Foundations of Political Analysis
POL 601

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Class meets: T/TR, 1:15-2:35 pm, HRN 202

Office hours: T/TR, 2:45-4:00 pm or by appointment. Please book meetings at `https://rachelblum.youcanbook.me/`

1 Course Description

Foundations of Political Analysis is one of the core courses in the Political Science M.A. program. Designed to complement the skills learned in POL 603 and POL 604 (the statistical methods sequence), POL 601 equips students to craft their own research projects, make informed decisions about how to study political questions, and connect their interests to broader areas of inquiry in the discipline of political science. The course will focus on three areas. First, students will gain a basic understanding of the enterprise of political science, and how it relates to social science more generally. In the second part of the course, students will examine literature in the field to understand the questions that political science equips us to answer. Finally, students will learn to identify the best methodological tools to answer different political questions. Students will apply this knowledge during the semester through various assignments, culminating in a guided draft of their final project.

2 Student Learning Outcomes

This course will further the learning outcomes for MA students in Political Science in the following ways:

1. Through course readings and discussions, students learn to identify and apply methodology, design and analysis for a problem and understand ethical components of research choices.

2. Through course readings, discussions, and written assignments, students will learn to apply political science knowledge to contemporary issues and problems and identify and evaluate alternative political science-based solutions.

3. Students may draw on course material to formulate, propose and advocate political science-based solutions to contemporary political issues and problems.

4. Course readings and assignments will provide students with introductory skills to conduct and communicate independent, professional-level investigations into sub-disciplinary problems and contribute to knowledge base.

Course Policies

The following is a summary. More detailed explanation of policies are below.

Students are expected to:

- Come to every class prepared to actively discuss and engage in the readings and participate in discussions.

- Turn in assignments on time.

- Check email and read the Canvas site frequently.

In return, you can expect that I will:

- Foster an atmosphere where discussion-based learning can occur.

- Show an interest in your learning, and respect your opinions.

- Give timely feedback on your work.

- Check email and read the Canvas site frequently.

2.1   Absences

The Student Handbook states, "Every student is expected to attend every class session for which the student is duly registered." (Part VII, Section 01.701).

- Absences: The University recognizes a limited number of reasons for absences. These include things like illness, athletic events, serious family emergencies, jury duty, pregnancy, military service, etc. In accordance with University policy (Part VII, Section 01.701.B), students must give written notice to the instructor within the first two weeks of class of a religious observance, participation in athletic events, or other academic-related group activities that prohibit class attendance.

- Turning in assignments: Exceptions to deadlines may be made for illness or serious emergencies at the discretion of the professor. In all other circumstances, students are responsible for readings and assignments on their due date even if that student misses class.

- Inclement weather/snow: In the event of inclement weather preventing me from reaching campus, we will hold our class sessions online via Canvas. I will make slides and a lecture available, and will enable discussion via chatroom. Each student will be required to post at least one substantive comment in the class chatroom on these days. This will not impact assignment due dates.

2.2   Academic Dishonesty

Cheating, plagiarism, and any form of academic dishonesty in any portion of the aca- demic work for a course will not be tolerated and shall be grounds for awarding a grade of Withdrawal Academic Dishonesty (W(AD)) for the entire course. A W(AD) is calculated as an F in your grade point average.

Assignment Due Dates

All written assignments must be turned in at the time specified. Late assignments will not be accepted, even if the assignment is turned in one minute past the deadline.

Classroom Conduct

- Cellular Phones: My expectation is that you will turn your phone off and place it in a bag or otherwise out of view during class time.

- Laptop computers/tablets: My expectation is that you will not bring these to class, or will keep them in a bag. If you will need computers for a class activity, I will let you know in advance.

- Engagement and Civility: My expectation is that students will be highly engaged and active in our learning environment. While politics is at times a contentious and controversial subject, I expect students to maintain the highest level of civility and respect to one another and to the professor in the class regardless of differences of opinions.

Emails

- You are responsible for reading and following any instructions I send via email/Canvas.

- You are encouraged to email with questions, but follow this checklist first:
    - If your question can be answered by the syllabus, a classmate, the university's resources (IT, library, etc.), or google, do not email me until you have exhausted other options. Otherwise, I may not respond.
    - Only email me with reasonable and appropriate requests. E.g. a request for a recommendation with adequate time is reasonable; a request to print your paper is not.

– Although I attempt to respond quickly, please allow at least two business days for response.

- Be professional and courteous in your emails. Address me by my correct title (Dr. Blum or Professor Blum), use complete sentences, and keep your request clear and concise.

Grades

Grading System

- A range (90-100): Achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.

- B range (80-89): Achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.

- C range (70-79): Achievement that meets course requirements in every respect.

- D range (60-69): Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements.

- F (0-59): Represents failure (or no credit) and signifies that the work was either (1) completed but at a level of achievement that is not worthy of credit of (2) was not completed.

Any grading disputes must be made in writing within 48 hours of receiving the grade.

3 Graded Components

- Class participation: 10%

- Discussion posts and questions: 15%

- Book review: 15%

- Research proposal: 20%

- Project presentation: 10%

- Final project draft: 30%

Class Participation: 10%

This includes attendance, participation in class discussions, participation in in-class activities, and participation in office hours. A combination of these factors will determine this final component of your participation grade.

