

Political Science 30: POLITICAL INQUIRY

Spring 2008
Peter H. Smith

Peterson 108

MW 9:00-9:50

This course provides an introduction to the logic of empirical research in political science. Emphasis will be on quantitative methods, but the underlying principles also apply to qualitative analysis.

Our basic goal is conceptual: to demonstrate the purpose and utility of statistical approaches in political inquiry. There will be frequent reference to practical applications. The course assumes no knowledge of statistics or mathematics beyond a basic high school level.

Required reading:

- Philip H. Pollock III, *The Essentials of Political Analysis*, 2nd edition (Washington DC: CQ Press, 2005),
- Philip H. Pollock III, *An SPSS Companion to Political Analysis*, 2nd edition (Washington DC: CQ Press, 2005), and
- A POLI 30 Course Reader.

Available for purchase:

- SPSS Student Version.

Course requirements and grading will be as follows:

- Participation in discussion sections (10% of course grade),
- Written homework assignments (30%),
- A research paper (25%), and
- A final examination (35%).

Date/time of final exam: Wednesday, June 11, 8:00-11:00 a.m. (location TBA).

Measurement and Politics

Mar 31: What Are We Doing Here?

Apr 02: Data, Variables, and Concepts

Apr 07: Levels of Measurement

Apr 09: Numbers in Action: Cycles of Democracy

Reading:

Pollock, *Essentials*, Preface, Introduction, and ch. 1
Course Reader, Selection 1 (Smith, “Cycles of Electoral Democracy”)

Variation, Association, and Research Design

Apr 14: Central Tendency: Mean, Median, Mode

Apr 16: Measures of Dispersion: Spread and Variability

Apr 21: Controlled Comparisons

Apr 23: Strategies for Research: Approaching the Paper Assignment

Reading:

Pollock, *Essentials*, chs. 2-3

Nonparametric Relationships: Cross-Tabulation

Apr 28: The Principle of PRE

Apr 30: The Art (and Science?) of Interpreting Tables

May 05: Chi-square and Statistical Significance

May 07: Data at Work: Negotiating Civil Wars

Reading:

Pollock, *Essentials*, chs. 4-6
Course Reader, Selection 2 (Licklider, “The Consequences of Negotiated Settlements in Civil Wars, 1945-1993”)

Relationships with Interval Data

May 12: The Logic of Regression

May 14: Interpreting Regression Coefficients

May 19: The Meaning of Statistical Significance

May 21: Regressions at Work: Ideology and Law, Correlates of Democracy

May 26: MEMORIAL DAY

Reading:

Pollock, *Essentials*, Pollock, *Essentials*, review chs. 5-6, read ch. 7 (pp. 154-165);
Course Reader, Selections 3 and 4 (Segal and Cover, “Ideological Values and the Votes
of U.S. Supreme Court Justices” and Cutright, “National Political Development:
Measurement and Analysis”)

Multivariate Relationships

May 28: Multiple Regression and Correlation

Jun 02: Using Dummy Variables

Jun 04: Understanding Support for Democracy/Conclusion to Course

Reading:

Pollock, *Essentials*, ch. 7 (pp. 165-176)

Course Reader, Selections 5 and 6 (Smith and Ziegler, “Governmental Performance and
Political Regimes: Latin America in Comparative Perspective” and Inglehart, “How Solid
Is Mass Support for Democracy—And How Can We Measure It?”)