

## **POLS 3103: Introduction to Political Inquiry**

Spring 2019

Tuesdays & Thursdays 2:00-3:15 pm  
General Academic Building (GAB) 002

### **Instructor Information**

Instructor: Dr. Joshua Jansa  
Email: joshua.jansa@okstate.edu  
Office Location: Murray Hall 233  
Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays 10-12 & 3:30-4:30  
Office Phone: 405-744-0420

### **II. Course Overview**

Students will learn the basics of the scientific method as used by political scientists. Doing so will help students become better informed citizens because they will be better consumers of data, information, and research. Student will also practice skills such as quantitative reasoning, clear and concise writing, and applied statistical analysis. These are useful job skills in today's information-based economy, no matter a student's chosen career path.

### **III. Course D2L Website**

To access the course site, go to [online.okstate.edu/d2l/home](https://online.okstate.edu/d2l/home) and sign-in. Start by reading this syllabus. It is posted under the Syllabus tab in the Content section. More often than not, your question will be answered by the syllabus. If you have any problems accessing the course site, please let me know as soon as possible!

### **IV. Student and Instructor Responsibilities**

I will work hard to be prepared, enthusiastic, fair, and respectful of every student. I will provide interesting and important readings, lectures, and assignments that will help you better understand the subject and help you practice important skills for success in your careers. I will also be accessible and do my best to return graded materials in a timely fashion.

You are expected to actively engage with course material, to read all assigned material, and complete assignments on time. You are expected to keep up with lectures, grades, and assignments as they are posted to the course D2L site. You are also expected to ask questions about the material when necessary, and provide thoughtful responses on written assignments. A wise colleague once said: **“Do not let your education be the one thing where you expect less for your money.”**

### **V. Assignments and Grading**

Your grade for the course will be determined through a points system. The points are distributed as follows:

Attendance	25 points
Participation	25 points

Quizzes	50 points
Final Exam	100 points
Activities	200 points
Group Project: Research Design	200 points
• Paper	150 points
• Presentation	25 points
• Group Participation	25 points
Total	600 points

### Grade scale

The following grading scale will be used for assigning final letter grades.:

A = 540 – 600 points, or 90.00 – 100.00%

B = 480 – 539 points, or 80.00 – 89.99%

C = 420 – 479 points, or 70.00 – 79.99%

D = 360 – 419 points, or 60.00 – 69.99%

F = 0 - 359 points, or 0 – 59.99%

**Note on grade scale:** There will be no rounding up of final course grades, nor a grade curve.

### Attendance

Attendance is required for this course and is worth 25 points, or about 4% of your course grade.

You may miss 2 classes without penalty. These are considered “freebie” absences. You do not need to contact me before hand and do not need an excuse of any kind. Missing class after you use your freebies will result in a 5-point reduction in your attendance grade for each absence. You must have a documented emergency preventing you from coming to class in order to avoid a penalty to your grade. I must be notified as soon as possible of the absence and the emergency must be documented within one week of the absence.

### Participation

Class time will involve lecture, discussions, group work, and activities. As such, 25 points, or about 4% of your final course grade will be determined by your participation in class. Each student should be prepared to discuss each of the assigned readings every week. Excellent participation means regularly making comments that demonstrate that you’ve completed the readings and making an effort to have a productive conversation. You can also earn points by engaging constructively with one another during small-group work or activities. If you are called upon and are unprepared, your participation points will be negatively affected. You should not expect to earn an A on participation just by showing up.

### Quizzes

As an incentive to complete all of the readings on time, and to promote comprehension of the material learned over several related class periods, you will be given quizzes in class from time to time. These will be pop-quizzes and may come in various formats. Attendance in class on the day of the quiz is required to complete the quiz. There are no make-up quizzes. There will be a total of 6 quizzes worth 10 points each. The lowest quiz grade will be dropped. This means the quizzes are worth a total of 50 points, or about 8% of your total course grade.

