will be made available through the UNL Library Course Reserves when possible.

Additional readings will be available on Canvas.

Technical Requirements

UNL email account (@huskers.unl.edu)

Canvas (recommended browsers are Firefox or Google Chrome)

R (<https://www.r-project.org>)

RStudio (<https://rstudio.com/products/rstudio/>)

Zoom (<http://unl.zoom.us>)

Word processor (e.g., Microsoft Word, Pages)

PDF reader (e.g., Adobe, Preview)

Personal computer (desktop or laptop)

High-speed Internet connection (recommended)

Webcam (recommended)

For more information on technology resources available to UNL students, check out UNL IT resources: <https://its.unl.edu/>. You can also contact them at support@nebraska.edu with problems/questions regarding any UNL-supported software (this includes UNL email, Canvas, Zoom).

ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

Assessments

Reaction Papers. On the days that we discuss research articles, you will be assigned to read the 2 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, experiments, and/or computer programs. 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.

Research Proposal 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 our class meetings 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, coding, and/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. 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.** You are also responsible for maintaining contact with your group project members outside of class and notifying them of any absences that will impact group work.

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.

Grades

Final grades for this course will be calculated based on a possible 660 points and using the distribution and percentages below. I don’t round up or assign extra points at the end of the semester, so it is your responsibility to earn your desired grade. If you have any questions or concerns about your grade, you should always feel free to talk to me--the earlier in the semester the better! Final grades will be curved up for everyone in the class *only* if the overall class average is below a B- (< 80%). I will use Canvas throughout the semester to post grades so that you can keep track of your progress, and you can also calculate your grade using the point distribution below. Incompletes will be given only under extreme circumstances, and at the sole discretion of the instructor.

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 in class throughout semester	50 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	
Research Proposal Presentation (1 per group)	40 points
Final Research Presentation (1 per group)	40 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	660 points

A+ = 97-100%

A = 93-96.9%

A- = 90-92.9%

B+ = 87-89.9%

B = 83-86.9%

B- = 80-82.9%

C+ = 77-79.9%

C = 73-76.9%

C- = 70-72.9%

D+ = 67-69.9%

D = 63-66.9%

D- = 60-62.9%

F = < 59.9%

COURSE POLICIES

Instructional Continuity

If in-person classes are canceled, you will be notified of the instructional continuity plan for this class through Canvas.

Attendance and Engagement

Students are expected to attend all classes and engage with the course on a regular basis. Absences will be excused for illness, injury, hospitalization, military orders, university-sponsored activities, religious observation, and/or personal tragedy. Students should notify the instructor in advance of the absence (when possible), and students are responsible for material and content covered in the missed class(es).

Students who are sick or who are engaging in self-quarantine in accordance with guidance from the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department or their health care professional should not physically attend in-person classes. They must notify the instructor of their absence and must still meet the stated engagement expectations of the course, and they must adhere to the usual codes of conduct and rules of academic integrity that remain in place.

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Deadlines and Completion of Coursework

Regular engagement in the course is expected. In general, I do not accept late assignments or give make-up exams without a valid excuse. Should you miss any exam or assignment without approval from me, you will receive a zero grade for that exercise. That said, an exception may be granted to a student who contacts the instructor prior to the assignment due date or exam dates to request an extension. If you foresee being unable to turn in a paper or take an exam on the assigned dates, please contact me through Canvas or email and I will work with you. I realize these are complicated times and students may be dealing with additional constraints on their time and resources, in addition to health concerns, so I would just encourage you to reach out to me if you find you are having trouble keeping up with the course for whatever reason. Your health and safety (and that of the surrounding community) should be the top priority in the midst of a pandemic.

Communication

I will communicate with students through Canvas, so please make sure that you check Canvas on a regular basis and set up your Canvas notifications to receive emails about any course announcements or updates. You should plan to use your official @huskers.unl.edu email address for class. In general, I will plan to send weekly announcements on Monday mornings, so as not to flood your inbox with updates. But, you should feel free to contact me anytime with questions. The best way to contact me is by sending a message through Canvas, or email me directly with "POLS 450" in the subject line. I will do my best to respond to emails within 24 hours Monday-Friday. You are also welcome to stop by my Student Office Hours on Zoom/phone (make an appointment at <https://calendly.com/ingridjhaas/pols-450-office-hours>) or email me with your availability to meet if my regular meeting times (TR 2-4pm) don't work for you.

