

**PLS 2330-01: Introduction to Theory and Methods**  
**Fall 2011—Oxendine 3246**

**Instructor:** Dr. Kevin S. Freeman

**Class Hours:** MWF 11:15 AM-12:05 PM

**Office:** Oxendine 1309

**Lab** F 12:20-1:10 PM

**Phone:** 521-6447

**Office Hours:** MWF 1:30-3:30 PM

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**Course Description:** This course offers an introduction to Political Science research methods, spanning the methods used in both professional and academic research. Course topics range from formulating and developing a hypothesis and research design to the measurement, gathering, analysis, and interpretation of data. Students will learn the research process by formulating their own questions, locating current literature to frame the topic, and studying the question using available data.

The format for class meetings will consist of lectures and opportunities for discussion and debate as well as in-classroom assignments and projects to help facilitate the development of necessary skills. We also will be using clicker technology in this course.

There will also be a once-a-week lab, scheduled on Friday immediately following the regular course (after a 10-minute break). Two of these labs will be used to give you two hours to complete midterm examinations. The remaining ten labs (see the schedule on page 3 of this syllabus) will be used to do problems and exercises related to topics that we are discussing in the regular lectures. Many of these will be group-oriented activities and exercises.

**Course Objectives:**

1. To be able to put together plausible and testable political hypotheses
2. To learn the different types and levels of measurement
3. To develop reliable methods for testing hypotheses and make intelligent conclusions based thereupon.
4. To learn the primary principles tied to qualitative and quantitative research.

**Text:** There is one required text for this course: *Political Science Research Methods (6<sup>th</sup> Edition)* by Johnson and Reynolds. There is also a Problems and Exercises book that accompanies the primary text.

**Attendance:** Attendance is expected in this class. It will be very difficult to make a decent grade in this class without regular attendance--many of the test questions will be directly from lecture material and may not necessarily be found in your text.

Students are allowed two absences per semester as religious holidays. If you are observing a religious holiday that falls on an examination day, please notify me **ahead of time** so we can make arrangements. Posthumous notification of absence due to religious observance will result in a grade of zero on said exam.

**Tardiness:** Do not make it a habit of arriving into my class late. I will keep track of late arrivals, and two tardies will count the same as one absence for the purpose of attendance grades. This policy is instituted to discourage chronic tardiness which has become increasingly prevalent in recent semesters.

**Classroom Etiquette:** While as a whole I have minimal in-classroom requirements, I do expect some degree of respect to be shown in the classroom environment. This includes having your cell phone OFF or on VIBRATE when in class, not bringing your breakfast or lunch into class, not studying for another test while in my class, and not talking when others are. Systematic violations of this can result in a reduction of grade and/or a dismissal from the classroom. This is a university-level class, and you will be treated as adults. As such, you will be expected to act like adults.

**Office Visits:** You are more than welcome to meet with me at any time that is mutually convenient. My office hours are listed at the top of this syllabus. If these times are not convenient to you, we can easily arrange some other time. Do not assume that office visits are only to address problems you might be having in class. I'm happy to talk about whatever you like.

**Students with Disabilities:** Any student with a documented disability needing academic adjustments is requested to speak directly to Disability Support Services and the instructor, as early in the semester as possible. All discussions will remain confidential. Please contact DSS at 521-6695. This syllabus is also available in alternative formats upon request. Please call the aforementioned number if you desire this. Do not spring this on me on the day of a test, as you will take the test with the same rules as everyone else.

**Grading:** There will be four non-cumulative examinations—three midterms and a final exam—during the semester. The tests will be a combination of multiple choice questions, true-false, short-answer essays, mathematical problems, and other methods as I deem fit. More information will be made available as examinations get closer. The final exam is scheduled for **Wednesday, December 7, at 10:45 AM.**

**Note: These exams will be given in the Education Building, Room 223. Please make a note of this.**

There will also be ten take-home assignments scheduled throughout the semester intended to give you practical research experience throughout the semester. I will drop your **lowest two** of these assignments. Due dates for these assignments will be clearly listed at the top of each one, but generally will be due within one week of them being passed out. Finally, a significant portion of your grade will come from in-class participation, particularly in the form of 'clicker questions', of which approximately 3-4 will be given during each class.

|   |                   |
|---|-------------------|
| 8 Take-Home Assignments (20 points each)..... | 160 points        |
| Midterm 1 .....                               | 75 points         |
| Midterm 2 .....                               | 75 points         |
| Midterm 3.....                                | 75 points         |
| Final Exam.....                               | 75 points         |
| Class Participation.....                      | 140 points        |
| <b>TOTAL .....</b>                            | <b>600 points</b> |

