

Occidental College

Fall 2022 Course Evaluations

Course: POLS300_0: Research Meth/Pols & Pub Pol

Instructor: Isaac Hale *

1 - 1. How would you describe your level of engagement in this course? How did you engage in class? For example: Did you come to class prepared? Did you seek help from the instructor, peers, or other supports when needed?

Response Rate 15/18 (83.33%)

- I was very engaged because it was super interesting
- Pretty engaged, came to class prepared and participated a lot.
- The level of engagement in this class was one of the best amongst all my courses this semester. Professor Hale was super engaging and made it a comfortable space to speak up.
- I feel like I was engaged in this class. I came prepared, and went to office hours when needed.
- I worked hard & did the homework, came to class prepared, and participated. Went to office hours when I needed help.
- I thought the course was very engaging and was a good balance between lecture, videos, and class participation. I was easily able to get my questions answered through both the professor's office hours and the TA's office hours.
- I really enjoyed this course! I was definitely very nervous about this course because it was a 300s level course and I have only ever take POLS 101. With that being said I would honestly take this course again if my schedule allowed it! I really enjoyed the lecture style of the class and Stata days on Fridays. Professor Hale was very accessible throughout the semester (which I definitely needed during our Poster Project) and I always laughed a lot during class.
- Very engaged. Professor used reading assignments for class each day that were digestible and understandable. When I did not understand something, I went to office hours from either Professor Hale or our TA, which were held often, especially when we had a big assignment due. Professor also made help from our peers accessible through a class Discord.
- I was very engaged. I came to class ready to LEARN. This course was difficult for me, so I came to office hours often to get help, where Professor Hale was very helpful.
- I came to class prepared and sought a lot of help from Professor Hale, I went to office hours more for this class than I do other classes and he was very helpful, I had to engage quite a bit in this class if I wanted to pass because Research Methods is not in my area of expertise.
- I came to class prepared, took notes, and regularly asked/answered questions in class. I also attended both Professor Hale's and Codey Carr's office hours multiple times.
- The readings were all very engaging (as far as statistics goes) so I came to class having read everything. I also went to office hours many times throughout the semester.
- I was very engaged and came to office hours at least once every other week. I came to class prepared and had a great time.
- I don't know why but I have always been afraid of speaking in class fearing that I'm going to say something and it's wrong, and it happened a lot in this class considering that we deal with statistics, data, and analysis. I sought help from Professor Hale during office hours and he set up a discord channel to ask other peers when we were in need of help -- which I did not find particularly useful. Office hours yes, discord no.
- I was in class prepared, though, aside from bringing my laptop I almost didn't feel I needed to a lot of the time as Professor Hale would walk us through all of the concepts from the reading and provided extra support over email and in office hours.

2 - 2. How did this course influence, change, or help shape your understanding of the subject matter?

Response Rate 15/18 (83.33%)

- It taught me a lot about how we interpret data
- I had already taken a research methods class (for the psych major), but this class did a really good job at making concepts comprehensible and easy to understand.
- I was definitely intimidated by the class when I first registered, but it ended up being one of my favorite classes due to my level of understanding and it's helped me like statistics a lot more.
- I learned a lot about statistics that I did not think I would learn about before coming into this class. It was very helpful.
- Know how to use stata and have basic understanding of some basic statistics concepts
- I thought that the course gave me an alternate perspective on statistics. I had previously take statistics and computer science courses, however I had not mixed these two subjects with politics. I was able to understand the concepts more intuitively, without having to overcome any large learning curves.
- I honestly have become a lot more interested in coding since the start of this class. Professor Hale made it seem like an incredibly approachable and applicable course of study while also not overwhelming us with lofty expectations of us already having coding experience.
- It gave me understanding of research methods when I had no understanding prior to taking this course. We learned not just about research methods, but also about the ethics behind them and how methods of research are differing. It was also very useful when thinking about my Comp.
- I have a way better understanding of stats now, and how they work. I feel like I understand how stats can be manipulated to push a viewpoint one way or another.
- I learned so much about polling that I did not know before, and the code behind it. I guess I can also say I learned that I will never be able to learn code because that was so hard, but I was able to do it enough to get through the course.
- This course taught me a lot about how to read, analyze, and conduct studies in the field of political science. It also helped me understand a lot of rationale for arguments made in the field, such as why it's so hard to conduct controlled experiments and why case studies are so important.
- I think that this course did a good job of re-introducing me to many topics I haven't had to think about in a few years, and then expanding on them. I had no previous knowledge about Stata and many of the statistical methods we talked about towards the end of class but I feel much more confident in those subjects now.
- Well I did not know anything about statistics beforehand except whatever I learned in middle school math so it helped me learn about statistics and the incredibly valuable skill of using the program Stata. It was also very helpful to dive into the data finding process, this will most likely be particularly useful for comps, and learn about the complexities of research design.
- I was very uncomfortable with statistics and now I feel like I understand them better. I am by no means an expert but I feel like I definitely gained some knowledge.
- I didn't know much about statistics before taking this class, and now I have the knowledge to interpret political polls that may have otherwise improperly shifted my opinion.

