

**POLS 2280**  
**Research Methods**  
**Fall 2017**

Instructor: Dr. April A. Johnson  
Class Time: Mon/Wed 3:30pm-4:45pm  
Class Location: Social Sciences Building, Room 3025  
Office Hours: Mon/Wed 1:00pm-2:00pm  
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**Course Description and Objectives**

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the logic and methods of empirical political science. Students will first learn to identify good, testable research questions and to develop ways in which those questions can be quantified. Here we cover issues related to formulating hypotheses, identifying causal relationships, and appropriately measuring variables. The second section of the course will introduce students to various types of research designs that political scientists use to collect data and examine their hypotheses. Students will understand the advantages and disadvantages of content analysis, longitudinal designs, archival survey data, and experimental methods. Specifically, we will focus on issues related to sampling, validity, reliability, and survey implementation. The remainder of the course will be an introduction to quantitative methods through applied statistics. This section will explain why and when we can make legitimate claims about a population when we have data on only a small subset of that population. We will also examine basic tools and concepts essential to using statistical methods in investigations of political problems. The primary objective of this course is for you to become critical consumers of empirical social science as well as competent producers of your own research.

**Required Texts**

Johnson, Janet and H.T. Reynolds. 2012. *Political Science Research Methods*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed.  
Washington, DC: CQ Press. (ISBN: 978-1-60871-689-0)

**Evaluation of Course Objectives**

**Research Exercises:** Students will complete a total of eight research exercises in this class. Exercises are meant to assess your comprehension of the material and to give you hands on experience critiquing and developing empirical work. Instructions for each exercise will be distributed approximately two weeks before the due date. Exercises are due at the *beginning* of class unless otherwise noted. We will also have six in-class workshops during the semester. While these technically count as part of your attendance/professionalism grade, participating in workshops should greatly assist you when it comes to completing research exercises.

**Final Paper:** In lieu of a final exam, each student is expected to submit a 15-20 page paper reflecting their own original research to the Kennesaw Journal of Undergraduate Research (KJUR). Students will submit a completed draft to the instructor on the date they present their project in class. Drafts will be returned to students with substantive and organizational feedback

from the instructor. After making the appropriate revisions, students will digitally submit their research papers to KJUR. Note that while this task may seem daunting, this course was designed so that the completion of individual research exercises should help students build their paper/project throughout the semester. Specific formatting guidelines for the final paper, as well as a grading rubric, will be distributed roughly three weeks into the semester. However, papers should generally include the following: Abstract, background/literature review, research question, hypotheses, data and methodology, results, discussion, and concluding thoughts. To view the aims & scope of KJUR, as well as current articles, please visit <http://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/kjur/>.

**Research Presentation:** Each student will give an 8-10 minute (approximate) presentation on his or her research project during one of the last three class meetings. Instructions and grading criteria for the presentation will be handed out four weeks before it is due.

**Attendance/Participation/Professionalism:** Students are given one excused absence per semester. In general, however, I expect students to come to each class, to be attentive, and to be engaged in both lectures and discussion. *Please note that showing up late and/or leaving early is disruptive to the classroom flow (meaning- don't do it!).*

Attending class does not equate to participating in it. Participation includes asking questions about the readings (write down questions as you read!), answering questions posed by the instructor, and responding to the comments made by your classmates. I encourage all students to think critically and to share their insights and inquiries with the class.

In addition to attendance and participation, students will be assessed on the professionalism with which they conduct themselves. Professionalism means that students are focused on course material, accountable for their own learning and respectful in their communication both inside and outside of the classroom. Incivilities, such as texting, chatting, or excessive classroom disruptions, will lower your grade in this course.

**Readings:** Because this is a methods class it is *absolutely critical* for you to stay up to date with all of the required readings. This means reading *before* class (even if it is just skimming) so you do not get lost in that day's lecture.

