

Political Science 280
Research Methods
Fall 2010

Political Science 280
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Dr. Lonna Atkeson
Office Hours: Tuesday 9:00-11:00 & by
appointment

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Office: Social Sciences 2049

Course Description

Political Science 280 is an introductory undergraduate research methods class. The class is an introduction to political science methodology and political science research methods. It focuses on an introduction to research methods including basic statistics and the fundamentals of quantitative and qualitative methods. In this course we address questions such as: What do political scientists do? What do political scientists think about? And, is there a science of politics?

Over the course of the semester each student will develop a toolbox of skills to think critically, causally, and empirically about research questions.

Please note this syllabus represents a guide to our activities. Changes to the syllabus are possible and even likely. Be sure to update your syllabus as required.

Assignments and Responsibilities

This class is conducted with an eye to a mixed approach to learning including lectures, experiential learning, homework assignments, discussion, group activities, and multimedia. Please keep in mind the following:

1. All readings are required. I expect all students to have studied the readings, thought about them and actively participate in class discussions.
2. Any homework assignments are expected to be completed on-time. I do not anticipate accepting late assignments or allowing extensions. There will be sufficient time to complete all of the requirements in the allotted time.
3. Always demonstrate respect and courtesy for fellow students. Arrive on time for class and leave only when it is time to leave. Class disruptions/distractions are not acceptable. Avoid talking when someone else is speaking.
4. Absolutely no form of academic dishonesty will be tolerated. This includes, but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, and depriving another student of the ability to perform his or her work. If you have any questions about my views on this subject, or official University of New Mexico policy, please discuss them with me.

Note: Qualified students with disabilities needing appropriate academic adjustments should contact me as soon as possible to ensure your needs are met in a timely manner.

Assignments:

1. Election Day Observations and Write Ups as an Election Day Poll Observer or Bernalillo County Poll Worker (1/2 the class in each group). This includes attending poll worker training. It also includes a debriefing on the morning immediately following the election and a qualitative write-up (2 page maximum) on the regularities and irregularities observed in the election process, amusing anecdotes from you Election Day experience, and others matters you deem of significance. This will be due the end of the day Wednesday. These should be emailed to me at: atkeson@unm.edu.
25% A/F

2. Final Paper: 5-7 double spaced typed pages on an empirical question you develop and answer using techniques you developed over the course of the semester. 30%
3. Midterm : on concepts and the statistics part of the course (25%)
4. 4 Statistical Homework Assignments (20%)

The following book is available for purchase from the University of New Mexico Bookstore. I will make any additional readings available to you via email or the web or will provide you the information so you can find the information from on-line library resources.

Johnson, Janet Buttolph and H.T. Reynolds. 2008. *Political Science Research Methods*. Washington DC: CQ Press.

Please note that articles are available on-line via JSTOR, e-journals, or on my web page.

Tentative Course Outline and Summary

1. Class overview **August 24**

II. Introduction to Political Science Research **August 26 – September 7**

READING: Thinking Causally, what is political science research? August 28

Johnson & Reynolds, Chapter 1 and 2

No Class APSA **September 2**

Reading: September 7
JSTOR: Baby Books and Ballots: The Impact of Congressional Mail on
Constituent Opinion, *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 76,
No. 2 (Jun., 1982), pp. 347-359

JSTOR: Benjamin Most "Getting Started on Political Research," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 23(4), 1990, pp. 592-96.

III. The Building Blocks of Research:

September 9-21

Reading: Johnson et al, Chapter 3 and 4 September 9 & 14

Reading: Johnson et al Chapter 5 September 16-21
JSTOR: Timothy Cool and Paul Gronke, "The Skeptical American: Revisiting the Meanings of Trust in Government and Confidence in Institutions," *The Journal of Politics* (2005), 67 (3):784-803

IVa. Statistics 7 weeks (14 classes –DON'T MISS ANY) September 23-October 21 (Note: No class October 14, Fall Break –some before election, some after election)

3 days: Descriptive Statistics September 23-30

Reading: Johnson et al 351-393
HW1

2 days: Probability Theory October 5-7

Reading: Johnston Et al Chapter 7
Reading: 393-425

3 days: Crosstabs October 12-19

Johnson et al 426-462
HW2

Catch-up October 21

V. Election Break: Qualitative Analysis & Election Activities October 26-November 4

READING: Johnson et al Chapter 8
Atkeson, et al, The 2008 New Mexico Election Report, Election Day Observations, available on my web site:
<http://www.unm.edu/~atkeson/newmexico.html>
Atkeson et al, The 2009 Albuquerque Mayoral Race, available at:
<http://www.unm.edu/~atkeson/newmexico.html>

October 28 Training and Prep (graduate students will join us)

November 2, Election Day Activities

November 3, 1 hour election de-briefing noon Social Science 2069

November 4 No Class Decompression from Election Activity

IVb. Statistics Continued

2 days crosstabs with controls

November 9-11

Reading: Johnson et al 503-514

HW3

2 days: Difference of means test

November 16-18

Reading: Johnston et al: 462-473

HW4

VI. Statistical Midterm

November 23

No Class Thanksgiving

November 25

VII. Replication - in class using 2008 data

November 30- December 2

Alan Abramowitz, 1995, It's abortion, Stupid: Policy Voting in the 1992 General Election, *The Journal of Politics* 57(1):176-186.

VIII. Open Office hours to work on paper

December 7-9

Final Paper Due: Monday December 13 by 5:00 (my office)