### 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/](https://blackboard.olemiss.edu/).

### Grades:

- **Weekly assignments:** 40%
- **Memorandum:** 30%
- **Mid-term 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). 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 memoranda will address a topic of the various groups’ interest. 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. There will be two submissions. The first will be a rough draft that defines your group’s issue and outlines the empirical strategy of analysis. The second will be the final product. The first will count 10% of the total 30% (see above) while the second will account for 20%. I will distribute copies of past examples.
3. *Mid-term Exam:* The exam which will test your knowledge of the scientific approach of social science, qualitative research, and descriptive statistical techniques. 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 date 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 2010-2011 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 before the due date.

**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. You will also create your own dataset under my direction.

Academic Resource Center/ADA:
If you have a disability, or believe you might, and would like to receive accommodations in this 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 it goes off, you will be asked to leave for the remainder of the class.

--------- SYLLABUS ---------

24/26 Aug
Introduction of the Course, The Scientific Method
Topics Covered: Introduction to course; What is Scientific Research?
Readings: Introduction in Pollock
Assignment: Assignment 1 (due 31 Aug)

31 Aug / 2 Sept
Theory, Causation, and Generalization
Topics Covered: Traditional Deductive Method of Research
Readings: KKV - available on Blackboard
Assignment: Assignment 2 (due 7 Sept)

7/9 Sept
Hypotheses and Research Design
Topics Covered: Variables and Research Design
Readings: Chapter 1 in Pollock
Assignment: Assignment 3 (due 14 Sept)

14/16 Sept
Data Generating Process I: Qualitative Methods
Topics Covered: Methods of Qualitative Research
Readings: Reading available on Blackboard
Assignment: Assignment 4 (due 21 Sept)

21/23 Sept
Data Generating Process II: Quantitative Data
Topics Covered: Surveys and Experiments in the Social Sciences
Readings: Chapter 4 in Pollock
Assignment: Assignment 5 (due 30 Sept)

28/30 Sept
Introduction to Statistics: Descriptive Statistics
Topics Covered: Levels of Measurement; CT and Dispersion
Readings: Chapter 2 in Pollock
Assignment: Assignment 6 (due 5 Oct)

5/7 Oct
Descriptive Statistics: Measures of Association I
Topics Covered: Ordinal and Nominal level Variables
Readings: Chapter 3 in Pollock; also pp. 159-166.
Assignment: Assignment 7 (due 12 Oct)
12 Oct
Descriptive Statistics: Correlation and Regression
Topics Covered: Measures of Association II
Readings: Chapter 5 in Pollock; also pp. 171-183
Assignment: None

14 Oct
MID-TERM EXAM

19/21 Oct
Inferential Statistics
Topics Covered: Central Limit Theorem; Normal Distribution
Readings: Chapter 6 in Pollock
Assignment: Assignment 8 (due 2 Nov)

26/28 Oct
Tests of Significance and Statistical Significance: Univariate and Bivariate
Hypothesis Testing
Readings: Chapter 7 in Pollock
Assignment: Assignment 9 (due 2 Nov)

2/4 Nov
Multivariate Inferential Statistics
Topics Covered: Multiple Regression
Readings: In Pollock, pp. 187-189
Assignment: Assignment 10 (due 2 Nov)

9/11 Nov
More Multiple Regression
Topics Covered: Basic extensions to Multiple Regression
Assignment: Assignment 11 (due 2 Dec)

16/18 Nov
Advanced Topics
Topics Covered: Common problems with Multiple Regression
Readings: Chapter 9 in Pollock, also pp. 193
Assignment: Work on Memorandum

30 Nov/2 Dec
Overview and Project Due
Topics Covered: Social Context of Social Research (Ethics); Debates in the discipline
Readings: Chapter 10 in Pollock