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3 - 3. What skills or capacities did you expect to gain from this course? How and to what extent did the course help you to develop those skills or capacities?

Response Rate 15/18 (83.33%)

- Stata knowledge, and yes this course expanded my knowledge on the subject. I also expected to learn more about statistical analysis. I believe that this was achieved.
- I expected to learn how to code data in a new program, and this course really helped me develop those skills.
- I learned how to use Stata, which is amazing. Learning about statistics has better prepared me for the classes I take in ECON as well.
- I learned a lot about Stata, and a general overview of statistics from a Politics perspective.
- To be honest, I expected the course to get a bit more advanced with regards to the statistics and stata techniques we covered. I have a strong basic understanding of both, but I felt that it was possible to move much faster and cover more material.
- I expected to have an increased knowledge in statistics, coding, and how to apply statistics to politics in a non-misleading way. I developed these skills to a great extent.
- I definitely would love to keep using and learning about Stata! I really enjoyed our coding days and felt like being knowledgeable with Stata software would be a very useful skill for my future career aspirations. I also would do more research in the future about different graph fallacies in the media and misinterpretations of graph -- which I found to be incredibly intriguing.
- I expected to learn how to code with Stata as well as generally learning about research methods, but I never anticipated that I would learn as much coding as I actually did in this course. I had no prior knowledge of coding and that made me anxious going into this course at the start of the semester, but Professor Hale made it very easy to understand and was very helpful and accessible throughout the course.
- I gained the ability to use Stata.
- I had no idea what to expect coming into this course, I know that every politics major says it is the worst class in the major to take, I agree with that, but I did not know what it would be about. I definitely developed my understanding of polls at every level, whether that is nation or state or anything else. I also had no idea about the CLT and I learned quite a bit regarding that and other math related topics.
- I expected to learn how to compile data, but I learned much more than just that. I feel that I have gained many skills from this class that will help me both with my degree in politics and in everyday life.
- Using stata and being able to make regressions and t-tests etc were some of the skills I gained from this course. I think I honestly learned more than I expected to at the beginning of class.
- The skills I learned are stated above, and the course helped me develop them through forcing me to do them. Force sounds negative, but I mean it in a kind way.
- I expected to learn how to interpret graphs. I'm still not entirely confident, but I'm a politics major and I'm sure that it will help me for the duration of my time at Oxy, especially for Comps.
- I learned how to use stata to create/analyze graphs. I'm not completely comfortable with the programming language by any means, though I think I now have the base understanding and ability to use it for data analysis and graph creation in the future.

4 - 4. What aspects/features of the instruction were particularly effective or ineffective? What aspects/features of the course facilitated or impeded your learning? For example: How well did the professor structure class periods (e.g., discussion facilitation, group work, in-class exercises, lectures, handouts, etc), reading questions, assignments, exams, community-based work, field work, laboratory work, studio work, etc.?

Response Rate 15/18 (83.33%)

