GVPT 100 Scope and Methods
for Political Science Research

Fall Semester 2012

Mondays and Wednesdays 9:00-9:50 (Tydings 130)
Mondays and Wednesdays 10:00-10:50 (Tydings 1102)

Professor	Office	email	Voice
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Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 1:00-2:00 (and by appointment)

Teaching Assistants:
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Course Description:

How to conduct new research and how to interpret research are key aspects of (political) science. Research allows us to pose novel questions, construct fresh theories, and provide new evidence about how the world works. However, before we start *doing* research, we have to learn *how* it works.

This course teaches you how to think scientifically about politics. It is designed to help students develop their analytical abilities and statistical reasoning. It will provide an introduction to **research design** and the use of **quantitative methods** in political science. In other words, you will learn how to formulate questions and theories about politics and then test them in a rigorous manner. Students can expect to have exposure to actual and hypothetical cases, as well as hands-on practice with research tools (e.g., statistical software program SPSS). Thus, this course will combine teaching the principals of statistics as used in political science with data analysis—that is, it will involve both theory and practice.

Student Learning Objectives:

By the end of this course, at the very least you will be able to:
- Describe different approaches (and their pros and cons) to the study of politics.
- Effectively and efficiently evaluate specific types of existing research and other writings on politics (thus making you more informed about politics and preparing you for other political science classes).

- Evaluate causal arguments and use statistics as broad research tools for their own academic or professional purposes (thus giving you the fundamentals for any job).

Preliminaries:

The course provides twice-weekly lectures and weekly sections (lab). Students are **very** strongly advised to attend all three. This is **both** a lecture-based and section-based class: the information and skills that you need to complete your homework assignments, exams and final paper will be distributed in all the meetings. In addition, you are strongly encouraged to read all materials assigned. The reading materials will help you achieve a better understanding of the class material.

Section Labs:

Teaching assistants (TA's) will hold section labs in the designated room for your section. All lab sections for this course meet on Fridays, but each section may meet at a different time. Please make sure you know which lab section you are assigned to and what time it meets.

Books and Other Course Materials:

1) Philip H. Pollock III. 2012. The Essentials of Political Analysis. Fourth Edition. Washington D.C. CQ Press. (REQUIRED)*

2) Philip H. Pollack III. 2012. An SPSS Companion to Political Analysis. Fourth Edition. Washington D.C. CQ Press (REQUIRED)*

***Do not purchase Third Edition of either the book or the companion. Your homework assignments will not match up with the rest of the class!**

3) A number of scholarly articles, used as examples in lectures, may be posted on Blackboard.

4) Student Version of SPSS (Highly Recommended)

Note: You can purchase a student version of SPSS from the bookstore. Alternatively, there are a number of computer labs on campus with SPSS-enabled systems where you can do your homework exercises.[1] These computers are available to students almost any time.

Requirements and Grading:

Final grades are determined by two midterm exams, homework assignments, and attendance and participation in section. The weight of each component in as follows:

Homework	**20%**
Midterm 1	**25%**
Midterm 2	**25%**
Final Paper	**20%**
Section Attendance and Participation	**10%**

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[1] For information regarding which labs have SPSS enabled systems contact OIT.

Homework:

    a. The required textbook, *The Essentials of Political Analysis* (herein referred to as "Essentials"), is divided into chapters by statistical topic. Lectures will roughly follow the topical outline of the book as indicated on the syllabus and **students are expected to read before coming to class.**

    b. In addition to reading the textbook, students are expected to hand in homework assignments in section. The topics of the workbook assignments correspond to the topics covered in the textbook and <u>lecture but there will be some leeway so students have time to master the material.</u> **The due date of each homework assignment is noted in the syllabus. All, but one of the homework assignments are in the workbook**: *An SPSS Companion to Political Analysis* (herein referred to as "Companion").

