

# POSC 182: POLITICAL RESEARCH II

FALL 2015

Dr. Jack D. Collens

[jcollens@siena.edu](mailto:jcollens@siena.edu)

*Course Time:* 11:25am – 12:50pm (*Lab: 1:00pm – 2:25pm*)  
Tuesday & Thursday  
101 Siena Hall

*Office Hours:* 2:30pm–4:30pm  
M, W, & Th  
321C Siena Hall

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This course is the second part of a two-course research methods sequence. It continues the work of the first course by providing a review of the basic process and components of political science research—research question, literature review, theory/hypotheses, methods, analysis—but then turns to new material, covering the quantitative (*i.e.*, statistics-based) approach to political science research. Students will learn basic probability theory, data sampling techniques, the concept of hypothesis testing, and descriptive and inferential statistics. Throughout the semester, students will work on an original research project using either observational or survey data available via the Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) or other online data repositories. Along the way, students will learn (in lab sessions) how to use the SPSS software package for data analysis, a software package used widely in the social sciences and many other disciplines. An important byproduct of the course is that students will develop data literacy, a skill which has proven benefits for graduate schools and employers in today's numbers-driven world.

## 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 (though you will need the hard copy of the companion workbook, as it comes with a disc for data). Both are often cheaper options than purchasing the books. Other required readings can be found on the course Blackboard page (a full list of additional, non-textbook readings can be found at the end of this syllabus).

Pollock III, Philip H. 2012. *The Essentials of Political Analysis, 4th ed.* Washington, DC: CQ Press.

Pollock III, Philip H. 2012. *An SPSS Companion to Political Analysis, 4th ed.* Washington, DC: CQ Press.<sup>1</sup>

Whelan, Charles. 2013. *Naked Statistics: Stripping the Dread from the Data.* New York: W.W. Norton & Co. ISBN: 978-0393347777.

Powner, Leanne C. 2015. *Empirical Research and Writing: A Political Science Student's Practical Guide.* Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press. ISBN: 978-1483369631.<sup>2</sup>

## 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.

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<sup>1</sup>Both the textbook and SPSS workbook can be purchased as a bundle with the ISBN of 978-1608719204.

<sup>2</sup>You should already have this from last semester. If not, please purchase it or use a friend's copy.

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
- Understand and utilize the research process and all its major steps: theory, hypothesis formulation, and empirical testing
- Learn basic statistical analysis techniques
- Master the SPSS software package for quantitative data 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. I will forgive up to two unexcused absences per student. **For each unexcused absence beyond the permitted two, students will lose two full grade points from their final course grade** (*i.e.*, a 91 becomes an 89 if the student has missed three classes without a valid excuse). **This policy applies both to lectures and labs.**

### *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 15 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 questions, problem sets, and/or 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 quantitative research approaches. You will be introduced to—and will use—software that has been designed for the analysis of quantitative data (SPSS). Students should bring the Pollock workbook (*An SPSS Companion to Political Analysis*) as well as the accompanying disc to each lab session. **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 multiple regression 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 must develop research questions that can be explored using the datasets provided (more on this in the first week of classes). Students will submit the project according to the following schedule:

1. **Research Proposals (Due 09.22):** 2–3 pages describing the research question, data used, and any preliminary literature students may have collected
2. **Literature Review, Theory, and Research Design Sections (Due 11.03):** Also called the “front matter,” this includes a minimum of 10 pages (with a minimum of 10 *scholarly* sources) reviewing the relevant literature on your topic, discussing your theory, clearly stating your hypothesis/hypotheses, discussing the dataset, and listing the variables you intend to explore as dependent/independent variables
3. **Preliminary Results Presentations (Due 12.01–12.03):** A roughly 8-minute presentation (with slides) reviewing your question, literature, theory, data, and preliminary results
4. **Final Papers (Due 12.16):** A minimum of 15 pages, with a cover page, an abstract page, an introduction, your revised “front matter” sections, the data analysis and discussion of results, a conclusion, and works cited

Students must submit each component on the due dates—late submissions will result in a 10-point deduction from the final research paper grade. Failure to submit will result in a 30-point deduction from the final research paper. The final draft is due on **December 16** in my office and on Turnitin and must include all required components listed above. Additional grading rubric will be provided prior to the Thanksgiving 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). Full details on the assignments will be made available on Blackboard at least two weeks before the deadline. These homework assignments include:

1. **Measurement Assignment (Due 09.29):** Students will critique the validity and reliability of a measurement used in a published article. Responses must be typed and submitted both as a hard copy and electronically via Turnitin by the beginning of class. The expected length is 2–3 pages, double-spaced.
2. **Descriptive Statistics Assignment (Due 10.27):** Students will complete a problem set requiring the calculation of means, medians, standard deviations, and probability distributions. Responses must be *hand-written* and each step in the calculation must be shown.
3. **Replication Assignment (Due 11.10):** Students will replicate the difference in proportions test found in Table 3, rows 1 & 2 of Kahn and Goldenberg (1991) and the  $\chi^2$  test found in Table 3 of Davis, Haire and Songer (1993). Responses must be *hand-written* and each step in the calculation must be shown.
4. **Multiple Regression Assignment (Due 12.01):** Students will (1) estimate a multiple regression model using SPSS; (2) report (in a table) the coefficients, standard errors, p-values, N, and  $R^2$ ; and (3) discuss the findings. Responses must be typed and submitted both as a hard copy and electronically via Turnitin by the beginning of class. The expected length is 2–3 pages, double-spaced, including the results table.

