

POSC 178: POLITICAL RESEARCH I

SPRING 2015

Dr. Jack D. Collens

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Course Time: 8:00am – 9:25am (*Lab:* 2:35pm – 3:30pm)
Tuesday & Thursday
105 Siena Hall (*Lab:* 104 Rosetti Hall)

Office Hours: 9:30am–12:30pm
Tuesday & Thursday
321C Siena Hall

This course is the first part of a two-course research methods sequence. It provides an overview of the political science discipline, its evolution, and its subfields. Students are introduced to the systematic, empirical approach to the study of politics and are alerted to the issues that may arise when doing social science research. In this course, students are also introduced to various qualitative approaches to data collection and analysis. Such approaches include case study analysis, content analysis, process tracing, in-depth interviews, focus groups, ethnographic and field research, and archival research. The course includes an original research project, to be submitted in parts throughout the semester to the professor and presented at the end of the course to the class. Students will then be encouraged to submit their final, revised drafts for publication or presentation at local, state, regional, or national conferences. The primary goal of the course is to introduce students to the discipline of political science and to encourage students to think and act as political scientists.

Texts

The texts below are **required** and can be found in the Siena College bookstore or online. Note that some may be available as eBooks or for rental via Amazon or the publisher's website. Both are often cheaper options than purchasing the books. Other required readings can be found on the course Blackboard page.

Berg, Bruce L. and Howard Lune. 2012. *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences, 8th ed.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson. ISBN: 978-0205809387.

Powner, Leanne C. 2015. *Empirical Research and Writing: A Political Science Student's Practical Guide.* Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press. ISBN: 978-1483369631.

Learning Goals

This course addresses the following college, school, and departmental learning goals:

Siena College Learning Goals

1. INFORMED REASONING: Students will think critically and creatively to make reasoned and informed judgments. Through engagement with contemporary and enduring questions of human concern, students will solve problems in ways that reflect the integration of knowledge across general and specialized studies, and they will demonstrate competence in information literacy and independent research.
2. EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION: Students will read texts with comprehension and critical involvement, write effectively for a variety of purposes and audiences, speak knowledgeably, and listen with discernment and empathy.
4. REGARD FOR HUMAN SOLIDARITY AND DIVERSITY: Students will affirm the unity of the human family, uphold the dignity of individuals, and delight in diversity. They will demonstrate intercultural knowledge and respect.

School of Liberal Arts Learning Goals

1. Apply evaluative thinking skills to investigate the complexities of the human past and its connections to artistic, ethical, sociopolitical, moral, and spiritual dimensions of contemporary life.
2. Use analytical problem-solving skills and appropriate theoretical and methodological approaches.
3. Utilize effective oral, written, and artistic communication relevant to academic disciplines.
4. Exhibit mastery of appropriate technologies and information literacy competencies in academic pursuits.
7. Develop a perspective that recognizes diversity within and among cultures.

Major/Program Learning Goals

The Political Science program aims to provide students with:

- A foundation for future careers;
- A solid theoretical, empirical, and methodological foundation for future graduate study;
- A knowledge and awareness, as citizens, of the responsibility that membership within a democratic society entails;
- A sensitivity to the cultural and political diversity within the United States and the world community.

Learning Outcomes

To accomplish these learning goals, students in this class will:

- ☑ Gain an understanding of the political science research process and various methods of social scientific inquiry
- ☑ Be exposed to numerous examples of real political science research from various subfields on diverse topics
- ☑ Consider the ethical issues that may arise throughout the research process
- ☑ Understand and utilize the research process and all its major steps: theory, hypothesis formulation, and empirical testing
- ☑ Master the MAXQDA software package for content analysis
- ☑ Learn to use the **Chicago style** of citation and reference management (author-date style)
- ☑ Learn to use the Zotero software package for citation and reference management

Student Responsibilities

Attendance & Participation

Reading is necessary for a successful college experience, but it is far from sufficient. Class attendance is more than mere reinforcement of material you may have read in the assigned readings. As such, students must attend class regularly, take comprehensive notes, ask for clarification when necessary, and participate in discussion. I will draw test questions from the texts, lectures, and discussion material, so you must pay attention. Attendance is mandatory and will constitute 7.5 percent of your final grade.

