Instructor: Matthew Loveless
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Introduction:
The study of social and political phenomena is a vast endeavor and this class will serve as an introduction to methods for social science research. We will discuss the use of both qualitative and quantitative research methods as a tool to further aid you as researchers of - and participants - in social science research. The progression of this course will address scientific research design and methodology and consider many examples of such research. Students can expect to be introduced to not only the means for conducting rigorous research in social science fields but also the theory that guides the accumulation of knowledge about these phenomena. Its format will be lecture, discussion, active practice, and include formal written submissions. This course will provide students with the analytic tools necessary to understand and perform fundamental social science research, to identify its limitations and abilities, and to approach research critically.

Required Text:

Topics and Assigned Reading:
You are expected to complete the readings prior to the day in which they are discussed. Other than the required textbook, copies of the assigned readings are available through both the library’s electronic journal catalogue and the course website on Blackboard: https://blackboard.olemiss.edu/.

Grades:
Weekly assignments: 40%
Memoranda: 30%
Final Exam: 20%
Class Participation: 10%

Assignments:
1. Weekly assignments: Each week, students will be asked to employ the topic under discussion in class through written assignments. These assignments will be posted on Blackboard the day they are assigned (the second meeting of the week in most cases) and will due at the beginning of the following class meeting (due dates are indicated in the syllabus as well). Late assignments are penalized one letter grade per day (including Saturday and Sunday) and not accepted after 5 days. The lowest grade will be dropped at the end of the semester.

2. Memoranda: In addition to the individual assignments above, group policy papers will address a topic drawn from a list of defined issues and incorporate statistical techniques learned in the previous week. Each group will not only apply specific statistical techniques to address a ‘real world’ question but also demonstrate their understanding of the appropriateness of these techniques to inform the question; that is, citing what it can and cannot contribute to our understanding of the issue. Two weeks before these are due, I will construct the groups and distribute copies of past examples.
3. Final Exam: There will be a final exam in accordance with the University of Mississippi’s exam schedule. The final will test your knowledge of the scientific approach of social science and both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques from the second half of this course. A make up will be scheduled at my discretion.

4. Participation: Attendance will be formally taken and your constructive participation noted. In addition, civility will reign the day. Everyone is entitled to his or her educated and informed opinions, but all interactions in this classroom will be rooted in respect for one another as individuals. Strongly voiced comments are highly encouraged, but since you are ultimately responsible for your words, all comments must be done in a manner that refrains from personally attacking your classmates or instructor.

There will be no extensions for papers or make-ups for the exams unless students have documented medical, family or work emergencies. Since exam dates and the paper due dates are set well in advance, if you anticipate any problems with these assignments, you must talk to the instructor well in advance.

No student will receive a passing grade for the class without completing all of the work. You must participate in class, take the exams, and complete all written assignments in order to pass the course. The grading at the University of Mississippi assigns simple letter grades unaltered by “+” and “-“. ‘A’ means excellent, ‘B’ means good, ‘C’ means satisfactory, ‘D’ is the lowest passing grade, and ‘F’ is failure.

Academic Integrity:
Any work submitted to this class and found to contain plagiarism (representing someone else's work as your own or the undocumented use of another person's words or ideas) will receive a failing grade. If you have any questions about how to cite a source, please talk to the instructor before turning in your work. I adhere to, and you can refer to, the Academic Conduct and Discipline policy outline available in the Undergraduate Handbook 2009-2010 or from the Registrar’s office. More detailed instructions regarding written assignments will be handed out in class. If you have any question as to what is acceptable, please contact me prior to the submitted assignment.

Instructor Availability:
You are encouraged to pursue topics that are relevant to your area of interest. In doing so, please note my office hours and make an effort to come by to discuss any particulars including data sources, techniques, and approaches. Included in this invitation is the discussion of concerns with the class, its content, or other related issues. If you are unable to meet at that time, please email me to make an appointment.

Course Goals:
Core Competencies:
- Methodological literacy
  - Ability to read, understand, and critically assess research
  - Assess research designs that incorporate qualitative or quantitative methodologies
  - Discern appropriateness of applied methodological techniques
- Statistical (Quantitative) Abilities
  - The ability to determine and apply appropriate statistical techniques
  - Use statistical techniques to inform and/or support an argument
  - To understand the limitations of statistical techniques
  - Generate descriptive and inferential statistics using SPSS
  - Interpret and analyze computer generated statistical output
- Research Skills
  - Rigorously employ a quantitative methodology to address a research question
  - Present research in a clear, informative, and effective manner
  - Evaluate other research critically
Data Sources:

We will be using a number of data sets in our exercises. The purpose is twofold. First, this is to allow you to work with different types of raw data (e.g. survey data, aggregate data, *inter alia*) and get a ‘feel’ for the differences among types of data. Second, it is to begin to expose you to the wide array of datasets that exist and are available to you as researchers. For the datasets to be used in the exercises and assignments, I will make these available on Blackboard (more than likely they will be modified to include fewer variables to control for the immense size of some of these); however, most are freely available. Some examples include…..

