Seton Hall University

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Spring 2016

DIPL 6310 NA Research Methods for Policy Analysis

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Seton Hall University

School of Diplomacy and International Relations
DIPL 6310 NA: Research Methods for Policy Analysis
Thursdays 7:35pm-9:45pm in Alfieri Hall (Seminary/School of Theology Building) 121

Professor: Rev. Brian K. Muzás, Ph.D.
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Course Description
The objectives of this class are twofold. The first goal is to develop a critical understanding of the use of scientific research in the practice and academic study of international affairs. While we will consider issues central to all research and some unique to qualitative analysis, the emphasis in this class is quantitative research. Whether you are primarily interested in security, finance, development, trade, or social issues, much research that is likely of interest to you uses some form of quantitative analysis. This is equally true for policy reports published by the UN, World Bank, Brookings, RAND, or other relevant organizations. In order to be a productive participant in the world of international affairs, you need to be able to understand the assumptions that underlie quantitative analyses, to disentangle proper and improper uses of quantitative evidence, and to ask intelligent questions about the validity of quantitative measurement and statistical methods. A second goal of the class is to equip you with the basic skills to actually perform quantitative analyses using a statistical software package (SPSS in this case). These skills include being able to find, download, use, and manipulate datasets published on the internet; to produce and interpret basic graphs and tables in an intelligent way; and to execute and evaluate the output of basic statistical models, especially regression analysis. Bear in mind that the emphasis in this class is on the analysis of data and the substantive interpretation of results. Of necessity, some concepts and relationships will be represented mathematically, but the class is not a mathematical statistics class. Those desiring more rigorous mathematical treatments are encouraged to take follow-up courses in statistical theory and econometrics.

Readings and Materials
Required readings are listed below for each class session. Most readings will come from the following sources.

Bhattacherjee, Anol. (2012) *Social Science Research: Principles, Methods, and Practices*, 2nd Edition. http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/oa_textbooks/3

Trochim, William M. (2006) *The Research Methods Knowledge Base*, 2nd Edition. http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/

Other readings will be provided electronically either by internet link or by Blackboard.

We will be using a statistical software during the semester. The university has a package called SPSS. Students may use university computers equipped with SPSS either in the information commons area of the library on the second floor or at one of the public computer labs. You may want to purchase the software since a student version is available. Alternatively, there is an open-source statistical package apparently very similar to SPSS called PSPP which is available here: http://www.gnu.org/software/pspp/ . If you choose to rent, purchase, or download software, I am not responsible for its functionality.

We will also use a free on-line course on Probability and Statistics from the Open Learning Initiative. This is analogous to an interactive reading assignment. It is essential that you complete these modules before class. Later modules will probably take up much more time than earlier modules, so budget your time accordingly. I will be covering material from these modules during class, but I will not repeat everything. You can learn more about the course and sign up here: http://oli.cmu.edu/courses/free-open/statistics-course-details/

Course Objectives
1. To familiarize students with the key principles underlying the scientific study of politics, public policy, and international affairs.
2. To enable students to undertake their own research and to thoughtfully critique the research of others.
3. To allow students to develop their skills in analyzing, and to feel comfortable working with, quantitative data.

Requirements and Grading
Homework Assignments 20%
Mid-Term Exam 20%
Data Analysis Paper 30%
Research Design Paper 30%

Homework Assignments - 20%
There will be a variety of homework assignments during the semester to give you an opportunity to work through the concepts and ideas from the class and/or practice the types of analyses that will be crucial on the midterm exam and the data analysis paper (as well as in your professional lives).

Mid-Term In-Class Exam - 20%
The questions, which will cover the readings and class lectures, will be similar to those found in the homework and in the questions asked in the on-line modules. The exam will be open book and notes.

Data Analysis Paper - 30%
Students will obtain and use data collected by others to research an international affairs topic of their choosing. This paper will have a fixed structure: it starts with a research question and ends with a regression analysis. I will distribute more specific instructions in class. This project may be undertaken individually, in pairs, or in trios.