Active & Informed Participation

This course requires *active* and *informed* participation. As such, students are expected to speak up in class and contribute to all discussions with relevant points and questions. Note that this approach emphasizes quality of participation over quantity. I will monitor your contributions each week and provide you with a current participation grade at the midpoint of the semester. Participation is worth 7.5 percent of the final course grade and will assess students' critical thinking and oral communication skills.

Exams

You will receive two exams—a midterm and a *non-cumulative* final. These exams will consist of short answer and essay questions. I shall draw exam questions from lectures, discussions, and the required texts. Be punctual on test days, as you will have no extended time. Makeup exams will differ significantly from the original exam and will only be granted with a valid, college-recognized excuse.

Labs

The purpose of the lab sessions is to provide you with hands-on knowledge of research methodology, and of qualitative research approaches. You will be introduced to—and will use—software that has been designed for the analysis of qualitative data (MAXQDA). The lab will also include research design exercises covering several approaches to qualitative research. **It is extremely important that you attend all lab sessions. You may fall behind if you miss one or more labs.**

Research Project

The largest portion of your grade will be the research project, which will constitute 30 percent of your final grade. For this project, students will choose a research topic within a subfield of political science that can be explored using content analysis and carry out the research process from inception to completion, ultimately presented to the class and submitted as a 15–20 page research paper. Students will submit drafts of the first stages of the project according to the following schedule:

1. **Research Proposals (Due 02.03):** 2–3 pages describing the research question and any preliminary literature students may have collected
2. **Annotated Bibliography (Due 02.17):** A minimum of 8 relevant, scholarly sources, each with a paragraph describing how the source relates to the research question and/or methods
3. **Literature Review (Due 03.10):** A full literature review, with at least 12 scholarly sources (including the 8 from the annotated bibliography), in which students synthesize and organize the relevant literature and discuss their own project's place in the literature (roughly 5 pages)
4. **Theory (Due 03.24):** A description of the student's own theory, including any required assumptions, concept definitions, and associated hypotheses derived from the theory (roughly 4 pages)
5. **Methods (Due 04.07):** A description of the analytical methods to be used, case(s) to be studied, and any other specific information required to replicate the analysis (roughly 4 pages)
6. **Analysis and Discussion (Due with final draft on 04.27):** The findings uncovered as a result of the analysis, complete with implications for any hypotheses and the theory, as well as figures or tables to provide further evidence (roughly 3 pages)

Students must submit first drafts of each stage on the due dates—late submissions will result in a 10-point deduction from the final research paper grade. Failure to submit a first draft will result in a 30-point deduction from the final research paper. The revised draft is due on **April 27** in my office and on Turnitin and must include a title page, abstract page, introduction (which includes the research question and discussion of the topic's relevance), literature review, theory, methods, analysis and discussion, conclusion, and works cited. Additional grading rubric will be provided prior to Spring Break.

Assignments

There are four assignments students must complete throughout the semester. They will be worth a total of 20 percent of your final grade (5 percent each). Students will primarily work on the exercises in lab and turn them in both as a hard copy and via Turnitin during lecture at a later date. They include:

1. **NIH Certification (Due 02.10):** Students will complete the certification for the National Institutes of Health, required for working with human subjects. The Siena College Institutional Review Board honors this certification for 4 years.
2. **Content Analysis Exercise (Due 03.12):** Students will choose from a predetermined list of research questions to address using MAXQDA and submit a 3–5 page analysis write-up.
3. **IRB Training (Due 03.19):** Students will prepare (but not formally submit) a Siena College Institutional Review Board proposal.
4. **Interview Exercise (Due 03.26):** Students will interview each other about their high school experiences and submit a 3–5 page discussion of the conclusions, along with a complete transcript of the interview.