Grading Scale: 558-600=A; 540-557=A-; 522-539=B+; 498-521=B; 480-497=B-; 462-479=C+; 438-461=C; 420-437=C-; 402-419=D+; 378-401=D; 360-377=D-; < 360=F

**Extra Credit:** I do give opportunities for extra credit throughout the semester. However, these opportunities are planned and given by me. Please do not ask for extra credit outside of what I offer to the course as a whole. I may also offer other opportunities as they present themselves.

| Date                 | Event                                      | Extra Credit Points |
|----------------------|--|---------------------|
| September 29, 7:30PM | Distinguished Speaker: <i>Corey Booker</i> | 10                  |

**Make-up Policy:** All graded assignment dates are clearly indicated on this syllabus. If these dates do not fit into your schedule, you should consider dropping this course or taking a different section. **As such, no make-up exams will be given except in cases of serious, documented emergencies or official university-sanctioned events.** The documentation must have contact information that allows me to call and verify your story. Vacations, birthdays, oversleeping, eye doctor appointments, and/or hangovers do not qualify as emergencies. Note that what qualifies as a valid excuse is at the discretion of the instructor.

**Academic Dishonesty:** Academic dishonesty of any variety will not be tolerated. Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to, cheating on an exam, unauthorized collaboration on an assignment, and plagiarism. Any instance coming to the attention of the instructor will result in the assignment of an “F” grade for the course, and notification of appropriate Deans. In order to ensure that you understand what constitutes plagiarism and academic dishonesty, please read the complete description of the UNCP policy on academic dishonesty, which is available in the student handbook and online at <http://www.uncp.edu/studentconduct/honor/>.

**Clickers:** You will be assigned a clicker on the first or second day of class. Be sure to note the number on your clicker, and **use the same one each day!** Clickers will be left in the classroom at the end of each day.

**Disclaimer:** We all know how boring long, droning lectures can be. Teachers can learn a few things from class discussion, too. But above all, I want this class to be both FUN and INTERESTING for all of us!

It is your responsibility to keep up with when assignments are due and when tests and quizzes might be given. Just because I don't announce a test or quiz ahead of time does not mean that I am going to push it back. To be safe, check your syllabus regularly.

**LECTURE SCHEDULE**

| <u>Date</u>      | <u>Topic</u>                            | <u>Readings</u> |
|------------------|---|-----------------|
| Aug 17-19        | Introduction to Research Methods        | Chapter 1       |
| Aug 22-26        | The Scientific Study of Politics        | Chapter 2       |
| Aug 29-Sept 2    | Hypotheses, Concepts, and Variables     | Chapter 3       |
| <b>Sept 5</b>    | <b>No Class: Labor Day Holiday</b>      | ---             |
| Sept 7-9         | The Literature Review                   | Chapter 6       |
| Sept 12-14       | The Research Design                     | Chapter 5       |
| <b>Sept 16</b>   | <b>Midterm Examination #1</b>           | ---             |
| Sept 19-23       | Measurement                             | Chapter 4       |
| Sept 26-30       | Sampling                                | Chapter 7       |
| Oct 3-7          | Empirical Observation                   | Chapter 8       |
| Oct 10-12        | Document Analysis                       | Chapter 9       |
| <b>Oct 14</b>    | <b>No Class! Fall Break!</b>            | ---             |
| Oct 17-19        | Survey Research                         | Chapter 10      |
| <b>Oct 21</b>    | <b>Midterm Examination #2</b>           | ---             |
| Oct 24-Nov 9     | Introductory Statistics                 | Chapter 11      |
| <b>Nov 11</b>    | <b>Midterm Examination # 3</b>          | ---             |
| Nov 14-16        | Bivariate Data Analysis                 | Chapter 12      |
| <b>Nov 18</b>    | <b>No Class: Instructor Out of Town</b> | ---             |
| Nov 21           | Bivariate Data Analysis                 | Chapter 12      |
| <b>Nov 23-25</b> | <b>No Class! Thanksgiving Holiday!</b>  | ---             |
| Nov 28-30        | Bivariate Data Analysis                 | Chapter 12      |

**LAB DATES**

Aug 26  
 Sept 2  
 Sept 9  
 Sept 23  
 Sept 30  
 Oct 7  
 Oct 28  
 Nov 4  
 Dec 2