Research Design Paper - 30%
The research design paper (10 pages) should draw on all of the material from the class as well as your knowledge of an interest in researching a substantive international affairs topic. This paper will be due during the exam period. This research design can be qualitative, quantitative, or both. This assignment is preparation for your master's research project. You will:
– Develop an international relations research question
– Locate the question in the context of relevant literature (i.e. discuss the importance of the question for theory and policy)
– Review the relevant literature on the topic
– Outline a strategy for answering this question by addressing the following issues:
  • Operationalize the dependent variable
  • Develop a series of alternative explanations for the outcome
  • Specify the sort of evidence that will enable you to choose between those alternative explanations

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Civil Rights Restoration Act, students at Seton Hall University who have a disability may be eligible for accommodations in this course. Should a student require such accommodation, he or she must self-identify at the Office of Disability Support Services (DSS), Room 67, Duffy Hall, provide documentation of said disability, and work with DSS to develop a plan for accommodations. The contact person is Ms. Diane Delorenzo at (973) 313-6003.

Academic Integrity
Thinking about cheating? Don't do it.

Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will be reported to the administration, and may result in a lowered or failing grade for the course and up to possible dismissal from the School of Diplomacy. See university and school standards for academic conduct here: http://www.shu.edu/offices/student-life/community-standards/community-standards.cfm http://www.shu.edu/academics/diplomacy/academic-conduct.cfm.

Please see me if you have any questions about the academic violations described in the Code in general or as they relate to particular requirements for this course.

Course Schedule
Many readings will be posted electronically. If you are unable to access a reading, please contact me in adequate time before the class session in which the reading is due. This schedule of readings may be changed with appropriate notice.

1. January 14 – Introduction

2. January 21 – Social Science and Asking Questions
B: Chapters 1-5
ASSIGNMENT #1 DUE

3. January 28 – Causality and Case Studies
B: Chapter 11
T: Design: Internal Validity: Establishing Cause and Effect
Van Evera: selections (available on Blackboard)
ASSIGNMENT #2 DUE

4. February 4 – Experiments, Quasi-experiments, and Observational Studies
B: Chapter 10
T: Design (all)
ASSIGNMENT #3 DUE MONDAY, FEBRUARY 1

Class will not meet February 11th. The professor will be overseas.

5. February 18 – Measurement and Descriptive statistics
OLI Module 1, Examining Distributions.
B: Chapters 6-7
T: Analysis: Descriptive Statistics

6. February 25 – Association / Correlation
OLI Module 2, Examining Relationships, p.43 to p.55 [Including Linear Relationships 7 and 8. We will
      be covering this material again in more detail later in the semester.]
B: Chapter 14
T: Analysis: Descriptive Statistics: Correlation
ASSIGNMENT #4 DUE

Class will not meet March 3ʳᵈ. The university will be closed for spring break.

7. March 10 – Foundations of Statistical Inference I
OLI Modules 8, Random Variables, and 9, Sampling Distributions.
B: Chapters 8 and 15
T: Sampling; Analysis: Inferential Statistics
http://www.mathsisfun.com/data/standard-normal-distribution.html
http://www.sixsigmastudyguide.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/z-table.jpg

8. March 17 – Foundations of Statistical Inference II
OLI Modules 11, Estimation, and 12, Hypothesis Testing.
Assignment #5 DUE

Class will not meet March 24ᵗʰ. The university will be closed for Holy Thursday.

9. March 31 – Midterm Exam: Research Design and Statistical Inference

10. April 7 – Linear Regression I
Pollock: Chapter 8 (available on Blackboard)

11. April 14 – Linear Regression II
Pollock: Chapter 8 (available on Blackboard)

12. April 21 – Linear Regression III
Pollock: Chapter 8 (available on Blackboard)
ASSIGNMENT #6 DUE

13. April 28 – Writing a Research Design
DATA ANALYSIS PAPER DUE

Optional. Reading Day, Tuesday, May 3 – Research Design Discussion

TBD: RESEARCH DESIGN PAPER DUE

*Please note that I may make adjustments to the syllabus during the course of the semester.