Grading

A = 93–100; A- = 90–92; B+ = 87–89; B = 83–86; B- = 80–82; C+ = 77–79; C = 73–76; C- = 70–72; D+ = 67–69; D = 63–66; D- = 60–62; F ≤ 59.

| Item | Percentage |
|----------------|--------------------|
| Exam I | 17.5 percent |
| Exam II | 17.5 percent |
| Research Paper | 30 percent |
| Assignments | 20 percent |
| Attendance | 7.5 percent |
| Participation | 7.5 percent |
| TOTAL | 100 percent |

Availability

The best way to contact me is via email. Please include the course number in your subject line (“POSC 178”). If your question requires more than a few sentences to ask, please feel free to visit my office hours. My door is always open. If you have concerns about your grade, I highly recommend that you come to see me as soon as possible. I am available to help you, but it is your responsibility to demonstrate to me that you want to improve your performance. If you cannot meet during office hours, feel free to email me to schedule another time. Note, however, that failure to appear during any meetings scheduled outside of my regular office hours will count against your participation grade.

Disabilities & Illnesses

Students with disabilities of any kind are strongly encouraged to notify me and the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities at the beginning of the semester, so the appropriate accommodations can be made. Please note that I am willing to work with students who contract illnesses, but it is the student’s responsibility to contact me as soon as they are aware of the illness to plan their coursework for the duration of the illness. I can help you during and immediately after any illnesses, but I cannot help you if you wait until the end of the semester to make up any missed work.

Academic Honesty

All Siena College policies relating to academic honesty will be upheld in this course. An outline of the college's Academic Integrity Policy is available at <https://www2.siena.edu/pages/2667.asp>. The use of Turnitin guarantees that I will catch any attempts at plagiarism. Please note that I have a “zero tolerance” policy towards cheating and plagiarism. It is your responsibility to know what constitutes plagiarism and cheating.

Assistance

Students requiring assistance with their writing may see me in my office or contact the Siena College [Writing Center](#). As you will not be allowed to rewrite any assignments, I suggest you take advantage of the resources available to help you with your writing before turning in any written assignments.

Laptop Policy

The current generation of college students grew up in the connected age; as such, computers are as much a part of your learning experience as textbooks and pens. However, the [most current research](#) on laptop and tablet use in classrooms suggests that significant majorities of students who use laptops in class spend more than 10 minutes in class on social networking sites and non-course related sites, that these types of activities can distract those around you, and that taking notes by hand is a far more effective strategy than using a laptop. As such, I require that any students who choose to use laptops must sit in the back half of the classroom. Students taking notes by hand may sit in the front half of the classroom, free from the distractions of their neighbors' favorite YouTube clips and cat photos.

A final word on the use of laptops: Most faculty members recognize the tension between wanting to allow laptops (which will help students develop the skills they will need to incorporate technology in their future careers) and wanting to ensure adequate delivery of course material. My policy is somewhat of a compromise. Note, however, that I retain the right to alter this policy and ban laptops from my classroom (exceptions would apply to those with relevant disabilities). My goal in this class is to ensure that you become better-informed consumers of political information and are able to participate in the political process. I will work with you to ensure that you are able to use your laptops effectively to that end and will, from time to time, encourage the use of laptops or even smart phones to retrieve relevant material in class, but students should be careful not to take this as a *carte blanche* to distract themselves and others.

Class Schedule[†]