        The book comes with a CD-rom that contains all the data students will use in the class. Each chapter ends with an assignment. Students must read the appropriate chapter and complete the assignment using the statistical package SPSS. Students will tear the appropriate pages out of the workbook and print one sample output page when requested. Copies will not be accepted. These assignments will be collected in section and graded. **Do not bring homework assignments to lecture! Homework assignments are due at the beginning of section. If you walk in late to lecture your homework assignment will be penalized 5 points for every five minutes you are late. Homework assignments are only accepted the day they are due-no exceptions. Do not wait until the last minute to complete homework assignments—the exercises are involved and take time.**

Midterms:

Midterms are based on material covered in the books, lectures and sections. **Note that regular attendance at lectures is a necessity in order to be successful in this course. Lectures often do not overlap directly with the readings and many key concepts and cases will be discussed in lectures only.** Exams will draw on materials from readings and lecture and section presentations. Technically, the midterms are not cumulative, but the nature of the material is cumulative as it is impossible for concepts not to build on one another. Therefore, there may be some overlap between the two tests.

Final Paper:

10 page, double-spaced (including tables) analytical paper on a dataset provided with The Companion Workbook. Final papers should be submitted in hard copy to the appropriate TA on the day of the final. Electronic copies of the paper may only be submitted with prior approval by their TA. In the weeks prior to the paper being due, the TA's and the professor (in cases when the TA's have been unable to assist the student) will be available for students who have questions about the research paper. Note however that **neither the TA's nor the professor will review drafts of the paper.** Do not wait until the last minute to complete the paper. More often than not, grades reflect the time spent on this assignment. Students are expected to keep the papers within assigned lengths. Grades will be based on consistency of the analytical argument, demonstration of cumulative mastery of the material from the course, and clarity of writing (including grammar and sentence structure). Late papers will be penalized one letter grade per day late, unless a legitimate and documented reason for the tardiness has been approved by the TA and/or professor.

Section Attendance and Participation:

Students are expected to have completed all of the assigned readings and homework for each section and be prepared to discuss them. **TA's take attendance in section and section grades will be based on attendance and a demonstrated ability to discuss topics covered in lecture and section.**

Blackboard:

Important communication regarding the class is conducted via ELMS. This includes posting of

syllabus, announcements, and grades. Students are required to be proficient users of ELMS and to ensure that their emails are registered with ELMS and that they are receiving ELMS communication for this course. **Lack of communication through ELMS is not an excuse for not being aware of changes to the syllabus that result in late/missed assignments.**

Religious Observance
By the end of September students must provide their TA in writing a request for make-up of any assignments if the syllabus indicates a date that conflicts with a religious observance.

Students with Disabilities
Every effort will be made to accommodate students who are registered with the Disability Support Services (DSS) Office. We are not able to accommodate students who are not registered with DSS or who do not provide documentation. These students will be referred to the DSS office.

Medical and other Emergency Excuses
In spring 2011, the Campus Senate amended the *University of Maryland Policy for A Student's Medically Necessitated Absence from Class V-100.* Under this new policy, instructors are expected to accept as an excused absence a self-signed note from a student who has missed a single lecture, recitation, or laboratory, attesting to the date of the illness. This note must also contain an acknowledgement by the student that the information is true and correct and that providing false information is prohibited under the Code of Student Conduct. The student is also obligated to make a reasonable attempt to inform the instructor of his/her illness in advance. **A student is allowed only ONE self-signed note per class for the semester.** The form link is: http://www.health.umd.edu/sites/default/files/ClassExcuse1011.pdf

***Note: This one time self-excused absence does not apply for a "Major Scheduled Grading Event." For this course, a "major scheduled grading event" includes exams and paper assignment.** A student who experiences an absence or a prolonged illness preventing attendance at a "Major Grading Event" is required to provide written documentation of the illness from the Health Center or an outside health care provider, verifying the dates of the treatment and the time period during which the student was unable to meet academic responsibilities. This must be provided immediately upon return to class. Students will not be allowed to turn in missed assignments, tests, papers, etc. if they have not provided this documentation.