### Final Exam

The purpose of the final exam is to test your comprehension of the material learned throughout the semester. The final exam will be given during finals week at the university assigned exam time, which can be found on the course schedule below. The exam will be a mix of fill-in-the-blank, multiple choice, identification, and essay questions. You may also be asked to read and comprehend relevant tables and graphs. The exam is comprehensive – material will appear from the entirety of the course. This exam is worth 100 points, or about 16% of your course grade.

### Activities

The emphasis of the course is to practice data analysis skills that will be transferrable to the workplace, whether working in politics, policy, business, agriculture, or some other field. In order to practice these skills, you will have 11 activities to complete throughout the semester. These are worth 20 points each. The lowest activity grade will be dropped. This means the quizzes are worth a total of 200 points, or about 32% of your course grade. The due dates for the activities can be found on the course schedule below.

### Research Design

You will be required to complete a project in a small-group for points. The project will be to complete a research design on a topic of the group's choosing. The project will include a 8-10-minute presentation and a 12-15-page paper. This assignment exposes students to the process of thinking critically about the relationship between two concepts, and allows students to work with one another on a project, a style of work that is common in the workplace.

In the paper, you will hypothesize a relationship between two variables. The paper should specify which variable is the dependent variable and which is the independent variable, as well as identify the unit of analysis, explore what the literature says about this (or similar) relationships, discuss why understanding this relationship is important, and propose how you would test the relationship.

Presentations will be given in class on April 30 and May 2. You will be given time to work in your groups throughout the semester. More information on the specific requirements for the project, including a grading rubric, will be provided early in the semester.

I will make every effort to guide you through the process. To do this, I will ask you to check-in with me regarding your group's research design throughout the semester. These check-ins will count toward your group's grade. I will provide numerous comments on the written work you turn in to me for these check-ins.

I am also cognizant that group work creates the incentive for some to free ride. To avoid that, you will each be required to sign a group work contract which stipulates the responsibilities of each member. Violations of the contract by individual group members will result in that individual losing points on their own group participation grade and/or paper grade depending on the nature of the violation. Group members will also have the chance to rate each other on their participation in the group at the end of the semester.

In all, the group project is worth 200 points, with the paper counting for 150 points, the presentation counting for 25 points, and the participation grade counting for 25 points. As a whole, the project is worth about 32% of your final course grade. You should take it very seriously and work your hardest with your group to produce a solid final product.

## **VI. Late Work**

If any activity is not turned by the time specified in the syllabus, it will be considered late. Late activities will be discounted a full letter grade each day it is late. For example, if you scored a 90 on an assignment but turned it in a day late, you will earn an 80 on that assignment. I cannot accept any activities after the final exam. This same policy applies for assignments related the group project. You are not able to make-up the quizzes.

You must have a documented emergency preventing you from coming to class or completing an assignment in order to avoid a penalty to your grade for late work. In order to avoid late work penalties, I must be notified as soon as possible of the emergency and must have documentation within one week.

## **VII. Communication**

If you do not understand the readings, or what we discussed in class, or if you have further questions about readings or class, please do not hesitate to ask questions! You are highly encouraged to attend office hours. If you would like to meet one-on-one, but cannot attend office hours, please email me to set up a time to meet. I am easy to reach if you need to communicate with me. It is important for you to stay in touch, particularly if any problems arise.

## **VIII. Academic Honesty**

You must always adhere to OSU's academic integrity standards. Violations of academic integrity, including unauthorized collaboration, plagiarism, cheating on examinations, helping another person cheat, and unauthorized advance access to examinations, will result in severe penalty. Penalties include: receiving a failing grade on an assignment, examination or course, receiving a notation of a violation of academic integrity on your transcript, and being suspended from the University. You can learn more at <http://academicintegrity.okstate.edu>.

## **IX. Additional Course Policies**

Please see the Oklahoma State University Syllabus Attachment for all other policies in effect and resources available to you for this course.

## **X. Required Readings**

The following books are required for the course:

1. Howard, Christopher. 2017. *Thinking Like a Political Scientist: A Practical Guide to Research Methods*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
2. Monogan, James E. 2015. *Political Analysis Using R*. New York: Springer.

