Methods for Political Analysis I

Course Description:

This course is an introduction to quantitative research methods in political science. The class begins by with a brief overview of the goals of social science and the strengths and weaknesses of different research methodologies. The first major part of the class focuses on statistical techniques for summarizing data and testing hypotheses about single variables. The remainder of the course considers statistical techniques for analyzing the relationship between two or more variables, with a focus on regression analysis. The course has three main goals: to teach students how to interpret quantitative social science research; to enable students to conduct basic quantitative research themselves; and to provide students with a basic theoretical foundation in statistics that will enable them to learn more advanced quantitative methods in the future.

Course Information:

Instructor Contact Information:
Email: steinbe2@uoregon.edu
Office: PLC 923
Office Hours: 3:30-5:00, Tuesday & Thursday

Textbook & Software:
Students must purchase one book, The Fundamentals of Political Science Research by Paul Kellstedt & Guy Whitten, which is available at the University bookstore. All other required readings will be made available on the course Blackboard site.

Purchasing STATA statistical analysis software is highly recommended. There will be several classes where we will use this software during class, and following along on your own laptop is strongly advised. Assignments also require the use of STATA or similar software. Students can purchase this software at reasonable prices through STATA’s GradPlan.

Grading & Assignments:
1. Attendance & Participation. Students are expected to attend class. On those days where we will be discussing the class readings, students are expected to have completed all of the required readings before class, and to actively participate in the class discussions. Students are expected to bring laptop computers with
STATA software on the specified dates. Attendance and participation will make up 10% of the final grade. This portion of the grade depends upon attendance, preparation for class, as well as the quantity and quality of participation in class discussions.

2. Assignments. Each graduate student is required to complete four assignments during the quarter. Each undergraduate student is required to complete three assignments during the quarter. These assignments are worth a total of 30% of the course grade. Graduate student assignments are due at the start of class on Oct. 9, Oct. 18, Nov. 8, and Nov. 27; the same applies to undergraduate students, though they are not required to complete the Oct. 9 assignment. Students will receive further instructions on each assignment at least one week prior to their due dates.

3. Midterm & Final Exams. A midterm exam will be held on October 25. A final exam will be held during final exam week. Each exam counts for 30% of the final grade.

4. Optional Final Paper. All students have the option to write a final class paper in addition to the other course requirements. For students that choose this option, this paper will count for 20% of the final grade, and the midterm and final exam will each count for 20% of the final grade (rather than 30%). Students that select this option must hand in their final papers no later than the start of the final exam. More details on this assignment are available from the instructor upon request.

Policy on Late Assignments & Extensions:
Late assignments will be penalized 10% per day (24-hour period). Extensions will only be granted if students provide official documentation (e.g. doctor’s note) that explains the necessity of an extension.

Academic Honesty & Plagiarism:
By enrolling in this course, you agree to abide by the University’s Student Conduct Code. Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated. Any student that violates these policies will receive an F grade in the course and will be reported to the University authorities. Please ask the instructor if you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism or cheating.

Students with Disabilities:
The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation, please notify the instructor as soon as possible. You may also wish to contact the Accessible Education Center in 164 Oregon Hall, by telephone at 346-1155 or by email at uoaec@uoregon.edu.
Course Schedule:

Sep. 25: The Objectives of Social/Political Science
Kellstedt & Whitten, Chapters 1-2.

Sep. 27: Research Design
Kellstedt & Whitten, Chapters 3-4.


Oct. 2: Measurement
Kellstedt & Whitten, Chapter 5.


Oct. 4: Univariate Statistics: Description
Kellstedt & Whitten, Chapter 6.

Kellstedt & Whitten, Chapter 7.


Oct. 11: Univariate Statistics: Confidence Intervals
Week of Oct 8-12: Additional Meeting

Student presentations on measurement.


Oct. 18: Bivariate Statistics: Description & Inference

Kellstedt & Whitten, Chapter 8.


No readings. Bring laptops to class to practice using STATA software.

Oct. 25: Midterm Exam

No readings.

Oct. 30: Bivariate Regression: Description

Kellstedt & Whitten, Chapter 9 (pages 159-169).

Nov. 1: Bivariate Regression: Inference

Kellstedt & Whitten, Chapter 9 (pages 169-177).

Nov. 6: Bivariate Regression: Attractive Properties of Ordinary Least Squares

Kellstedt & Whitten, Chapter 9 (pages 177-182).


Nov. 8: Multiple Regression

Kellstedt & Whitten, Chapter 10.
Nov. 13: Regression Analysis: Practice

No readings. Bring laptops to class to practice using STATA software.

Nov. 15: Regression Analysis: Extensions & Limitations

Kellstedt & Whitten, Chapter 11.

Nov. 20: No Class

Nov. 27: Regression Analysis: Evaluating Political Science Applications


Nov. 29: Conclusions & Review for Final Exam

No Readings.

Dec. 3-7: Final Exam