POL 501: INTRODUCTION TO STATISTICS FOR PUBLIC POLICY
SPRING 2011
LOCATION: SBS-POLI SCI DEPARTMENT
TIME: MONDAY 6-9 PM

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Office: SBS S-737   Office Hours: Thursday 11-1pm
Course website: https://blackboard.stonybrook.edu/

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is the first methodology course of the Political Science Department's M.A. in Public Policy program. You will be introduced to fundamental statistical concepts and tools, such as measuring political phenomena, research design, statistical inference, building and testing hypotheses, and the basics of regression analysis. These tools will form the foundation for the second statistics course in the program (POL 502).

COURSE GOALS

The main purpose of this course is to teach you the basic concepts and techniques for empirical research on public policy using statistical analysis. After all, for you to be successful in any field of public policy you should have a solid understanding of how to conduct convincing quantitative research since decision-making in public policy often revolves around numerical facts (e.g., project costs or measures of policy effectiveness). Inevitably, learning about the research process comes with learning about some statistics as well.

After this class you will be capable of conducting your own quantitative research. Moreover, you will be able to critically assess the research of others.

For this course it is required that you tolerate and recall some basic algebra. However, I want to stress that we will begin from scratch and that no specific mathematical background knowledge is required. **All of you can do this!**

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The overall course grade consists of the following components:

Class Participation   10%
Homework Assignments   30%
Midterm Exam   30%
Final Exam   30%

Class Participation
Active class participation is a prerequisite for successful completion of this class. This involves coming to class prepared with the assigned readings, speaking up in class discussions, and working together with other students during tutorials in the computer lab. While I do not take formal attendance, frequent absence from class will result in a poor participation grade. Also, I will be less willing to spend time helping you with difficulties you may encounter if I notice you hardly make it to class.

Homework Assignments
There will be at least three graded homework assignments during the course. Homework assignments will be due at the beginning of class. Assignments handed in late will receive a grade of 0 (zero). Students are free to work together on homework, but each student must hand in their own (unique) work. Work that is too similar to one another will each receive a grade of zero (0).

Midterm Exam
The midterm exam will be held on March 14 in class. The midterm will cover all materials covered up to that date, both assigned readings and materials covered in class.

Final Exam
The midterm exam will be held on May 9 in class. The final will cover all materials covered up to that date, both assigned readings and materials covered in class.

GRADING

All tests will be graded on a 0-100 scale and **grades will not be curved**:

A	100-94	B+	89-87	C+	79-77	*F	69-0
A-	93-90	B	86-84	C	76-74		
		B-	83-80	C-	73-70		

* The Graduate School does not recognize a 'D'.

COMPUTER WORK

In order to give you the practical skills needed for data analysis, this class introduces the statistical software package SPSS. The use of SPSS is not optional, as some assignments will require graphical and statistical analysis using this software. SPSS is installed on computers on some SINC sites, but it is strongly recommended you buy your own copy of SPSS (see `Readings' section). Lack of access to SPSS or a facility with SPSS will not be accepted as an excuse for not completing or turning in assignments on time.

MISCELLANEOUS

Make-up Exams, Extensions
Make-up exams and extensions on homework assignments will only be given if you present appropriate documentation of medical or personal emergencies. Every effort should be made to notify me as soon as possible of the reasons for the emergency.

Blackboard
I make use of Blackboard to distribute documents and homework. You are responsible for making sure your current email address is on file with the Blackboard system and that you are receiving my emails. I will not accept the excuse that you did not receive my e-mails (and any assignments therein) through Blackboard under any circumstances.

Quizzes
I do not plan on giving quizzes in class but reserve the right to do so if students are habitually failing to complete the assigned reading before class. Under no circumstances are quizzes allowed to be made-up, so missed quizzes will receive a grade of zero. If quizzes are administered, they will be included in the "Homework" portion of the grading scheme.

READINGS

- Pollock, Philip H. 2009. *The Essentials of Political Analysis*. Third Edition. CQ Press. (Hereafter "Text")
- Pollock, Philip H. 2009. *An SPSS Companion to Political Analysis*. Third Edition. CQ Press. (Hereafter "Companion")
- I strongly encourage you buy your own copy of SPSS. The cheapest option is a bundle offered by CQ press that includes the text, the companion, and a student copy of SPSS for only $25 more than the price of the two text books (see cqpress.com for more info) If you want to buy SPSS separately, student copies are also available at the Seawolves Marketplace in the Student Activities

Center. Again, lack of access to SPSS or a facility with SPSS will not be accepted as an excuse for not completing or turning in assignments on time.

LECTURES

Lecture slides will be made available before class on Blackboard.

CLASS SCHEDULE*

Week 1 January 31:   Topic: Introduction to Statistical Research
                        Reading: Text: Introduction and Chapter 1

Week 2 February 7:   Topic: The Definition and Measurement of Concepts. Measuring and Describing Variables
                        Reading: Text: Chapters 1 and 2

Week 3 February 14:   Topic: Proposing Explanations, Framing Hypotheses, Introduction to SPSS
                        Reading: Text: Chapter: 3, Companion: Chapters 1,2 and 3

Week 4 February 21:   Research Design and the Logic of Control
                        Reading: Text: Chapter 4

Week 5 February 28:   Topic: Making Controlled Comparisons, Comparisons in SPSS
                        Reading: Text: Chapter 5, Companion: Chapters 4 and 5

Week 6 March 7:   Topic: Comparisons in SPSS cont'd, Review Day
                        Reading: no extra reading

Week 7 March 14:   **MIDTERM EXAM [IN CLASS]**

Week 8 March 21:   Topic: Statistical Inference I
                        Reading: Text: Chapter 6, pages 113-130

Week 9 March 28:   Topic: Statistical Inference II
                        Reading: Text: Chapter 6, pages, pages 130-144

Week 10 April 4:   Topic: Tests of Significance and Measures of Association
                        Reading: Text: Chapter 7

Week 11 April 11:   Topic: Statistical Inference in SPSS
                        Reading: Companion: Chapters 6 and 7

Week 12 April 18:   **SPRING BREAK**

Week 13 April 25:   Correlation and Linear Regression
                        Reading: Text: Chapter 8

Week 14 May 2:   Correlation and Linear Regression in SPSS
                        Reading: Companion: Chapter 8

Week 15 May 9:   **FINAL EXAM [IN CLASS]**

* Changes in the schedule may occur as the semester progresses.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Americans with Disabilities Act:

If you have a physical, psychological, medical or learning disability that may impact your coursework, please contact Disability Support Services, ECC (Educational Communications Center) Building, room 128, (631) 632-6748. They will determine with you what accommodations, if any, are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential.

Academic Integrity:

Each student must pursue his or her academic goals honestly and be personally accountable for all submitted work.   Representing another person's work as your own is always wrong. Faculty are required to report any suspected instances of academic dishonesty to the Academic Judiciary. Faculty in the Health Sciences Center (School of Health Technology & Management, Nursing, Social Welfare, Dental Medicine) and School of Medicine are required to follow their school-specific procedures. For more comprehensive information on academic integrity, including categories of academic dishonesty, please refer to the academic judiciary website at http://www.stonybrook.edu/uaa/academicjudiciary.

*Critical Incident Management***:**

Stony Brook University expects students to respect the rights, privileges, and property of other people. Faculty are required to report to the Office of Judicial Affairs any disruptive behavior that interrupts their ability to teach, compromises the safety of the learning environment, or inhibits students' ability to learn. Faculty in the HSC Schools and the School of Medicine are required to follow their school-specific procedures.