You are required to complete additional readings, but these will be provided to you on D2L.

## **XI. Course Schedule**

The course schedule is presented below. I reserve the right to change the course schedule at any time, but I will let you know with ample time before hand.

	<b>Tuesdays</b>	<b>Thursdays</b>
<b>Week 1</b> Jan. 15 & 17	Course Introduction  <b>Read:</b> Syllabus	So What? Asking Questions that Matter  <b>Read:</b> Howard Ch. 1
<b>Week 2</b> Jan 22 & 24	Who Cares? Joining the Scholarly Conversation  <b>Read:</b> Geer “The News Media and the Rise of Negativity in Presidential Campaigns”  <b>Due:</b> Activity 1	Defining Concepts  <b>Read:</b> Howard Ch. 2
<b>Week 3</b> Jan 29 & 31	Measurement  <b>Read:</b> Gladwell “The Order of Things”  <b>Due:</b> Activity 2	Group Work Day
<b>Week 4</b> Feb 5 & 7	Theorizing About Politics  <b>Read:</b> Howard Ch. 3	Hypotheses  <b>Read:</b> Putnam “The Strange Disappearance of Civic Engagement”  <b>Due:</b> Activity 3
<b>Week 5</b> Feb 12 & 14	The Logic of Research Design  <b>Read:</b> Howard Ch. 4	Group Work Day  <b>Due:</b> Activity 4
<b>Week 6</b> Feb 19 & 21	Qualitative Evidence  <b>Read:</b> Howard Ch. 5	Case Selection, Sampling, and Interviewing  <b>Read:</b> Biddle, Friedman, and Shapiro “Testing the Surge”  <b>Due:</b> Activity 5

<b>Week 7</b> <b>Feb 26 &amp; 28</b>	Quantitative Evidence  <b>Read:</b> Howard Ch. 7	Descriptive Statistics & Correlations  <b>Read:</b> Stepan and Linz “Comparative Perspectives on Inequality and Democracy”
<b>Week 8</b> <b>March 5 &amp; 7</b>	Group Work Day  <b>Due:</b> Activity 6	R!  <b>Read:</b> Monogan Ch. 1
<b>Week 9</b> <b>March 12 &amp; 14</b>	Loading & Manipulating Data  <b>Read:</b> Monogan Ch. 2  <b>Due:</b> Activity 7	Visualizing Data  <b>Read:</b> Monogan Ch. 3
<b>Week 10</b> <b>March 19 &amp; 21</b>	<b>NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK</b>	
<b>Week 11</b> <b>March 26 &amp; 28</b>	Calculating Descriptive Stats: Measures of Central Tendency  <b>Read:</b> Monogan Ch. 4.1  <b>Due:</b> Activity 8	Calculating Descriptive Stats: Measures of Variance  <b>Read:</b> Monogan Ch. 4.2
<b>Week 12</b> <b>April 2 &amp; 4</b>	Collecting & Managing Data  <b>Due:</b> Activity 9	Group Work Day
<b>Week 13</b> <b>April 9 &amp; 11</b>	Group Work Day	Significance Tests & Correlations  <b>Read:</b> Monogan Ch. 5
<b>Week 14</b> <b>April 16 &amp; 18</b>	Linear Regression Basics  <b>Read:</b> Monogan Ch. 6.1  <b>Due:</b> Activity 10	Regression Diagnostics & Other Considerations  <b>Read:</b> Monogan Ch. 6.2

<b>Week 15</b> <b>April 23 &amp; 25</b>	Interpreting & Understanding Results  <b>Read:</b> LaMarre et al “The Irony of Satire”  <b>Due:</b> Activity 11	Group Work Day
<b>Week 16</b> <b>April 30 &amp; May 2</b>	Group Presentations	Group Presentations
<b>FINAL EXAM</b>	<b>Thursday, May 9<sup>th</sup> 2:00 – 3:50 PM</b>	