Plagiarism-Checking Software

Writing assignments in this course will be submitted online through Canvas and run through plagiarism-checking software (Turnitin). This software compares your work against previous papers and Internet sources to detect text copied from other authors. Further information about Turnitin can be found at <https://its.unl.edu/services/turnitin/> or www.turnitin.com.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND RESOURCES

All students at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln should be aware of the following university-wide course policies and resources (see <https://go.unl.edu/coursepolicies>):

- **Attendance Policy**
- **Academic Honesty Policy**
- **Services for Students with Disabilities**
- **Mental Health and Well-Being Resources**
- **Final Exam Schedule (15th Week Policy)**
- **Emergency Procedures (On Campus)**
- **Diversity & Inclusiveness**
- **Title IX Policy**

Academic Flexibility for COVID-19

Students who have medical documentation of a health risk that cannot be mitigated through vaccination should submit a [COVID-19 Academic Flexibility Request](#). Those with a disability and/or chronic health

condition that makes them high risk for the virus should seek support via [Services for Students with Disabilities](#). International students should contact the [International Student and Scholar Office](#) to discuss their options.

Writing Center (<https://www.unl.edu/writing/home>)

The Writing Center can provide you with meaningful support as you write for this class as well as every course in which you enroll. Trained undergraduate and graduate peer consultants are available to talk with you about all forms of communication. You are welcome to bring in everything from lab reports, presentations, and research papers to cover letters, application essays, and graduate theses and dissertations. Writing Center Consultants can work with you at any stage of the writing process, from brainstorming and organizing your ideas through polishing a final draft.

In 2021-22, there are three ways you can connect with a Consultant: Online (a real-time, video conversation), eTutoring (email feedback), and in person. To learn more about online options and view video tutorials, visit <https://www.unl.edu/writing/online-writing-center-services>. For information about the Writing Center's COVID-19 policies, visit <https://www.unl.edu/writing/covid-19-policies>.

Sign up for an appointment any time by visiting unl.mywconline.com. For other information about the Writing Center, please visit unl.edu/writing.

Recording of Class-Related Activity

I invite all of you to join me in actively creating and contributing to a positive, productive, and respectful classroom culture. Each student contributes to an environment that shapes the learning process. Any work and/or communication that you are privy to as a member of this course should be treated as the intellectual property of the speaker/creator, and is not to be shared outside the context of this course.

Students may not make or distribute screen captures, audio/video recordings of, or livestream, any class-related activity, including lectures and presentations, without express prior written consent from me or an approved accommodation from Services for Students with Disabilities. If you have (or think you may have) a disability such that you need to record or tape class-related activities, you should contact Services for Students with Disabilities. If you have an accommodation to record class-related activities, those recordings may not be shared with any other student, whether in this course or not, or with any other person or on any other platform. Failure to follow this policy on recording or distributing class-related activities may subject you to discipline under the Student Code of Conduct.

Trespass Policy (Regents' Policy 6.4.7)

The areas of University academic, research, public service, and administrative buildings of the University used for classrooms, laboratories, faculty and staff offices, and the areas of University student residence buildings used for student living quarters are not open to the general public. Any person not authorized to be or remain in any such building area will be deemed to be trespassing on University property and may be cited and subject to prosecution for criminal trespass in violation of Neb. Rev. Stat., § 28-520 or § 28-521.

POLS 450 | (TENTATIVE) COURSE SCHEDULE

Topics, readings, and assessments are listed below on the course schedule. All due dates are 11:59pm Central Standard Time (CST) unless otherwise specified below and all assessments should be submitted through Canvas. In general, readings should be completed prior to class 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 through Canvas and reflected in updates to the Syllabus and Course Schedule.

