

## PLSC 210 – Introduction to Political Analysis Fall 2018

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### COURSE THEMES AND OBJECTIVES

Politics can be described as the way we divide desirable but limited resources of various kinds without using actual violence. In order to make this work, we must have available a great deal of information and knowledge about what various individuals and groups of people want, why they want it and why, which wants are more or less important than others, and the processes by which all this gets sorted out. We can also use some wisdom in applying our information and knowledge to the political process.

Data is at the heart of information and knowledge. Most of the truly interesting questions in practical politics can only be answered, if they can be answered at all, by properly framing the question, deciding what kind of data might lead to an answer, gathering the right kind of data properly, organizing the data so that it is useful, and then correctly interpreting the meaning gleaned from the data. This requires a *scientific* approach to political questions that bothers some.

Why are people willing to go to war? Are democracies more peaceful than non-democracies? How do Americans decide who to vote for? How and why do they decide to support certain policies and not others? How should we rank budget spending priorities? Just what do we know about the politics of sharing out *resources held in common* in a manner that is perceived as fair?

It is often assumed that political science consists of studying the activities of elected officials as they bicker over which laws to pass, which taxes to raise or lower, and which laws to pass or not. In fact, there is much more to political science than this. We strive not only to know about politics as activity (who gets what when and where), but to explain why some things happen rather than others, how things happen, and maybe even predict when they will happen. Without knowing all these things, it is difficult to argue over claims about the normative part of politics – what *ought* to happen.

As opposed to other classes you have probably taken, we are not going to memorize much (I hope) from the textbook just so you can regurgitate them on tests. We are going to strive to understand the process of political science research. You will learn the use of the tools of the political scientist in order to explore, understand and explain events and issues that are of interest to you. You will learn to read and understand the scholarly research of other political scientists. You will go beyond simple opinions and arguments and instead look at facts, evidence, and explanations. The skills you learn in this class should make you more sophisticated consumers and analyzers of political

information, and they may even help you land a job someday. It's been known to happen.

### **Course objectives.**

Overall, the objective is for you to be able to usefully understand political research. To do that, you must 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 question and hypotheses;
- 3) understand and utilize various types of data to explore hypotheses;
- 4) develop basic competence using SPSS to perform statistical analysis;
- 5) understand, explain, and evaluate scholarly research published by other political scientists.

A passing grade in PLSC 112 or 113 is a pre-requisite for this course. If you have not met this requirement, please speak to me immediately.

### **Text:**

Required: PLSC 210: POLLOCK, **ESSENTIALS OF POLITICAL Analysis CQ Press.**

**There is an optional IW/SPSS COMPANION**

While this text has a workbook, the data disk does not include SPSS. If you do not have easy access to SPSS (statistics software) then I strongly suggest you consider spending the extra \$50-60 or so for the Student Version of SPSS. Get the Grad pack.

Suggested: Kranzler and Moursund, "Statistics for the Terrified, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed." Prentice Hall.

ISBN: 0139554106. Get a used copy of this classic if you are nervous about numbers and math. It runs about \$10 on amazon.com

### **RULES OF THE GAME**

Class meets two days a week for 14 weeks. You are adults. I expect you to attend class and to be on time. No electronic equipment may be used during class with the exception of those needed in cases of disabilities or to take notes. I have found that students who take notes by hand do better. There is good research to support my observation. Cell phones must have their rings turned off. Calls must be taken outside of the classroom.

The format is lecture/discussion. I encourage students to raise their hand to interrupt me if you believe you have a pertinent question or point.

**If you have any difficulties in the course, contact me right away. The end of the semester is too late.**

There will be several graded (OK and not-Okay) exercises. These all must be done. The purpose is to help you become better at the mechanics of SPSS and statistics. The exercises will be discussed in class. You will in all likelihood get a better grade if you are in class to hear how I want the exercises done. **All work is due the exact second class starts on the due date. One second late is the same as one day late. One-third of a letter grade is deducted for each day late. Work later than one week will not be accepted except at the sole decision of the instructor. This means that late exercises will not earn any points and that will affect your semester graded accordingly.**

You will be expected to keep up on current events. You can most easily do this by reading a major newspaper (NY Times, Washington Post or Wall Street Journal), by reading weekly news magazines, by listening to or watching national news reporting programs, or by web-surfing and reading a variety of blogs. You might subscribe to one of the newspapers or read most of what they publish online on their websites. The EMU library also has copies of these papers.

Be courteous. Especially in politics being courteous helps. People have differing opinions. You are more likely to get more of what you want by respecting others, even when (maybe *especially* when) they disagree with you. Collegiality is expected and incivility will not be tolerated. If there are any issues you are concerned about in class, or anything that makes learning difficult for you in this class, I strongly encourage you to talk with me privately, either in my office or by email. .

On the other hand, humor and give-and-take lighten the load. Just remember, simply because you (or I) think something is humorous does not make it so. Please remember that we are part of a large and disparate group while we are in class.