Other emergency excuses require written documentation—no exceptions. Students will not be allowed to turn in missed assignments, tests, papers, etc. if they have not provided documentation of their emergency situation. Students are encouraged to contact their TA or professor as soon as possible about their situation. However, notification is not a substitute for written documentation.

Make-up Exams
Make-up exams will only be allowed under documented medical and emergency excuses. Athletes on University teams will also be excused if you are traveling for a game or out of town. All of these scenarios must have the appropriate documentation as described above, and sports events MUST have my prior, written approval. You will have a maximum of two weeks from the date of the original event to complete the make-up, or in the event that you miss the final you must contact your TA or the professor as soon as

possible. Unexcused missed assignments or failure to complete a make-up exam in the appropriate time will result in a grade of zero for that assignment. There is no extra credit. Make up exams will likely be different from those given in class.

Academic Honesty
The work done in this course is expected to be solely the effort of each individual student. Cheating and plagiarism (representing the words or ideas of others as one's own or copying the work of another without giving proper credit) will not be tolerated. Any form of academic dishonesty will result in a zero for the course (regardless of prior class achievement) and will be reported to the Office of the Dean of Students. If you are unsure about what constitutes academic dishonesty, please refer to the Student Honor Council's "Code of Academic Integrity," available at:
http://shc.umd.edu/SHC/AICodeAndCaseProcess.aspx

Things I (unfortunately) must say
-Be courteous in the classroom. Classroom courtesy is necessary to ensure that all students have the opportunity to learn without distractions. If you are not interested in learning, do not come to class.

-No cell phone usage, no talking during lectures, no reading newspapers, or listening to music. If you must have a cell phone for emergencies, please have it on "vibrate." I reserve the right to confiscate ringing phones until the end of lectures.

-Please be on time for class and stay until the end. Entering late and leaving early is distracting to the instructor and to other students. If you must enter late or leave early, please take the seat nearest an exit and enter or leave as quietly as possible. Two or more disruptions of class that require me to address you directly in any form will lead to a reduction in your participation grade.

-A discussion of current political events will likely take place in both lecture and labs (particularly since it is an election year). These discussions can often stimulate strong feelings and heated debate. Students are expected to be respectful of the opinions of others, regardless of whether they share similar opinions or beliefs. Debates will be cut short that do not enhance understanding of course concepts. We (professor and TA's) expect students to offer substantive comments and questions when appropriate. We also expect students to not dominate a conversation, but to allow a free discussion and exchange of ideas.

Important Note about Class Communication
The first avenue of communication for this course is with your designated teaching assistant. All issues, problems, questions, concerns should first be addressed with him or her, unless the issue is of a sensitive nature. Please provide written documentation or notice of absence to your TA. If issues cannot be resolved or questions cannot be answered by the TA, then contact the professor. Please allow TA's and/or the professor 24 hours to respond to emails (48 to 72 hours on weekends).

General Course Outline

Students should complete their assigned chapter readings before the beginning of each week (unless otherwise noted).

Essentials = Readings from *Essentials of Political Analysis*
Companion = Readings from *An SPSS Companion to Political Analysis*

We will attempt to stick as closely to this schedule as possible; however, the professor reserves the right to change the schedule as the semester progresses. **You are responsible for checking Blackboard for any updates to the schedule.**