WEEK	DATES	TOPIC(S)	READINGS	ASSESSMENTS
1	T 1/18	Introduction & Course Overview		Syllabus and Course Schedule
	R 1/20	Research Methods: Theories, Hypotheses, & Variables	Morling Ch. 1-2, Ch. 3 pp. 56-60, Ch. 5 pp. 118-125	
2	T 1/25	Research Methods: Research Design	Morling Ch. 3 pp. 60-68, Ch. 8, Ch. 10	Assignment 1: Variables (due T 1/25)
	R 1/27	Reliability, Validity, & Replication	Morling Ch. 3 pp. 66-79, Ch. 5 pp. 125-143, Ch. 6 pp. 153-166, Ch. 14	Assignment 2: Research Design (due R 1/27)
3	T 2/1	Topic Overview	Jordan & Zanna (1999)	
	R 2/3	Article Discussion: Attitude Function Article Discussion: Attitude Measurement	Katz (1960) Eagly & Chaiken (2007) Zaller & Feldman (1992) Schwarz (1999)	Reaction Paper 1 (due M 1/31 12pm) Reaction Paper 2 (due W 2/2 12pm)
4	T 2/8	Article Discussion: Impact of Attitudes on Perception and Judgment	Sweeney & Gruber (1984) Flynn, Nyhan, & Reifler (2017)	Reaction Paper 3 (due M 2/7 12pm)
	R 2/10	Article Discussion: Impact of Attitudes on Behavior	Lavine (2001) Lundberg & Payne (2014)	Reaction Paper 4 (due W 2/9 12pm)
5	T 2/15	Topic Selection		Study Topic Preferences (due T 2/15)
	R 2/17	Midterm Exam NO CLASS R 2/17 (SPSP Conference)		Midterm Exam (due R 2/17)
6	T 2/22	Group Formation & Discussion		
	R 2/24	Research Ethics	Morling Ch. 4	Assignment 3: References (due R 2/24)
7	T 3/1	Group Meetings: Design & Materials Preparation	Morling Ch. 8-13 (as relevant for project)	
	R 3/3	Tips on Writing	Bem (2004) Morling pp. 523-561 (Presenting Results)	

WEEK	DATES	TOPIC(S)	READINGS	ASSESSMENTS
8	T 3/8 R 3/10	Group Meetings: Design & Materials Preparation Group Presentations		Research Proposal and Ethics Application (due W 3/9)
9	T 3/15 R 3/17	NO CLASS 3/15 or 3/17 (Spring Break)		
10	T 3/22 R 3/24	Basics of Data Analysis Selecting Participants	Review Morling pp. 467-515 (Statistics Review) Morling Ch. 7, Ch. 14 pp. 451-458	Assignment 4: Try R (due Su 3/27) Start collecting data outside of class
11	T 3/29 R 3/31	Peer Editing: Intro & Method Experimental Design & Data Interpretation	Morling Ch. 8-13 (as relevant for project)	Introduction & Methods draft (due in class for peer edit on T 3/29) Introduction & Methods draft (due on Canvas for grading Su 4/3) Continue collecting data outside of class
12	T 4/5 R 4/7	Data Analysis for Project NO CLASS R 4/7 (MPSA Conference)	Morling Ch. 8, 10, 12, 13, & Statistics Review pp. 467-515 (as relevant for project)	Bring dataset to class! (every group member should "bring" electronic copy to class on 4/5) Submit raw data on Canvas before 11am on 4/5 so I also have a copy Meet with research group to continue working on data analysis
13	T 4/12 R 4/14	Data Analysis for Project		Assignment 5: Interpreting Data (due T 4/12)
14	T 4/19 R 4/21	Data Analysis for Project Peer Editing: Results & Discussion		Results & Discussion draft (due in class for peer edit on R 4/21)
15	T 4/26 R 4/28	Data Analysis for Project / Group Meetings Final Research Presentations		Results & Discussion draft (due on Canvas for grading T 4/26) Submit final presentations on Canvas by R 4/28
16	T 5/3 R 5/5	Course Wrap-up / Final Paper Consultations NO CLASS R 5/5 (SANS Conference)		
***	T 5/10	Final Paper		Final Paper (due T 5/10)

Reading List

- 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.
- Eagly, A. H., & Chaiken, S. (2007). The advantages of an inclusive definition of attitude. *Social Cognition, 25*, 582-602.
- 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.
- Katz, D. (1960). The functional approach to the study of attitudes. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 24*, 163-204.
- Lavine, H. (2001). The electoral consequences of ambivalence toward presidential candidates. *American Journal of Political Science, 45*, 915-929.
- 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.