

PLSC 210 (CRN 17387)
Introduction to Political Analysis (HYBRID FORMAT)
Eastern Michigan University, Fall 2013
T & TH 9:30-10:45 am, Marshall 203

Professor Laverty (LLaverty@emich.edu)

Office Hours (601P Pray-Harrold):

Mondays & Wednesdays: 11:00-12:00

Tuesdays & Thursdays: 2:00-3:00

and by appointment at other times

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Why do international wars happen? What is the best way to ensure peace in a country following a civil war? Are democracies more peaceful than non-democracies? What do we mean by “democracy” anyway? How do Americans decide whom to vote for in presidential elections, or whether to vote at all? Will public education improve if we allow parents to use government money to send their children to private schools? Just what do we really know about politics, and how do we know it?

We often assume that studying political science means studying the preferences and opinions of a bunch of (mainly) guys in Lansing or Washington DC, as they bicker about which laws should and should not pass. But in fact there’s a lot more to political science than this. When we study political science, we must learn not only about politics (who gets what and how they get it) but also, about how we know what we know. Political scientists seek to explain why things happen, how they happen, and when they will happen again. Without this foundation in empirical knowledge, it is very difficult to make convincing claims about what *ought* to happen in politics.

This class is probably going to be different from many other classes that you have taken. Instead of memorizing facts from your textbook and then spitting them back out on an exam, **you are going to learn the process of political science research.** You will learn how to use the tools of a political scientist to explore, understand, and explain events and issues that are of interest to you. You will also learn to read and understand the scholarly research of other political scientists. We will go beyond opinions and arguments, and instead look at facts, evidence, and explanations. The skills you learn in this class will help you become more sophisticated consumers and analysts of political information, and they may even help you land a job some day.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Broadly construed, the objective of this course is for you to be able to understand political research. In order to achieve that objective, we will learn to:

- 1) differentiate between facts and opinions, arguments and evidence, gut-feelings and theoretically based causal explanations;
- 2) understand, develop, and test theoretically based research questions and hypotheses;
- 3) understand and utilize various types of data to explore hypotheses;
- 4) develop basic competence using SPSS to perform statistical analysis;
- 5) locate, understand, explain, and evaluate scholarly research published by other political scientists.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS and HYBRID FORMAT

The course meets two days a week for fifteen weeks, and is designed as a combination of lecture, discussion, and small group exercises. **This section of PLSC 210 is designated as a hybrid (partially online) course.** Some class sessions, activities, and assignments will be delivered online, and all students must have access to the internet. Students who do not have internet access at home/in their dorms should plan to spend additional time in the library or any of the University computer labs in order to complete their assigned work. In order to facilitate the online portion of this class, we will be using a course delivery system called EMU Online. You will be required to submit some graded assignments via the EMU Online system. Please see the reading schedule for information on which class days are designated as “Web days”. On those days, we will not meet in person, but you will still have course material and assignments on EMU Online.

GENERAL EDUCATION RATIONALE

Political Science 210 meets the Quantitative Reasoning (QR) requirement of the general education curriculum. The course introduces students to social science statistics and teaches them how to use statistics to analyze and address the real world problems that they will confront as participants in the global community. Through use of case studies, students are exposed to both experimental and quasi-experimental techniques for making sense of the political world. The course then concentrates largely on quantitative techniques, reading examples of how researchers use statistical analysis to suggest causation in political science models. Students are given an opportunity to practice this learning at the end of the course through a final paper assignment, which gives them a political dataset, access to a statistical program (such as SPSS) and requires them to do their own independent testing of hypotheses and write-up of the results.

Very important notice: This course does not automatically count as a QR course for every student who takes it. In general, students need to meet the following prerequisites in order for this course to satisfy the QR requirement:

1. ACT math score: 23 to 27;
2. SAT math score: 580 to 660;
3. EMU Math Placement Exam (QR Choice): College Level Math Score (CLM) 53 to 92;
4. Credit in MATH 104 with a grade of “C” or better

If you do not meet any of these prerequisites, it is essential that you check with an adviser about what class to take to satisfy your QR requirement for general education. For more information go to www.emich.edu/gened.

