

## **POLITICAL RESEARCH GOALS AND STRATEGIES - PSCI 480**

**Fall 2019**

**Monday 3:30 - 5:50, LA 344**

**Draft Syllabus – To be Revised**

Professor Christopher Muste

Phone: 406-243-4829

Office: 416 Liberal Arts

e-mail: [christopher.muste@umontana.edu](mailto:christopher.muste@umontana.edu)

Office Hours: Monday 12-1, Wednesday 12-2, and by appointment

Political Science Department Office - 301 Liberal Arts; phone 406-243-5202

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION AND LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Political Science addresses a wide range of questions and employs a variety of research methodologies, including those used in other social sciences. In this course, we explore the questions raised and methods used in the main subfields of political science: Comparative, Theory, International Relations, and American politics. Because the fundamental questions and methodological issues are common to the four subfields, and to social science more generally, we will begin by briefly examining basic issues in the philosophy of science, including the ways in which political science is and is not “scientific.” In the second part of the course, we will study how political scientists seek methodological rigor in their research, exploring the meaning and analysis of causation, the fundamentals of research design, the formation of concepts and hypotheses, common measurement problems, and case selection and sampling issues.

In the final part of the course, we examine the methodologies characteristic of work in the four main subfields of political science, such as ordinary language analysis in Theory; case studies and qualitative comparative analysis in Comparative; strategic-interaction modeling, in IR; and institutional analysis and survey research in American politics. The goals of the course are for you to understand the range of research approaches used to study political phenomena, learn how to critically evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of political research using these approaches, and to use these tools to develop a methodologically sound research design of your own.

### **READINGS**

Most of the course readings will be available on Moodle. The readings for each week are listed in the “Course Topics and Readings” section below. I may change some readings to reflect political events and the interests of students in the class, or if I find a better reading on a topic. The rest of the readings will be in the one required basic textbook for this course, *The Craft of Political Research, 10<sup>th</sup> edition* (2017) by W. Phillips Shively. The book is available from the UM Bookstore, and online. Be sure to get the 10<sup>th</sup> edition; previous editions don’t contain some important changes.

### **GRADES AND COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

Each week there will be a set of readings broadly covering that week’s topic, often of divergent perspectives and levels. The assigned readings are varied, sometimes complex and theoretical, so you are expected to do all the readings and be prepared to discuss them each week. Being prepared will contribute to your understanding of the material and success in the course. Participation in class discussions will be 10% of the course grade.

## GRADES AND COURSE REQUIREMENTS (CONTINUED)

In selected weeks, students will write a 3-4 page (double-spaced) analysis of the week's readings. This analysis can be an overview comparing a single theme in several readings for that week, an intensive comparison of two or more of the readings, or an analysis of the week's readings that relates them to relevant readings from previous weeks. These weekly analyses are due by 1:00 pm the day class meets (Monday) to [christopher.muste@umontana.edu](mailto:christopher.muste@umontana.edu). They will provide one source of topics for our class discussions. Papers turned in between 1:00-2:00 will receive half credit, and papers not turned in by 2:00 will receive no credit unless cleared with me via email by 10 am.

There are eleven weeks with possible reading analyses. All students must do reading analyses for the first two weeks, the readings for September 9 and September 16 in the "Course Topics & Readings" section of this syllabus. After September 16, undergraduate students will choose two more weeks in which to do reading analyses of the remaining nine weeks, selected largely by you based on your interests. Graduate students will choose four more weeks to do reading analyses. This will be a total of four reading analyses for undergrads, each worth 7.5% of the grade, for a total of 30%. For grad students, each of the six reading analyses will be worth 5% of the grade, also totaling 30%.

Note: At least half of your remaining Reading Analysis weeks must be done by October 21<sup>st</sup> (midterm).

As noted above, participating in class discussion is an important part of learning complex and unfamiliar material. Intelligent and frequent participation in class discussion is 10% of the overall course grade.

There will be a midterm exam at the end of the second section of the course, which will cover the readings and discussions up to that time. The midterm exam is worth 30% of the course grade.

The other requirement for this course is to prepare a research design for a research project you plan to carry out, based on your interests in political and social science. The research design must incorporate a research question, literature review, theory(ies), hypotheses, a comprehensive plan of the research process and the research strategies and methods that will be used to carry out the plan, and preliminary search for and possible analysis of some evidence or data. A draft plan describing the main components of your research design will be due in late October, and the first draft of your research design will be due in November. We will discuss the strengths and problems in the research design and potential solutions throughout the semester. The final version of the research design paper is due Monday, December 9<sup>th</sup> of final week, when we will meet to discuss all the projects. The research design is worth 30% of the course grade.

**GRADES:** Grades will be calculated according to the following percentages:

A = 93-100	B+ = 87-89.9	C+ = 77-79.9	D+ = 67-69.9	below 60=F
A- = 90-92.9	B = 83-86.9	C = 73-76.9	D = 63-66.9	
	B- = 80-82.9	C- = 70-72.9	D- = 60-62.9	

Participation in discussion	10%
Reading Analyses	30%
Midterm exam	30%
Final paper	30% of course grade

**PSCI 400:** Due to the extensive writing in this course, the course satisfies the PSC 400 Writing requirement for Poli Sci majors. If you want PSCI 400 credit for this course, complete an override slip and PSCI 400 sign-up form from Stacia Graham in the PSCI office (LA 301), then bring them both to me to sign. You can sign up for 1 credit of PSCI 400 even if you have already taken PSCI 400 in another course.