### Distribution of Grades

10%	Attendance/Participation/Professionalism		
25%	Final Paper		
10%	Research Presentation		
55%	Research Exercises (breakdown below)		
	5% - Research Question	5% - Research Design	10% - Data Analysis I
	5% - Article Critique	5% - Student Critique	10% - Data Analysis II
	10% - Literature Review	5% - Data Submission	

### Grading Scale

A	90-100	C	70-79	F	59 or below
B	80-89	D	60-69		

### **Electronics Policy**

*Above all, please be respectful to both the instructor and your fellow classmates when using electronic devices.* While electronics are not prohibited in the classroom, students generally do better by [taking handwritten notes](#) and [minimizing digital distractions](#). In order to maximize your in-class learning, attentiveness and participation I highly recommend unplugging. If a student's use of electronics is consistently problematic/disruptive I will ask them to leave the classroom.

### **Policy for Missed or Late Work**

Missing or late work/attendance will be accepted only under extenuating circumstances and with proper (medical) documentation. Students will generally not be allowed to make up missing coursework/attendance due to transportation, weather, technology, family and/or personal issues, though certain exceptions may be made on a case by case basis.

### **Religious Holidays**

Students who wish to observe religious holidays must notify the instructor of the date(s) they will be absent within the first two weeks of class. The instructor will make every reasonable effort to honor the request and not penalize the student for missing the class. If an examination or project is due during the absence the instructor will give the student an opportunity to complete the assessment at an earlier date.

### **Disability Policy**

Students who require accommodations (e.g., extra time on exams, designated note takers, etc.) to complete and participate in this course are welcome. However, in order for the instructor to recognize these accommodations students must officially document their disabilities with the office of Student Disability Services. *Note: Students seeking accommodations should do so within the first two weeks of the semester, as testing and documentation often takes time. The instructor will not grant accommodations retroactively.* Please visit the Student Disability Services website at [sss.kennesaw.edu/sds](http://sss.kennesaw.edu/sds).

### **Electronic Communication**

Communication for this course will be sent to your official university email address. ***It is your responsibility to read the email in your official university email account and to do so in a timely manner (at least twice per week).*** If you choose to forward your official university email to another off-campus account, faculty are *not responsible* for any undeliverable messages to your alternative personal accounts.

### **Writing Assistance**

The KSU Writing Center helps students in all disciplines improve their written work. Experienced, friendly writing assistants work with you on topic development, revision, research, documentation, grammar, and more. For more information or to make an appointment, visit [www.kennesaw.edu/writingcenter](http://www.kennesaw.edu/writingcenter), or stop by Room 242 in the English Building.

### **Academic Integrity and Plagiarism**

Academic honesty and adherence to KSU's Student Codes of Conduct is expected at all times. Any student found to have engaged in academic misconduct such as plagiarism, collusion, or submitting non-original work is subject to disciplinary sanctions from the Department of Student

Conduct and Academic Integrity. The term “plagiarism” includes, but is not limited to, the use, by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment. The term “collusion” includes, but is not limited to, the unauthorized collaboration with any other person in preparing work offered for academic credit. Students are advised that faculty routinely use online software (e.g., Turnitin, SafeAssign) both to prevent plagiarism and to assist in verifying when/if it has occurred.

*If I suspect that a student has committed plagiarism, even if it is his or her first time, the student will receive a zero on the assignment and an incident report will be filed with the Department of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity.* For more information about plagiarism and prevention go to [www.plagiarism.org](http://www.plagiarism.org). To view the Kennesaw State University Student Codes of Conduct visit <https://web.kennesaw.edu/scai/content/ksu-student-code-conduct>.

**Miscellaneous Policies**

[Academic Honesty/Integrity Statement](#)

[Ethics Statement](#)

[Confidentiality and Privacy Statement \(FERPA\)](#)

[Sexual Harassment Statement](#)

[Course Accessibility Statement \(ADA statement\)](#)

[University – Student Rights Statement](#)

[Campus Carry Information](#)

**Disclaimer**

The instructor reserves the right to amend or correct this course syllabus as necessary. If the instructor amends or corrects this syllabus students will be properly notified of any changes.