COLLABORATIVE LEARNING STATEMENT

I view this class more as a workshop, where each of you is an active and willing participant, than as a straight lecture, where I deliver information and you absorb it. Consequently, I have structured this course in a way that encourages you to take ownership of your own learning experience. You will be working together in small groups with other students on assignments from time to time during class. Not only will you probably enjoy the class and learn more from this approach, but I believe it is also a better reflection of how the discipline of political science actually works. Professional political scientists don’t do their research in isolation and neither should you. While your finished products must be your own work, I strongly encourage you to work together with classmates on in-class exercises, homework, and research assignments. Collaborative learning can be very effective in classes like this one.

MY CONTACT INFORMATION

I am on campus Monday through Thursday. I encourage you to stop by and introduce yourself and ask questions during my office hours, or to make an appointment if my office hours are not convenient for you. ***Email is a very good way to contact me*** if you have questions outside of class or office hours. I check email frequently and will respond as soon as possible to your question.

Please include your first and last name and the course in your email. Doing this will likely result in a quicker and more helpful response. Generally I do not check email before 8:00am or after 9:00pm, or on weekends.

Email is a better way to reach me than by phone. If you call and I'm not there, you can leave a message with our office staff and I will receive it the next time I am in the office. Please do NOT leave me a voice mail.

TEXTBOOK

The following required textbook is available for purchase at campus-area bookstores and a variety of on-line bookstores. **PLEASE MAKE SURE TO GET THE CORRECT EDITION.**

- Salkind, N. (2010) Statistics for people who (think they) hate statistics, 4th edition. Washington, DC: Sage Press. ISBN: 978-1-4129-7959-7

There will also be additional **REQUIRED** reading selections available online. These will be announced well in advance in class and via EMU-Online.

GRADES

As a professional student, you are ultimately responsible for your own success. If you are having difficulty, or think that you might have difficulty, it is your responsibility to contact me as soon as possible.

I am here to help you, but I can't read your mind. Grades do not come from out of the blue, and I do not just "give" them out; you must earn your grade. I will be very pleased to help you by talking about the material, answering your questions, and providing study suggestions, among other things.

Components of your Grade:

Midterm Exam (90 pts)

Final Exam (100 pts)

SPSS Assignments & Online Tutorials (100 pts)

Web Assignments & In Class Participation (100 pts)

Research Paper & Presentation (110 pts)

Grading Scale:

Final grades in this course are based on a total of 500 points and will be assigned according to the scale given below.

A (465-500 pts)	A- (450-464.9 pts)	B+ (435-449.9 pts)
B (415-434.9 pts)	B- (400-414.9 pts)	C+ (385-399.9 pts)
C (365-384.9 pts)	C- (350-364.9 pts)	D+ (335-349.9 pts)
D (315-334.9 pts)	D- (300-314.9 pts)	F (under 300 pts)

Attendance and Participation

Participation matters. Students who attend class regularly, who prepare for class by doing the assigned readings, and who participate in class discussions and exercises generally perform much better on exams. What's more, active students tend to enjoy class a lot more than those who only show up occasionally, arrive unprepared, and rarely participate.

You will have frequent opportunities to earn participation credit in one form or another during the semester. Some days this may include completing brief assignments during class and turning them in for credit. Other days, you will be given short exercises to complete outside of class and return next session.

Showing up is an important part of the game, but it isn't the only thing that matters. When you come to class, plan to participate. **I reserve the right to count as absent and/or dismiss anyone who arrives late or leaves early, sleeps during class, engages in non-course-related work or discussion, or disrupts the classroom environment.** This includes texting, surfing the web, playing online games, reading your email, etc. These types of activities are a distraction to you, to me, and to your fellow students.

EXAMS

There will be a midterm exam and a final exam in this course. Exams **ARE CUMULATIVE** in the sense that the material covered in the second half of the course builds upon the material covered in the first half. For more details on exam format and how to prepare for exams, please read the Exam Preparation & Information section on the Course Home page. The dates for the exams are listed in the reading schedule at the end of this syllabus.

If you arrive late to an exam, you will only be admitted if none of your classmates have already turned in their exams. Students who begin an exam late will not be granted additional time beyond the end of the regular exam period.

