Political Science 280
Research Methods
Fall 2010

Political Science 280 Dr. Lonna Atkeson
Fall 2010 Office Hours: Tuesday 9:00-11:00 & by
appointment

Email: atkeson@unm.edu Office: Social Sciences 2049

Course Description

Political Science 280 is an introductory undergraduate research methods class that serves a core requirement. 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 a research question.

*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. Class participation is one component of my evaluation of you.
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 election day experience, or 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 Assignment (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.


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
No Class APSA  

September 2

Reading:  

III. The Building Blocks of Research:  

September 9-21

**READING:** Johnson et al, Chapter 3 and 4  

September 9 & 14

In Class Assignment Activity 2.2 Due in of class

**READING:** Johnson et al Chapter 5  

September 16-21


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  
  Reading: Johnson et al 351-393  
  HW1  
  September 23-30

- **2 days:** Probability Theory  
  Reading: Johnston Et al Chapter 7  
  Reading: 393-425  
  October 5-7

- **3 days:** Crosstabs  
  Johnson et al 426-462  
  HW2  
  October 12-19

- **Catch-up**  
  October 21
V. Election Break: Qualitative Analysis & Election Activities  October 26-November 4

READING:  Johnson et al Chapter 8
www.unm.edu/~atkeson
Atkeson et al, The 2009 Albuquerque Mayoral Race, available at:
www.unm.edu/~atkeson

October 28  Training and Prep (graduate students should come to this class)

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

VIII. Open Office hours to work on paper  December  7-9

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