

Created by: Wesley D. Nishiyama
Reviewed by: Tina Mendoza
Reviewed by: Michelle Oja
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Semester Effective: Fall 2025

Political Science (POSC) 1506 Introduction to Political Science Research Methods (3 Units) CSU

Hours and Unit Calculations:

48 hours of lecture. 96 Outside of class hours (144 Total Student Learning Hours) 3 Units

Advisories: Eligibility for STAT 1510 and PSYC 2200 is strongly recommended.

Catalog Description:

Introduction to Political Science Research surveys different methods both qualitative and quantitative, and formal models in political science and the social sciences. This course will cover research design, descriptive methods, predictive methods, with a focus on collection of data and the interpretation and reporting of results. Finally, the course will consider ethical research. This course will meet one of the Political Core requirements for the Associate in Arts in Political Science for Transfer.

Recommended Text:

Franco, Josh, Charlotte Lee, Kau Vue, Dino Bozonelos, Masahiro Omae, and Steven Cauchon. 2020.
Introduction to Political Science Research Methods 1st Edition, An Open Education Resource

Additional Instructional Material:

May also include supplementary material including statistical software.

Course SLO's:

1. Explain the scientific methods as applied to the social sciences
2. Explain the limits of qualitative, quantitative, and formal model analyses
3. Create a research proposal responding to a political or social phenomenon
4. Explain the ethics of research, especially regarding the treatment of voluntary and non-voluntary participants.

Local Level General Education Learning Outcomes

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the rights and obligations of individual citizens in the political system established under the U.S. Constitution
2. Analyze the influence of major social, cultural, economic, and political forces on human behavior and institutions using the major concepts, models, and concerns developed through the social sciences in contemporary as well as historical settings and in a variety of cultural contexts.
3. Apply research methodologies employed in social scientific inquiry.
4. Demonstrate the principles, concepts, models of value systems, and ethics framework employed in social scientific inquiry

Course Objectives:

Upon successfully completing the course, the student will:

1. Understand the scientific method as applied to the social sciences
2. Apply experimental and non-experimental methods
3. Recognize natural experiments
4. Consider Mill's Method, causal relations, types of causes, and different types of variables
5. Know when to use middle-range theories, mixed methods, and ideal types
6. Develop and defend a research design, collect data, and interpret results
7. Write a well-constructed survey
8. Evaluate published research both academic and non-academic
9. Create a formal model indicating assumptions employed to explain and predict political and social behavior
10. Review the ethics of conducted research including the treatment of participants.
11. Develop a literature review
12. Write a well-constructed survey
13. Collect an unbiased sample of qualitative and quantitative data.
14. Apply statistics and econometrics to describe and predict political and social behavior
15. Use a statistical program to process data and properly interpret and present the results

Unit I – The Scientific Method

- A – Steps of Scientific Method
- B – Mill's Method

Unit II – Approaches to Social Explanation

- A – Group/Conflict/Elite Theories
- B – Rational Choice Theory
- C – Cultural Approach
- D – Historical Approach
- E – Institutionalism/Structural Approach
- F – Systems Theory
- G – Symbolic Interaction

Unit III – Research Considerations

- A – Internal Validity
- B – External Validity
- C – Parsimony
- D – Explanatory Power

Unit IV – Causal Mechanism

- A – Hume's Fork
- B – Causation versus Correlation

- C – Root Cause
- D – Proximal Cause
- E – Symmetrical Cause
- F – Spurious Cause
- G – Necessary Cause and Sufficient Cause
- H – Interactive Variables

Unit V – Research Design

- A – Hypothesis and Null Hypothesis
- B – Concepts
 - i – Operational Definitions
 - ii – Unbiased Terms
 - iii – Architypes
- C – Middle-range Theories
- D – Measurement
 - i – Reliability
 - ii - Validity
- E – Multi-item Measurement
 - i – Index
 - ii – Scales

Unit VI – Qualitative Analysis

- A – Naturalism
- B – Ethnomethodology
- C – Case Studies
- D – Observations – Soak and Poke
- E - Interviewing
- F – Reporting Results

Unit VII – Quantitative Analysis

- A – Sampling
- B – Surveys
- C – Statistical Testing
 - i – Normal Distribution – Standard Deviation, Skewness, Kurtosis, Mean, Mode, Medium
 - ii – Hypothesis Testing – P-Test
 - iii – Hypothesis Testing – T-Test
- D – Econometrics
 - i – OLS
 - ii – Maximum Likelihood
 - iii – Assumptions
 - iv – BLUE
 - v – Bayesian Updating
- E – Factor-Analysis
- F – Reporting Results

Unit VIII – Formal Models

A – Spatial Models

- i – Overview
- ii – Down’s Medium Voter Theory
- iii – Pivotal Politics

B – Game Theory

- i – The Problem of Collective Action
- ii – Prisoner’s Dilemma
- iii – Iterated Games
- iv – Nash Equilibrium

C – Chaos and Complexity

D – Micro Motives and Macro Behavior

E – Catastrophe

F – Social Choice Theory*

- i – Arrows Impossibility Theorem
- ii – Cycling
- iii – Aggregate Preferences

Unit IX – Formal Fallacies

A – Value Latent Concepts

B – The Ecological Fallacy

C – Confirmation Bias

D – Cherry Picking and Data Purging

E – Fallacy of Excluded Middle

Unit X – Research Ethics

A – Proper Treatment of Participants

B – Privacy

The student will spend 6 hours a week outside the classroom:

1. Studying
2. Reading the assigned text and taking notes
3. Completing written assignments and exercises
4. Watching online videos
5. Participating in online discussions

Method of Instruction:

1. Class lectures
2. In-class simulations
3. Group debates and discussions
4. In-class statistical exercises

5. Movie clips

Method of Evaluation:

1. In class and/or take-home examinations
2. Quizzes
3. Written assignments and exercises
4. Class Projects
5. Use of statical software
6. In-class simulations
7. Presentations
8. In-class or online participation

Supplemental Data:

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|------------------------------|---|
| TOP Code: | 220700: Political Science |
| SAM Priority Code: | E: Non-Occupational |
| Distance Education: | Online; Offline |
| Funding Agency: | Y: Not Applicable (funds not used) |
| Program Status: | 1: Program Applicable |
| Noncredit Category: | Y: Not Applicable, Credit Course |
| Special Class Status: | N: Course is not a special class |
| Basic Skills Status: | N: Course is not a basic skills course |
| Prior to College Level: | Y: Not applicable |
| Cooperative Work Experience: | N: Is not part of a cooperative work experience education program |
| Eligible for Credit by Exam: | E: Credit By Exam |



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|---------------------------------|---|
| Eligible for Pass/No Pass: | C: Pass/No Pass |
| Taft College General Education: | IG4H: IGETC Area 4H LAHI: Local Course American History LES: Local Ethnic Studies LSBS: Local GE Social/Behavioral Sci |
| Disciplines List: | Political Science |