MAKE-UP EXAM POLICY

Students who must miss an exam for any reason and who wish to take a make-up are required to inform me BEFORE the exam is given. Students who do not make arrangements with me BEFORE the exam is given may be expected to have proof that they were immobilized in a body cast, with no friends or family nearby who could have called or emailed me. Except in such truly extraordinary circumstances, you will not be able to take a make-up if you do not let me know ahead of time. I reserve the right to ask different questions and different types of questions on make-up exams.

QUIZZES

I reserve the right to give quizzes (announced or pop quizzes). Any such quizzes will be counted toward your participation grade. The best way to avoid this is to stay on top of your reading!

SPSS ASSIGNMENTS & ONLINE TUTORIALS

You will complete several SPSS assignments and tutorials during the semester. The purpose of these assignments is three-fold. First, learning to use SPSS is, in itself, a valuable and highly marketable skill. Second, the SPSS assignments are designed to reinforce abstract concepts presented in your textbook. And finally, these assignments will provide you with the skills you need to complete your research assignment in the second half of the semester. *Emailed assignments will not be accepted.*

RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT

You will also complete and present your findings from an applied research assignment during the second half of the semester. Unlike many undergraduate research papers, this is not merely an exercise in regurgitating others' ideas; instead, you will be developing and testing your own hypotheses about political phenomena of interest to you, and then interpreting the results of your tests to see whether your hypotheses are supported by the evidence.

This paper will require you to use SPSS to perform your analysis. Additional directions will be given in class. *Assignments will not be accepted by email.*

WEB ASSIGNMENTS

As part of the hybrid format of this class, you will be expected to complete regular online “Web Assignments” via EMU Online throughout the semester. Some examples of web assignments might include reading and responding to an assigned article, hosting a web-based discussion with your peers about an article or articles, analyzing statistical data, or addressing real-life application issues related to political analysis. Web Assignments are also frequently used to prepare you for the next in-class lecture or activity.

Web Assignments, tutorials/self-checks, quizzes, participation, and in-class activities will not be accepted late and cannot be made up if you miss them, so be sure to attend class and keep up with EMU Online

QUALITY EXPECTATIONS

I expect college-level work; among other things this means you need to type, proof-read, and spell check your work. Assignments that fail to meet these criteria will be returned to you ungraded, and will be considered late until these problems are rectified and the assignment is turned in again. Turn in your final draft, not your first draft! Unless otherwise specified, it is your responsibility to turn in hard copies of all assignments. Emailed assignments will not be accepted for any reason. Please also see the information regarding academic integrity, below. I take this very seriously and I hope you do too.

LATE WORK POLICY

- Late SPSS assignments will be penalized by 3 points per day. Late research assignments will be penalized by 10 points per day. ***This includes days when EMU is open but our class does not meet.***
- Assignments that are handed in after they are collected in class on the due date will be considered late.
- Only students who turn in a completed research assignment on the initial due date will be scheduled to do a presentation, in addition to late work penalties. Students who do not do a presentation will receive a 10% reduction on their research assignment grade. Students who miss their assigned presentation time may not be able to reschedule.
- **No late Web Assignments or SPSS tutorials/self-checks will be accepted.**
- Emailed assignments will not be accepted.
- If you need to turn in a late assignment outside of class time, please take it to the political science main office (601 Pray-Harrold), get it time-stamped by the office staff, and place it in my mailbox (not on or under my office door). Those assignments that have EMU-Online drop-boxes associated with them may be turned in late via the drop box.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Cheating and plagiarism are unacceptable breaches of the trust that is crucial to the creation of a learning environment. At a minimum, any student found to have committed an act of academic dishonesty will receive a grade of zero on the assignment or exam in question. Students may also receive a failing grade for the entire course, as well as possible disciplinary action from the University. Please consult the [EMU Student Conduct Code](#) for definitions of academic dishonesty, as well as procedures and punishments. You are also welcome to talk to me if you are in doubt about what constitutes academic dishonesty.

REGRADE POLICY

It is natural that two people may have occasional differences of opinion about assignment grades. In the case that this occurs in this course, I will be happy to discuss the assignment in question. The following guidelines for discussing grades have been developed to ensure that such a discussion is productive for the student and the instructor.

