Political Science 51: Scientific Study of Politics
T-Th, 10:30-11:50
Rock Hall

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Course Description
Why are you here? Apart from the answer, "this is a required class," many of you probably do not have a much better response than this. Nevertheless, it is almost surely the case that all of you have, from time to time, thought about politics and political *data*. Understanding politics—really understanding politics—requires more than a simple cursory examination of the local newspaper, your favorite blog, social media, or a preferred cable news outlet. In this class, we are going to think about analyzing politics, about how political scientists think about the world. To that end, we are going to concern ourselves with the theory and method of contemporary political analysis.

Additionally, we will concern ourselves with measurement of theoretical concepts and hypothesis testing. To that end, it will be necessary to think about working with data. How do we collect data, display it in a useful way? How do test for associations (or relationships) between two or more political variables? How do we evaluate causal claims and how might we *make* causal claims? These are the precise questions this class is concerned with. To successfully complete this class, you will be asked to complete several reading assignments as well as finish two problem sets. Further, there is a project associated with the 2018 Midterm elections. In class and in a separate detailed document, I will discuss this assignment. Be warned, the topics in this class will demand careful attention to the reading and to lectures. Further, in the quarter, you will be asked to work with political data and to perform statistical analyses. In short, this course is partially a statistics course but in reality, it is *not* fundamentally a statistics course: there are no proofs and technical details of some concepts will be kept to a minimum. If you have a positive attitude, work hard, and **come to class and TA sections,** you will most likely succeed.

Course Requirements
The intent of this course is to give you some exposure to the systematic study of politics and political data. To that end, you will be asked to complete a number of reading assignments from the principal text as well as some outside readings. Apart from readings, I'm going to insist you be prepared to discuss some of the assigned readings both in the main lecture and in your break-out discussion groups. Discussion and participation are one of the main ways we can

gauge whether or not you are "getting" the material. Of course, reading is not the only task you will need to do. I'm going to assign you two problem sets over the course of the quarter; these problem sets will take time to complete and if you wait until the last minute, there is no way you will succeed. There will be two exams, a midterm and final exam. The final is not comprehensive; however, it is worth more points because more information will be covered on the final compared to the midterm. Finally, because attendance to discussion sections are vital for success, I'm leaving a portion of your grade to be determined by the teaching assistants. The breakdown of your grade goes as follows:

Problem Set 1: 15 percent
Problem Set 2: 15 percent
Midterm Exam: 20 percent
Final Exam: 30 percent
2018 Midterm Assignment: 10 percent
T.A. Evaluations: 10 percent

To successfully complete this course (as with any course), you will need to take it seriously. I will expect high quality work, regular attendance to class, meaningful participation in lectures and discussions, and courteousness and decorum in both lecture and discussion. If your performance is subpar, if you miss deadlines, or if you miss class, your grade will suffer.

Course Policies
All exams must be taken at the time prescribed in the syllabus. Homework and problem sets are due on the date given to you in class. Late problem sets will be docked 10 percent for every day turned in late. Problem sets that are e-mailed to me or to the teaching assistants will **not be accepted** unless otherwise noted and authorized by me. In saying problem sets will not be accepted, this means you will receive a grade of 0 on that particular problem set. You are also required to become familiar with the UC Davis Code of Academic Conduct (http://sja.ucdavis.edu/cac.html). Cheating, plagiarism, and harassment in any form will not be tolerated. Do not do these things. **Also, in lecture and in discussions, cell phones, notebook computers and iPads must be turned off.** Usage of cell phones (or any other personal communication devices, including notebook computers and iPads) in class may affect your participation grade. Usage of cell phones (or any other personal communication devices, include notebook computers and iPads) during exams will be viewed as possible evidence of cheating. Use of personal computers or other similar devices (iPads, etc.) are not permitted in class (during lectures) unless I receive written permission from a UC-Davis authority granting permission to use such devices. The only exception to this policy is that in some class sessions, we will do some in-class exercises requiring the use of a computer. In that context, you will need to bring your computer to class. On exams, if the use of a calculator is deemed necessary, you must use a simple, cheap, non-programmable calculator. Use of cell phones or other devices permitting data storage will not be permitted and you will be asked to cease using such devices during the exam. All exams will require a blue book that you must provide. All assignments, unless otherwise stated, must be word-processed using standard fonts and margins. Nonstandard fonts (too large) and margins (too large) will result in grade reduction.

With respect to students with disabilities, students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation.

Readings
There is one book for this class: Deborah J. Rumsey's *Statistics for Dummies* (2 ed).

Software
This course is *not* a statistics course; however, we cover an extensive amount statistical material in this class. As such, you will need to learn to use a software package. The package you will learn is the package known as **R.** **R** is an open-source programming language and is the most powerful statistical computing environment on the planet. If you are unfamiliar with statistics and object-oriented languages, you will be intimidated at the start. To succeed in this class, will have to master the basics of **R.** You can access **R** here: http://cran.us.r-project.org/. You will need to determine what is the proper file to download, but this should be straightforward. To interface with **R** you will want to install an Integrated Development Environment (IDE). There are a number of IDEs available for **R,** perhaps the best being **RStudio**. You can install **RStudio** by accessing: http://www.rstudio.com/. It is crucial you install the **R** statistical program including **R Studio** on your computers (a separate e-mail on this was sent and will be resent).

Course Itinterary
Please be prepared in advance of class! Readings with no URL given (and that are not from the books) are available on Canvas.

September 27: Course Overview
Readings:
Why should you learn R?
https://www.r-bloggers.com/why-you-should-learn-r-first-for-data-science/

October 2: Core Concepts of Research: What's *y*? What's *x*?
Readings:
1. Rumsey, Chapters 1,4

October 4: R Day (Bring Computers)

October 9-11: Causal Inference: What is it?
Readings:
1. Rumsey, Chapter 17

October 16-18: How do experiments work?
Readings:
1. Rumsey, Chapter 17

2. Jones et al. (forthcoming) “Latina/o Anxiety about Deportation in a Climate of Threat.” (On Canvas)

October 23: Descriptive Measures of Data
Readings:
1. Rumsey, Chapter 5.

October 25: Visual Displays of Quantitative Data
Readings:
1. Rumsey, Chapters 6-7.
2. Imai, Chapter 3 (Selected Parts!)

October 30: R Day (Bring Computers)
Readings:
1. Rumsey, Chapter 14

November 1: MIDTERM EXAM

November 6: Measurement and Survey Data
Readings:
1. Rumsey, Chapter 16

November 8: What can we infer from our data?
Readings:
1. Rumsey, Chapters 9-11

November 13: More on inference
Readings:
1. Rumsey, Chapters 12-13, 15.

November 15: Correlation and Regression
Readings:
1. Rumsey, Chapter 18

November 20: R Day (Bring Computers)

November 27-December 4: Correlation and Regression
Readings:
1. Rumsey, Chapter 18

December 6: R Day (Bring Computers)

December 12: FINAL EXAM (Wednesday, 1-3 PM)