Week	Course Schedule	Notes
Week 1 Wed, Aug 29 Fri, Aug 30	Introduction of Syllabus, Overview of Course No Section (American Political Science Association Meeting)	
Week 2 Mon, Sept 3 Wed, Sept 5 Fri, Sept 7	**Reading: Essentials Chapter 1** No Class (Labor Day) Concepts and Operationalization First Lab Section with TA: Introduction	
Week 3 Mon, Sept 10 Wed, Sept 12 Fri, Sept 14	**Reading: Essentials Chapter 2** Measuring and Describing Variables Measuring and Describing Variables Section: SPSS Basics	Last day to add course or drop course w/o a "W"
Week 4 Mon, Sept 17 Wed, Sept 19 Fri, Sept 21	**Reading: Essentials Chapter 3** Explanations, Hypotheses, and Comparisons Explanations, Hypotheses, and Comparisons Section: 1st homework due (Ch1: Introduction to SPSS)	
Week 5 Mon, Sept 24 Wed, Sept 26 Fri, Sept 28	**Reading: Essentials Chapter 4*** **Read: pp78-83 (top); 84 ("controlled comparisons") -97** ***Do not read "A Field Experiment"** Section: 2nd homework due (Ch 2: Descriptive Statistics)	*Make sure to follow directions carefully for this chapter. <mark>Homework assignment is not in Companion!</mark>
Week 6 Mon, Oct 1 Wed, Oct 3 Fri, Oct 5	**Reading: Essentials Chapter 5** Making Controlled Comparisons Making Controlled Comparisons Section: 3rd homework due (Ch 3: Transforming Variables)	
Week 7 Mon, Oct 8 Wed, Oct 10 Fri, Oct 12	Wrap up Controlled Comparisons/Sample Size Sample Size/Standard Deviations <mark>Section: 4th homework due (Ch 4: Special Part)</mark> Exam Review	You may begin reading Ch. 6 but you are not responsible for it until after exam.
Week 8 Mon, Oct 15 Wed, Oct 17 Fri, Oct 19	Review of Chapters 1-5 **Midterm 1** (includes material from lectures and section week 1-7, chapters 1-5, homework 1-4) No Section	**MIDTERM EXAM WEEK**
Week 9 Mon, Oct 22 Wed, Oct 24	**Reading: Essentials Chapter 6** Confidence Intervals Statistical Significance: The T Test	

Fri, Oct 26	Section: 5th homework due (Ch. 5: Making Controlled Comparisons)	
Week 10 Mon, Oct 29 Wed, Oct 31 Fri, Nov 2	**Reading: Essentials Chapter 7** Tests of Significance and Measures of Association Tests of Significance and Measures of Association Section: 6th homework due (Ch. 6: Making Inferences about Sample Means)	
Week 11 Mon, Nov 5 Tues, Nov 6 Wed, Nov 7* Fri, Nov 9	**Reading: Essentials Chapter 8** No Class Election Day- Go Vote!!!! Correlation and Linear Regression Section: 7th homework: (Chi Square and Measures of Association)	***Last day to withdraw from course with a "W"**
Week 12 Mon, Nov 12 Wed, Nov 14 Fri, Nov 16	 Correlation and Linear Regression (cont.) Correlation and Linear Regression (cont.) Section: 8th homework due (Correlation and Linear Regression)	CAPC Election Post Mortem- Tues, Nov 13
Week 13 Mon, Nov 19 Wed, Nov 21 Fri, Nov 23	**Reading: Essentials Chapter 10** Thinking Empirically No Class (Thanksgiving Holiday) No Section (Thanksgiving Holiday)	We will not cover Ch. 9
Week 14 Mon, Nov 26 Wed, Nov 28 Fri, Nov 30	 Thinking Empirically/Thinking Probabilistically Catch-up Section: 9th homework due (Doing your own Political Analysis)	
Week 15 Mon, Dec 3 Wed, Dec 5 Fri, Dec 7	 Catch-up TBA Exam Review	
Week 16 Mon, Dec 10	 Review of Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 10	**Research Paper Due**

Final Exams: For 9:00 – 9:50 class--> exam will be Monday, December 17, 8:00-10:00 am
For 10:00 – 10:50 class--> exam will be Wednesday, December 19, 8:00-10:00 am
Exam includes material from lectures and section week 7-15, reading chapters 6,7, 8 and 10, homework 5-9