- I am always happy to explain any comments that I have written on a student's paper or exam. I am also happy to help students understand why they earned the grade they did, and how they might do better on similar assignments in the future.
- Students who feel that the grade recorded on their assignment is incorrect should contact me to discuss their concerns. I might ask the student to provide the assignment in question *AND* a written summary of exactly what they think they did not receive credit for, as well as why they think they should have. Students should include a reference to any material (textbook pages, lecture notes, etc.) that supports their argument.
- If students have concerns about their grades or comments on their assignments, they are expected to bring this to my attention promptly. I will not entertain requests for re-grades more than one month after the assignment was returned.
- Please be aware that a federal law called "Family Education Rights and Privacy Act" (FERPA) prohibits me from sharing any student's grades, work, or performance with other students or with friends and family members, without the written consent of the student in question. In other words, please don't have mom & dad email me about your grade!

COURSE EXPECTATIONS:

In general, here is what I expect of you.

- **Plan to participate.** Take an active role in your own education. That's the point of being here, right?
- **When you are in class, focus on this class.** There is no point in you physically going to class if you do not intend to be there mentally, too.
- **Be here on time, all the time.** Arriving late, leaving early, or stepping out in the middle of class means you miss class material. It also distracts me and your classmates. In those very rare instances where you might need to do this, please be as unobtrusive as possible about it. Also, see the information about class attendance and participation, above.
- **Ask for help.** If you have questions or need help, ask! In addition to your professors, there are many free support services available on campus.
- **Get to know your classmates.** Help each other when possible and appropriate. This is a valuable part of the college experience.
- **Turn in college-level work.** See the statement about "QUALITY EXPECTATIONS" in this syllabus. Turn in your best draft, not your first draft!
- **Take academic integrity seriously.** In a nutshell, don't cheat. You'll probably get caught. See section on "ACADEMIC INTEGRITY" in this syllabus. Even if you don't get caught, you will be short-changing yourself. I take this very seriously and I hope you do, too.
- **Be courteous.** Especially in the realm of politics, people often hold very different opinions. You do not have to agree, but you must treat others with respect. Collegiality is expected and incivility will not be tolerated.
- **If you use a laptop or mobile device during class,** it is expected that you will be using it for purposes directly related to the class period (like taking lecture notes). Students who choose to use laptops or mobile devices for other reasons during class time may be asked to turn them off and/or to cease bringing them to class. Failure to abide by any such request may result in a referral to the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards.
- **Students who persistently disrupt class** will be asked to leave and may be referred to the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards for disciplinary action.

In general, here is what you can expect of me and of this class.

- **Expect me to be even-handed.** Of course I have my own political views, which I will share from time to time. I may also play devil's advocate and espouse other points of view. I will provide you with a wide range of readings, including some that challenge conventional wisdom and some with which you may strongly disagree. However, *I do not grade or otherwise evaluate students on the basis of*

ideology. It is not my job to teach you to mimic my ideas, views, and values; it is my job to help you acquire the tools and background knowledge with which you can develop your own political identity and understand other people's views.

- **Expect me to answer your emails promptly.** I check email on a regular basis and will answer you as soon as possible. Please include your first and last name, and the course, in your email so that I can identify you and answer more quickly. Please also keep in mind that I teach other classes, have meetings, eat, sleep, commute, etc., too. (Just like you!) If you don't get an immediate answer, it is probably for one of those reasons. I don't usually check email between 9pm and 8am, or on weekends.
- **Expect courteous and professional treatment from me and from your classmates.** If there are any issues that you are concerned about, or anything that makes learning difficult for you in this class, I strongly encourage you to talk with me privately, either during office hours or via email.
- **Expect me to work with you in a reasonable manner regarding learning disabilities, religious observation, extended illnesses, and other true emergency situations.** If these issues impact you, please let me know as soon as possible. I may require documentation such as a letter from the EMU Students with Disabilities Office or the EMU Office of the Ombudsman, but in general, I will make every effort to work with you to construct a positive and effective learning experience in this class.
- **If you have questions about course material,** please contact me directly at LLaverty@emich.edu .

HELPFUL EMU OFFICES AND LINKS

Here are several useful links to campus resources. Most of these are available to you both on the physical campus and on our virtual (online) campus. Please take advantage of them.