**Course Schedule**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Required Readings</b>
Mon 8/14	Introduction	---
Wed 8/16	Politics as a Science Elements of Scientific Reasoning	Johnson and Reynolds, Ch. 1 Johnson and Reynolds, Ch. 2
Mon 8/21	<i>No Class- Total Solar Eclipse!</i>	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/national/eclipse/?utm_term=.2f7e9784222f">https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/national/eclipse/?utm_term=.2f7e9784222f</a>
Wed 8/23	Creating a ‘Good’ Research Question	Johnson and Reynolds, Ch. 3
Mon 8/28	<i>Workshop: Compiling a Bibliography and Learning APSA Style</i> <b>RE #1 Due (Research Question)</b>	---
Wed 8/30	Hypotheses and Variables	Johnson and Reynolds, Ch. 4
Mon 9/4	<i>Labor Day Holiday- No Class</i>	---
Wed 9/6	Measurement	Johnson and Reynolds, Ch. 5

Mon 9/11	Causal Inference: Experimental Designs <b>RE #2 Due (Article Critique)</b>	Johnson and Reynolds, pp. 165-184
Wed 9/13	Causal Inference: Nonrandomized Designs	Johnson and Reynolds, pp. 184-221 Johnson and Reynolds, Ch. 8
Mon 9/18	<i>Workshop: Organizing and Structuring Your Literature Review</i>	---
Wed 9/20	Fundamentals of Sampling	Johnson and Reynolds, pp. 222-240
Mon 9/25	Statistical Inference: Population vs. Sample	Johnson and Reynolds, pp. 240-256
Wed 9/27	<i>Workshop: Introduction to SPSS</i> <b>RE #3 Due (Literature Review)</b>	---
Mon 10/2	Survey Design	Johnson and Reynolds, Ch. 10
Wed 10/4	<i>Workshop: Finding and Coding Observational Data</i>	---
Mon 10/9	Descriptive Statistics	Johnson and Reynolds, Ch. 11
Wed 10/11	<i>No Class</i>	---
Mon 10/16	<i>Workshop: Visualizing Your Data</i> <b>RE #4 Due (Research Design)</b>	---
Wed 10/18	Hypothesis Testing	Johnson and Reynolds, pp. 396-408
Mon 10/23	T-tests <b>RE #5 Due (Student Critique)</b>	Johnson and Reynolds, pp. 408-420
Wed 10/25	Confidence Intervals	Johnson and Reynolds, pp. 420-427
Mon 10/30	Bivariate Relationships and Cross-Tabulation <b>RE #6 Due (Data Submission)</b>	Johnson and Reynolds, pp. 428-463
Wed 11/1	Difference Tests	Johnson and Reynolds, pp. 463-481
Mon 11/6	ANOVA	Johnson and Reynolds, pp. 481-490

Wed 11/8	Intro to Regression <b>RE #7 Due (Data Analysis I)</b>	Johnson and Reynolds, pp. 490-508
Mon 11/13	Regression Analysis	Johnson and Reynolds, pp. 509-550
Wed 11/15	<i>Workshop: Running and Interpreting Regressions</i>	---
Mon 11/20	<i>Thanksgiving Break- No Class</i>	---
Wed 11/22	<i>Thanksgiving Break- No Class</i>	---
Mon 11/27	Research Presentations/ Paper Draft Due <b>RE #8 Due (Data Analysis II)</b>	---
Wed 11/29	Research Presentations/ Paper Draft Due	---
Mon 12/4	Research Presentations/ Paper Draft Due	---
<b>Final Paper Due Monday December 11, 2017 By 11:59pm</b>		

To view academic deadlines, including add/drop and withdrawal dates, please visit  
<http://registrar.kennesaw.edu/>