Arrangements will be made to the extent possible for students with special needs, religious observations, or in some other circumstances. If you feel that there is an ongoing or temporary situation in which you need an accommodation, please stop by my office or email me with the facts as soon as possible. In some cases, supporting material may be requested. While I will obviously follow both the law and university policy, in cases which fall outside those lines, I will be the final arbiter. I will make every effort to work with you to provide an environment which makes it possible for you to maximize your learning experience in this class.

## **EXERCISES**

There will be several short exercises taken from the workbook. You must produce hard copies. They must be handed in to me either before class starts or in the Poli Sci office and time-stamped to show they were turned in on time. If you are going to miss a class (which is a **very** bad idea in a stat class) or be late to class, I suggest you email me the work well before the deadline. We will discuss how to do this properly in class.

Please learn how to produce short, hard copy from SPSS. It is not hard, but it is not intuitive. We will discuss it in class. I may allow you to mess it up once, but no more. That is, when I ask for output I don't want everything SPSS produced. I want just the essentials.

Getting these exercises done correctly is essential to doing well on the exams. Therefore it is extremely unwise to wait and do them at the last instant. Not turning more than one exercise is grounds for failing the entire course.

## GRADES

As a student, you are responsible for your own grade. Grades do not come from out of the blue, and I don't "give" grades. You earn them. I have found that those who sit in the front rows, come to class regularly and on time, pay attention and take notes seem to get more A's and B's than others. Think about it. I will try to help you out by going over the material in class and during office hours, but I will not merely be condensing "the important parts" of the book so you don't have to. Read the book. **If you or having difficulty or think you might be having trouble understanding the material, it is your responsibility to contact me immediately. I'm here to help, but I don't read minds, I have five classes, and there are about 100 of you.**

Components of the final grade:

Exercises	20%
Mid-Term Exam 1	35%
Final	45%
Class Participation (potentially extra)	10%

Class Schedule:

We will proceed through the text starting with chapter 1. Some chapters may be skimmed over, and we may not make it to the last chapter, I expect to spend the first two weeks on the first three chapters, then move on to the statistics. We will work our way through the chapters on statistics as expeditiously as possible, but we **will** work our way through bivariate regression, which is one of the strongest statistical techniques in common use. Your final will be a large exercise in the proper use of regression. In order for you to succeed in this you must thoroughly understand both how to use SPSS and the fundamental statistical tools underlying regression. Thus, missing any class at all will probably damage your ability to do well on the final.

I have tentatively scheduled the midterm for the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> week of class, and the final for the end of the semester. I expect to use at least the next-to-last week of class for preparation for the final.

Details of the exercises will be given in class and posted on Canvas.

This syllabus is subject to the normal corrections due to circumstances.

## **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 Canvas.

You will be required to submit some graded assignments via the Canvas 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 Canvas.

## **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. E MU 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](http://www.emich.edu/gened).

## **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. 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.

Anyone who believes they missed an exam for reasons beyond their control and without their prior knowledge may petition the instructor for a makeup. However, in both cases, the instructor may ask for supporting evidence of the justification for missing the exam and is the sole authority in the question of the adequacy of both the reason for missing the exam and the evidence. Makeups will be given only at the discretion of the instructor under these rules. Makeups will not be the same as the original test.

## 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.

## WEB ASSIGNMENTS

As part of the hybrid format of this class, you will be expected to complete regular online “Web Assignments” via Canvas 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 Canvas.

## 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.

## MORE

### 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, phone, 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, phones, 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. 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. If I haven’t responded in 24 hours something has probably gone wrong, so email me again.
- 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 [jivers@emich.edu](mailto:jivers@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.

- Dr. Ivers' email is [jivers@emich.edu](mailto:jivers@emich.edu)
- The Halle Library website is available here: <http://www.emich.edu/halle/>
- The Holman Success 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/>

## STUDENT AND EXCHANGE VISITOR STATEMENT (SEVIS)

"The Student Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) requires F and J students to report the following to the Office of International Students 244 EMU Student Center within ten (10) days of the event:

- Changes in your name, local address, major field of study, or source of funding;
- Changes in your degree-completion date;
- Changes in your degree-level (ex Bachelors to Masters)
- Intent to transfer to another school.

Prior permission from OIS is needed for the following:

- Dropping ALL courses as well as carrying or dropping BELOW minimum credit hours;
- Employment on or off-campus;
- Registering for more than one ONLINE course per term (F visa only)
- Endorsing I-20 or DS-2019 for re-entry into the USA.

Failure to report may result in the termination of your SEVIS record and even arrest and deportation. If you have questions or concerns, contact the Office of International Students at 734.487.3116, not the course instructor.”

## **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Cheating and plagiarism are unacceptable events in the learning experience. Any student found guilty of an act of academic dishonesty will receive a grade of 0 (zero, not an E) for the work in question as well as possibly an E for the course in cases of gross dishonesty. In addition, students found guilty of such acts will be referred to the university system for possible further disciplinary action. Consult your student handbook for definitions, procedures, and punishments. If you have any doubts about what constitutes academic dishonesty, see me.