- General Social Science Survey (GSS)
- National Election Study (NES)
- ITERATE (data on terrorist activity)
- EUGene data on Democracy and War
- World Development Indicators; World Tables of Economic and Social Indicators
- Eurobarometer
- World Development Indicators 1997-2000

Academic Resource Center/ADA:

If you have a disability, or believe you might, and would like to receive accommodations in my course, then you should contact the Office of Student Disability Services (SDS: sds@olemiss.edu) to register as a student with a disability, or for an evaluation referral. The SDS is the campus office responsible for reviewing documentation provided by students with disabilities and for determining reasonable accommodations in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and University policies. The SDS is located at 234 Martindale Center (617 All American Drive). Alternatively: http://www.olemiss.edu/depts/sds/index.html.

Writing Center:

There is a new initiative on the University of Mississippi campus called the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) at the Center for Writing and Rhetoric. It is designed to help students improve their writing skills at all levels. You can access the QEP website at http://www.olemiss.edu/qep/.

Finally, beeping technology should be turned off (*preferred*) or muted during class. If your phone/beeper goes off, you will be asked to leave for the remainder of the class.
20 Jan  Introduction of the Course
   Topics Covered: Introduction to course

25 Jan  The Scientific Method
   Topics Covered: What is Scientific Research?
   Readings: Introduction in Pollock

27 Jan/ 1 Feb  Theory, Causation, and Generalization
   Topics Covered: Traditional Deductive Method of Research
   Readings: KKV - available on Blackboard
   Assignment (due 1 Feb): Assignment 1

3/8 Feb  Hypotheses and Research Design
   Topics Covered: Variables: Conceptualization and Operationalization; Research Design
   Readings: Chapter 1 in Pollock
   Assignment (due 8 Feb): Assignment 2

10/15 Feb  Data Generating Process I: Qualitative Methods
   Topics Covered: Qualitative Research
   Readings: Reading available on Blackboard
   Assignment (due 15 Feb): Assignment 3

17 Feb  Data Generating Process II: Quantitative Data
   Topics Covered: Survey and Experiments in the Social Sciences
   Readings: Chapter 4 in Pollock
   Assignment (due 22 Feb): Assignment 4

22/24 Feb  Introduction to Statistics: Descriptive Statistics
   Topics Covered: Levels of Measurement; Measures of Central Tendency and Dispersion
   Readings: Chapter 2 in Pollock
   Assignment (due 1 Mar): Assignment 5

1/3 Mar  Descriptive Statistics: Measures of Association I
   Topics Covered: Ordinal and Nominal level Variables
   Readings: Chapter 3 in Pollock; also pp. 159-166.
   Assignment (due 10 Mar): Assignment 6

8/10 Mar  Descriptive Statistics: Measures of Association II
   Topics Covered: Correlation and Regression
   Readings: Chapter 5 in Pollock; also pp. 171-183
   Assignment (due 24 Mar): Assignment 7 is Memorandum 1

22/24 Mar  Inferential Statistics
   Topics Covered: Central Limit Theorem; Normal Distribution
   Readings: Chapter 6 in Pollock
   Assignment (due 29 Mar): Assignment 8

29/31 Mar  Tests of Significance and Hypothesis Testing
   Topics Covered: Understanding Statistical Significance
Univariate and Bivariate Inferential Statistics

Readings:
Chapter 7 in Pollock

Assignment (due 5 Apr):
Assignment 9

5/7 Apr  Multivariate Inferential Statistics

Topics Covered: Multiple Regression

Readings:
In Pollock, pp. 187-189

Assignment (due 12 Apr):
Assignment 10

12/14 Apr  More Multiple Regression

Topics Covered: Basic extensions to Multiple Regression

Readings:
In Pollock: pp. 184-187, 189-193

Assignment (due 26 Apr):
Assignment 11 is Memorandum 2

19/21 Apr  Advanced Topics

Topics Covered: Common problems with Multiple Regression

Readings:
Chapter 9 in Pollock, also pp. 193

26/28 Apr  Overview and Project Work

Topics Covered: Social Context of Social Research (Ethics); Debates in the discipline

Readings:
Chapter 10 in Pollock

Final Exam

as per University's schedule