### **ACADEMIC HONESTY AND PLAGIARISM:**

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to academic penalties by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. You must be familiar with the Student Conduct Code, online at <http://www.umt.edu/student-affairs/community-standards/default.php>

The University of Montana Student Conduct Code prohibits plagiarism, which is “representing another person’s words, ideas, data, or materials as one’s own” and other forms of academic misconduct. These are serious academic violations that can result in penalties up to suspension or expulsion from the University.

**I take academic honesty very seriously, and do my utmost to prevent, uncover, and penalize any form of dishonesty.** Read Section V, “Academic Conduct” on pp. 5-12 of the Student Conduct Code above.

**Please contact me with any questions or concerns about academic honesty.**

### **CLASS COURTESY:**

In order to have a pleasant and effective learning environment in a class this size, we need to observe a few basic courtesies. This is a small campus, so please arrive in class on time; arriving late or leaving early disrupts the class.

**Please turn off all cell phones and all other electronic devices before class begins.** Please do not read a newspaper or other non-course material, eat during class, or use text messaging, web browsers, or similar communications. You may take class notes using a computer but do not use it for other purposes. If you have a question or comment about the material, please raise your hand instead of discussing it with your neighbor. **We all benefit when we remember we’re in the room together to learn.**

### **DROP POLICY AND INCOMPLETES:**

You can drop on Cyberbear through September 16, and from September 17 to October 28 (5 pm) using a drop form signed by me and your advisor. From October - 29 December 6 (5 pm), you must go through the more difficult “late drop” petition process. I will sign late drop petitions until November 25<sup>th</sup>, and after that only if necessitated by accident, illness, or family/personal emergency as stated on the Drop form here:

<http://www.umt.edu/registrar/PDF/Course-Drop-Form.pdf> Incompletes will only be permitted when all the conditions set forth in the official University policy are met – this policy and other official UM academic policies are at <https://montana-catalog.coursedog.com/academics/policies-procedures>

### **DSS STUDENTS:**

Qualified students with disabilities will receive appropriate accommodations in this course. Students with disabilities requesting accommodations on exams, papers, notes or other course requirements should contact me as soon as possible, and must contact the DSS office to arrange for, and provide me with a copy of, your DSS letter of accommodations as soon as you can. The DSS office is in Lommasson Center 154.

### **E-MAIL AND MOODLE:**

Every registered UM student has an official UM e-mail account, and students registered for this course have a Moodle course account. I may use your official UM e-mail to send you important announcements, and I will post course readings, exam and paper grades on Moodle. At <https://umt.teamdynamix.com/TDClient/Home/> there are instructions on how to access your UM e-mail and Moodle accounts.

Moodle and Cyberbear both send my e-mails to your official UM e-mail account, so you should check it frequently. If you use another e-mail account, go into CyberBear or go to IT Central to have your official UM e-mail forwarded to your preferred e-mail account, and check that account frequently.

**GRADUATE STUDENTS** - Graduate students taking this course must complete supplemental graduate-level readings for most course topics as specified by the instructor, six reading analyses (instead of the four for undergraduates), and complete a more extensive 20-25 page paper consisting of a research design with a well-defined research question, theory, hypothesis, literature review, data collection and analysis, and an analysis that synthesizes the five components.

## COURSE TOPICS AND READINGS

NOTE: “\*GS” designates readings only required of Graduate Students

### PART I: POLITICAL SCIENCE AS A SCIENCE?

- August 26 Introduction - research methods and course requirements
- September 2 LABOR DAY - NO CLASS
- September 9 Who’s Right? What’s Important? Is Social Science a Science? Analyzing Research Claims
- September 16 Natural Science and Social Science: Causation, Interpretation, and Alternatives

### PART II: METHODOLOGICAL COMPONENTS – PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

- September 23 Natural Science and Social Science: Causation, Interpretation, and Alternatives
- September 30 Developing Research Questions, Concepts, and Hypotheses
- October 7 Problems in Measuring Political Phenomena: Reliability and Validity
- October 14 Sampling in Quantitative and Qualitative Research
- October 21 MIDTERM EXAM - TENTATIVE DATE  
Plus - Library & Archival Research, and Data Collection & Analysis: Part I
- October 28 Library & Archival Research, Data Collection II; *and* Research Design, Analysis and Writing in Political Science  
\* Draft Research Design Proposals are due at 1:00 pm
- November 4 Research Design Proposal Discussion  
\* Final Research Design Proposals are due at 1:00 pm (not papers, just the proposals)

### PART III: SUBFIELD RESEARCH EXAMPLES

- November 4 American Politics: Quantitative Analysis, Survey Research & Other Methods

NOVEMBER 11 - NO CLASS DUE TO VETERAN’S DAY HOLIDAY

- November 18 Comparative Politics: Case Studies, Least-similar/Most-similar, QCA, Single State Studies, and More
- November 25: International Relations: Variety in Methods of Analysis
- December 2 Political Theory: Analytic and Normative, Explanation and Interpretation  
Research Design Troubleshooting and Refining – Class Discussion

MONDAY, DECEMBER 9 FINAL RESEARCH DESIGN PAPERS DUE IN CLASS  
Summary Discussion of Final Research Designs & Methods