Discussion posts and questions: 15%

Before most classes, discussion posts or questions will be due on Canvas. For classes with readings, I will often require discussion questions (i.e. 1-2 thoughtful questions on the Canvas discussion board prior to each class session). Occasionally, I will ask you to respond to a prompt on Canvas instead (discussion posts). Detailed instructions will be given on Canvas.

Book review (15%)

I will provide suggestions for additional reading on various topics based on your final project topics. You will write a two-page summary of the book's argument (instructions on Canvas) and briefly present it to the class.

Research Proposal (20%)

Throughout class, I will guide you through the incremental crafting of research proposals which will provide the foundation for your final MA project (a draft of which is your final project for this class). We will also workshop these in class. Each of the four parts will be worth 5% of your final grade. These are:

- Part I: Research topic and question (due Oct. 4)

- Part II: Ideal Design (due Oct. 25)

- Part III: Literature Review (due Nov. 8)

- Part IV: Research Design (due Nov. 27)

Project Presentation (10%)

Before your final draft is due, we will devote two class periods to student presentations. This will ensure that you develop your argument thoroughly, give you all the opportunity to provide each other with feedback, and give you practice in scholarly presentations.

Project Final Draft (30%)

The main assignment of the course is a draft of your MA final project. We will work towards this sequentially via your research proposal. This will consist in identifying and stating a research question you think has not been fully answered, choosing a research design, summarizing and analyzing key literature on that question, and offering suggestions for future directions. More instructions will be posted on Canvas. The projects will be due at the time of the final exam.

4 Schedule

- *All readings should be completed by the assigned date.*

- *All readings are on Canvas unless otherwise indicated.*

- *As we go through the semester, occasional changes to the schedule may be necessary. I will both discuss these in class and publish these on Canvas in advance.*

Module 1: Defining and Political Science

August 28: Finding examples of political science (CLASS WILL NOT MEET)
Online discussion post (more instructions on Canvas)

August 30: Engaging with examples of political science (CLASS WILL NOT MEET)
Online replies to Tuesday's discussion posts (more instructions on Canvas)

September 4: What is social science?
Post discussion questions on Canvas
Readings on Canvas (excerpts from Durkheim and Geertz)

Septmber 6: Can social science be neutral?
Post discussion questions on Canvas
Readings on Canvas (excerpts from Taylor and Weber)

September 11: What is political science?
Post discussion questions on Canvas
Readings on Canvas (Bond; King)

September 13: What makes people do things?
Post discussion questions on Canvas
Readings on Canvas (Sen; Alford, Funk and Hibbing; Jennings and Niemi; Schuessler)

September 18: Research Design Part I: Political Science design
Post discussion replies on Canvas
Readings on Canvas (Duke: Writing in Political Science; Social Science Research Methods (Foundations); Kirschner (How to Write); Green (How to Read)

September 20: Research Design Part II: Dissecting articles
In-class activity

September 25: Research Design Part III: Transform questions
In-class activity

Module 2: Answering Political Questions

September 27: Modes of Inference
Post discussion questions on Canvas
Readings on Canvas (Rothman et al.; Geber et al.; Collier and Mahon; McDermott; Morton and Williams

October 2: Types of Data
Read
In class activity

October 4: Observational Studies 1: Behavior
Proposal Part I due on Canvas by class time
Post discussion questions on Canvas
Readings on Canvas (Bartels; Converse)

October 9: Observational Studies 2: Public Opinion
Post discussion questions on Canvas
Readings on Canvas (Abramowitz and Saunders; Druckman et al.)

October 11: Observational Studies 3: Case studies
Post discussion questions on Canvas
Readings on Canvas (Merolla et al.; Gerring; Collier; Lustick)

October 16: Structural Dynamics 1: Institutions
Post discussion questions on Canvas
Readings on Canvas (Bailey et al.; Lebo et al.; Nicholson et al.

October 18: Structural Dynamics 2: Relationships
Post discussion questions on Canvas
Readings on Canvas (Koger et al; Armingeon & Cranmer (see `http://www.skylercranmer.net/research-2` for other IR networks).

October 23: Structural Dynamics 3: Text-as-data
Post discussion questions on Canvas
Readings on Canvas (Blum; Grimmer; Hopkins)

Module 3: Leveraging Methodological Tools

October 25: Research Design Part IV: Designing an ideal analysis
In-class activity
Proposal Part II due by Class

October 30: Book Reviews Day 1

November 1: Book Reviews Day 2

November 6: Literature Review Design
In-class activity
Readings on Canvas

November 8: Workshopping Research Proposals
Proposal Part III Due by Class (bring to class)

November 13: Common types of methods and their assumptions
Post discussion questions on Canvas
Readings on Canvas (Grimmer; King; Adcock and Collier)

November 15: Identifying correct methods
In-class activity

November 20: How to present compelling results
Post discussion questions on Canvas
Readings on Canvas (King et al.; Tufte)

November 22: NO CLASS (THANKSGIVING

November 27: Choosing your presentation method
Proposal Part IV Due by Class (bring to class)
Workshop

November 29: Wrap-up

December 4: Class presentations day 1

December 6: Class presentations day 2
December 13: Final Paper Due via Canvas by 12:45 pm