### 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
Participation	15 percent
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100 percent</b>

### Availability

The best way to contact me is via email. Please include the course number in your subject line (“POSC 182”). 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.

## Important Deadlines

### Homework Deadlines

Assignment	Deadline
Measurement Assignment	09.29.2015
Descriptive Statistics Assignment	10.27.2015
Replication - $\chi^2$ & Difference in proportions	11.10.2015
Multiple Regression Assignment	12.01.2015

### Final Project Deadlines

Component	Deadline
Proposal	09.22.2015
Literature Review, Theory, & Research Design	11.03.2015
Presentations	12.08-12.10
Final Paper Deadline	12.16.2015

## Class Schedule<sup>†</sup>

Date	Topics	Reading(s)	Due
<b>09.08.2015</b> <b>09.10.2015</b>	Introduction & Research Question Reviewed Lit. Review & Theory, Reviewed	[1] Syllabus [2] Powner, Ch. 1 Powner, Chs. 2 & 3	
<b>09.15.2015</b> <b>09.17.2015</b>	Measurement & Operationalization Measurement & Operationalization	Pollock, Chs. 1 & 2 McDonald and Popkin (2001)	
<b>09.22.2015</b> <b>09.24.2015</b>	Sampling Sampling	Johnson and Reynolds (2012, Ch. 7) Geddes (1990)	Proposal
<b>09.29.2015</b> <b>10.01.2015</b>	Experimental Designs Experimental Designs	Pollock, Ch. 4 Druckman (2001)	HW1
<b>10.06.2015</b> <b>10.08.2015</b>	Basic Probability Basic Probability	Wheelan, Ch. 5 Wheelan, Chs. 5 <sup>1/2</sup> & 6	
<b>10.13.2015</b> <b>10.15.2015</b>	Midterm Exam Review *****MIDTERM EXAM*****		
<b>10.20.2015</b> <b>10.22.2015</b>	Descriptive Statistics Descriptive Statistics	Wheelan, Ch. 2 Jacobson (2013)	
<b>10.27.2015</b> <b>10.29.2015</b>	Logic of Statistical Inference Logic of Statistical Inference	Wheelan, Chs. 8 & 9 Pollock, Ch. 6	HW2

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<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Reading(s)</b>	<b>Due</b>
<b>11.03.2015</b>	Tests of Association	[1] Pollock, Ch. 7	Front Matter
<b>11.05.2015</b>	Tests of Association	[2] Kahn and Goldenberg (1991) Davis, Haire and Songer (1993)	
<b>11.10.2015</b>	Correlation & Bivariate Regression	[1] Pollock, pp. 182–199	HW3
<b>11.12.2015</b>	Correlation & Bivariate Regression	[2] Wheelan, Ch. 11 Segal and Cover (1989)	
<b>11.17.2015</b>	Multiple Regression	[1] Pollock, pp. 199–206	
<b>11.19.2015</b>	Multiple Regression	[2] Wheelan, Ch. 12 Jacobsmeier and Lewis (2013)	
<b>11.24.2015</b>	No Class		
<b>11.26.2015</b>	<b>THANKSGIVING BREAK</b>		
<b>12.01.2015</b>	Final Exam Review	[None]	HW4
<b>12.03.2015</b>	<b>*****FINAL EXAM*****</b>		
<b>12.08.2015</b>	Presentations		
<b>12.10.2015</b>	Presentations		
<b>12.16.2015</b>	<b>*****Final Papers Due*****</b>		

<sup>†</sup> *Note that I reserve the right to alter the course's schedule and all deadlines as I see fit.*

## Other Readings

- Davis, Sue, Susan Haire and Donald R. Songer. 1993. "Voting Behavior and Gender on the U.S. Courts of Appeals." *Judicature* 77(3):129–133.
- Druckman, James N. 2001. "The Implications of Framing Effects for Citizen Competence." *Political Behavior* 23(3):225–256.
- Geddes, Barbara. 1990. "How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics." *Political Analysis* 2(1):131–150.
- Jacobsmeier, Matthew L. and Daniel C. Lewis. 2013. "Barking Up the Wrong Tree: Why Bo Didn't Fetch Many Votes for Barack Obama in 2012." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 46(1):49–59.
- Jacobson, Gary C. 2013. "Partisan Polarization in American Politics: A Background Paper." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 43(4):688–708.
- Johnson, Janet Buttolph and H. T. Reynolds. 2012. *Political Science Research Methods*. 7th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE/CQ Press.
- Kahn, Kim Fridkin and Edie N. Goldenberg. 1991. "Women Candidates in the News: An Examination of Gender Differences in U.S. Senate Campaign Coverage." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 55(2):180–199.
- McDonald, Michael P. and Samuel L. Popkin. 2001. "The Myth of the Vanishing Voter." *The American Political Science Review* 95(4):963–974.
- Segal, Jeffrey A. and Albert D. Cover. 1989. "Ideological Values and the Votes of U.S. Supreme Court Justices." *The American Political Science Review* 83(2):557–565.