- Professor Laverty's email address is LLaverty@emich.edu
- The Halle Library website is available here: <http://www.emich.edu/halle/>
- The Holman Learning Center website is available here: <http://www.emich.edu/hsc/>
- The website for the Academic Projects Center (helpful for writing papers and working on other course-related assignments) is available here: <http://www.emich.edu/apc/> **They are open for DROP-IN visits from 11am-5pm on Mondays-Thursdays, in Halle Library Room 116.**
- For additional information regarding classroom conduct and other concerns, please refer to Eastern Michigan University's Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards and Student Conduct Code, available online here: <http://www.emich.edu/studentconduct/index.html>
- Information about University Health Services, including Snow Health Center, is available here: <http://www.emich.edu/uhs/>
- Eastern Michigan University's Disability Resource Center is online here: <http://www.emich.edu/drc/>
- Eastern Michigan University's Office of the Ombudsman is online here: <http://www.emich.edu/ombuds/>

COURSE SCHEDULE

Please consult this schedule regularly for reading and other assignments. We will follow this schedule as closely as possible, but some changes may occur. Any changes will be announced in class, or via EMU-Online.

Reading Schedule for PLSC 210 (Hybrid) – Fall 2013*

Dates	Topics	Reading Assignments	What's Due
Week One 9/5	Intro to Political Analysis Concepts & Variables	Salkind, Intro & ch. 1 & Appendix A Ciarelli, <i>How VISA Predicts Divorce</i> Waters, <i>Why You Can't Cite Wikipedia in my Class</i>	
Week Two 9/10 & 9/12	Measures of Central Tendency & Descriptive Statistics Developing Hypotheses	Salkind, ch. 2 & 3 Alvarez, et al. <i>Internet Voting in Comparative Perspective</i>	
Week Three 9/17 & 9/19 WEB DAY #1	Intro to SPSS	Salkind ch. 7 Andolina, et al. <i>Habits from Home, Lessons from School</i>	SPSS Tutorial & Self Check A
Week Four 9/24 & 9/26	Research Design Literature Reviews	Krain, <i>You Say You Want a Revolution</i> Hershey, <i>What We Know About Voter ID Laws, Registration, and Turnout</i>	Web Day Assignment #1 due Tuesday SPSS Assignment #1 due Thursday
Week Five 10/1 & 10/3 WEB DAY #2	Describing relationships using Cross Tabs & Means Comparisons	Salkind ch 4	SPSS Tutorial & Self Check B
Week Six 10/8 & 10/10	Describing relationships using Cross Tabs & Means Comparisons	Eckles and Schaffner, <i>Risk Tolerance and Support for Potential Military Interventions</i>	Web Day Assignment #2 due Tuesday SPSS Assignment #2 due Thursday
Week Seven 10/15 & 10/17 WEB DAY #3	Reliability & Validity	Salkind ch 6	SPSS Tutorial & Self Check C
Week Eight 10/22 & 10/24	Surveys & Samples Midterm Exam on Thursday	Salkind ch 21	Web Day Assignment #3 due Tuesday

Week Nine 10/29 & 10/31 WEB DAY #4	The Normal Curve & Probability	Salkind, ch 8	SPSS Assignment #3 due Tuesday
Week Ten 11/5 & 11/7	Significance & Means Testing	Salkind, ch 9, 10, and 11	Web Day Assignment #4 due Tuesday SPSS Tutorial & Self Check D
Week Eleven 11/12 & 11/14 WEB DAY #5 11/12 is the last day to withdraw from an individual class	Significance & Means Testing	Salkind, ch 9, 10, and 11	SPSS Assignment #4 due Tuesday
Week Twelve 11/19 & 11/21	Correlation & Regression	Salkind, ch 5, 15, and 16 Uscinski, et al., <i>Congress and Foreign Policy: Congressional Action on the Darfur Genocide</i>	Web Day Assignment #5 due Tuesday SPSS Tutorial & Self Check E & F
Week Thirteen 11/26 NO CLASS THURSDAY – THANKSGIVING BREAK	Correlation & Regression	Blais, <i>How Many Voters Change Their Minds in the Month Preceding an Election?</i>	SPSS Assignment #5 due Tuesday
Week Fourteen 12/3 & 12/5	Student Presentations	TBA	Research Paper due on Tuesday day at start of class
Week Fifteen 12/10 & 12/12	Student Presentations	TBA	Paper revisions due to 601 PH by 4:45pm on Friday 12/13
FINAL EXAM	Final Exam Tuesday 12/17 at 9am	Have a Fantastic Winter Break!	