- 01.13** Course Introduction
Readings: Course Syllabus (Blackboard)
- 01.15–01.22** The Discipline of Political Science; The Scientific Study of Politics
Readings: Ch. 1 of Roskin, Michael G., Robert L. Cord, James A. Medeiros, and Walter S. Jones. 2013. *Political Science: An Introduction, 13th ed.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson. (Blackboard)
King, Ronald F and Cosmin Gabriel Marian. 2008. “Defining Political Science: A Cross-National Survey.” *European Political Science* 7(2): 207–219. (Blackboard)
DiSalvo, Daniel. 2013. “The Politics of Studying Politics: Political Science Since the 1960s.” *Society* 50(2): 132–139. (Blackboard)
Labs: Berg & Lune, Ch. 3
Milgram, Stanley. 1963. “Behavioral Study of Obedience.” *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 67(4): 371–378. (Blackboard)
- 01.27–01.29** Choosing Topics & Finding Literature
Readings: Berg & Lune, pp. 26–38
Powner, Chs. 1 & 3
- 02.03–02.05** Defining Concepts & Crafting Theory
Readings: Berg & Lune, pp. 19–26
Powner, Ch. 2
Gerring, John. 1999. “What Makes a Concept Good? A Criterial Framework for Understanding Concept Formation in the Social Sciences.” *Polity* 31(3): 357–393. (Blackboard)
***** Research Proposal Due as Google Doc, 02.03**
- 02.10–02.12** What to Study: Choosing Cases
Readings: Berg & Lune, Ch. 10
Powner, Ch. 5
Allison, Graham T. 1969. “Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis.” *American Political Science Review* 63(3): 689–718. (Blackboard)
***** NIH Certification Due, 02.10**
- 02.17–02.19** How to Study: Content Analysis
Readings: Berg & Lune, Ch. 11
Powner, Ch. 6
Moen, Mathew C. 1988. “The Political Agenda of Ronald Reagan: A Content Analysis of the State of the Union Messages.” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 18(4): 775–785. (Blackboard)
***** Annotated Bibliography Due as Google Doc, 02.17**
- 02.24–02.26** NO CLASS—SPRING BREAK

[†]I reserve the right to alter the class schedule as I see fit.

- 03.03** Content Analysis (continued)
Moen, Mathew C. 1988. "The Political Agenda of Ronald Reagan: A Content Analysis of the State of the Union Messages." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 18(4): 775–785. (Blackboard)
- 03.05** Catch Up & Exam Review
- 03.10** **EXAM I**
- 03.12–03.17** Process Tracing
Readings: Bennett, Andrew. 2010. "Process Tracing and Causal Inference." In *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*, edited by Henry E. Brady and David Collier. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield. (Blackboard)
Brady, Henry E. 2010. "Data-Set Observations versus Causal Process Observations: The 2000 Presidential Election." In *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*, edited by Henry E. Brady and David Collier. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield. (Blackboard)
*****Content Analysis Exercise Due via Turnitin, 03.13 and as a hard copy in class, 03.17**
*****Literature Review Due as Google Doc, 03.17**
- 03.19–03.24** In-Depth Interviews
Readings: Berg & Lune, Ch. 4
*** and either ***
Post, Jerrold, Ehud Sprinzak, and Laurita Denny. 2003. "The Terrorists in Their Own Words: Interviews with 35 Incarcerated Middle Eastern Terrorists." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 15(1): 171–184. (Blackboard)
*** or ***
Strahan, Randall and Daniel J. Palazzolo. 2004. "The Gingrich Effect." *Political Science Quarterly* 119(1): 89–114. (Blackboard)
*****IRB Training Due in class, 03.24**
- 03.26–03.31** Ethnography
Readings: Berg & Lune, Ch. 6
Bayard de Volo, Lorraine and Edward Schatz. 2004. "From the Inside Out: Ethnographic Methods in Political Research." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 27(2): 267–271. (Blackboard)
Fenno, Richard E, Jr. 1977. "U.S. House Members in Their Constituencies: An Exploration." *American Political Science Review* 71(3): 883-917. (Blackboard)
*****Theory Section Due as Google Doc, 03.26**
*****Interview Exercise Due in class and via Turnitin, 03.31**
- 04.02** **NO CLASS—EASTER BREAK**
- 04.07** Focus Groups
Readings: Berg & Lune, Ch. 5
Kern, Montague and Marion Just. 1995. "The Focus Group Method, Political Advertising, Campaign News, and the Construction of Candidate Images." *Political Communication* 12(2): 127–145. (Blackboard)

- 04.09** Archival Research
Readings: Berg & Lune, Ch. 9
Additional reading(s) TBD
*****Methods Section Due as Google Doc, 04.09**
- 04.14** EXAM II
- 04.16** NO CLASS—OUT OF TOWN (Also, no labs this week)
- 04.21–04.23** Research Presentations (In Lecture and Lab)
- 04.27** FINAL PAPERS DUE IN MY OFFICE