- Lectures were very engaging. Office hours were super helpful. In class time to work on the poster was also very helpful.
- Nothing.
- Although the class was mostly lecture-based, it didn't feel like it and it wasn't extremely boring like most lectures tend to be. The use of memes and videos were a nice touch to get the class moving.
- Prof. Hale was very open to suggestions on how to make the big projects more manageable both in content and due date wise. Homework was manageable and I never felt behind or lost.
- Lectures were informative and helpful, and assignments were helpful to reinforce the material we worked on in class. Office hours were an especially helpful resource, as Professor Hale was always eager to be available and work through concepts/ideas.
- I thought that the amount of homework was very manageable and I thought I had ample time to complete the final project. The lecture period was always very engaging and class participation was always encouraged. We didn't have very much group work, but I did not think this negatively impacted the course.
- I enjoyed the structure of class (2 days lectures and 1 day coding/interactive) and found all the information we learned to be incredibly relevant. Professor Hale was always on time to class with a witty comment or two which always made the class engaging and eventful. Because Professor Hale is a somewhat new/young professor, he was able to better relate to the stresses of college life and expectations that other professors might have for us. This understanding helped create an environment that made me want to go to class, feel productive both in and out of class, and feel supported throughout the semester.
- Class periods were extremely effective; Professor taught with the help of slides that were later posted to Moodle (which was very nice because sometimes I missed information when handwriting my notes). I also really enjoyed having programming days on Fridays for us to have in-class exercises.
- Lectures were very engaging. However, I easily found myself distracted and lost during programming days, which made me struggle with Stata later on. Having Codey's extra office hours really helped as well bc if I was too embarrassed to ask Hale about it I could go to Codey.
- I think the periods were structured well, it was generally a powerpoint presentation for MW and then on Friday we had a programming lab, the readings were good, I think Naked Statistics was a great book and made the content easier to swallow. The assignments directly related to the end goal which was huge and super helpful. I'm not sure I would say anything was ineffective, I think the course generally was designed and executed as effective as can be for a subject I do not particularly enjoy.
- Professor Hale's was incredibly effective at engaging students in the material, whether it was through posing questions that made us think hard or showing us real life applications of what we were learning. It was impressive the extent that he was able to make otherwise dense material so easily digestible for students.
- I thought to the problem sets was very helpful for getting to know how stata worked. I think it was effective to have stata learning days on Friday so we had some structure and knew what to expect. I also think it was very effective to spread out the work for our big projects throughout the semester. It made it way more manageable!
- Lectures, problem sets, and the specific checkpoints of the research assignment were all very useful. The assignments being available on Moodle with rubrics and having examples for our final project were both immensely helpful. Also, having a clear and up to date syllabus for the class helped. I would say that I would have liked to have some sort of quiz or test on the statistics material at some point, worth no more than say 10% of our grade, because while I did all the readings I do not feel as though the information stuck with as well as it would have with a test. Oh I also think that the files in the shared folder for the programming days should be labeled by topic as well as week (ex. Week 9 - Multivariate Regression) so one does not have to click through all of them to find specific material.
- N/A
- The layout of the slides and pace of content was very engaging. Along with this, the rule of not having laptops for notes made lectures much less distracting and engaging for the entire class.

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5 - 5. What aspects of the course or instruction helped or hindered the creation of an inclusive learning environment that is responsive to, and promotes the success of, a diverse group of students?

Response Rate 13/18 (72.22%)

- Everyone participated, everyone was engaged.
- Prof. Hale's coding days really helped because we all got individual experiences in learning how to code in stata. Also his use of memes both added humor to the subject but also gave us new ways to understand the course as well.
- I guess I would've liked to meet more of my classmates and make more connections through our sessions.
- Prof. Hale did a good job trying to keep the whole class engaged and entertained and his lectures were well done.
- Fun, welcoming, inclusive environment. Encouraged participation and learning.
- I thought that the course encouraged an inclusive learning environment. We were all encouraged to participate during the lecture and offer our diverse perspectives.
- It was very helpful learning about how research methods may differ and particularly about the role that the researcher plays when conducting research, especially for those of us that are people of color conducting research as our race may play a part when conducting interviews, for example.
- The floor was always open to ask questions, make comments, etc. I think the environment was inclusive.
- Professor Hale's dedication to every student's success helped create an inclusive learning environment. He made sure that everyone was on the same page and encouraged us to attend his office hours if we needed additional help.
- I thought that the presenting was very engaging. The professor was very down to earth and funny. He explained things well and was always happy to answer any questions we had. He also made himself available as much as possible and let us come to his office hours for a different class if we were having trouble and couldn't make his regular ones.
- Nothing I can think of.
- I went to office hours a lot and I felt that when I was there and didn't understand a concept about Stata, professor Hale was not entirely friendly. He seemed frustrated about the fact that I didn't understand at times and to some degree, it made me feel dumb. Coding is hard and even though he takes all of his students through every step of the learning process, some people are just bound to understand better than others (regardless of how much studying goes on outside of class).
- Professor Hale was very vocal about reaching out to him for help with anything from the course, while there were both his office hours, and a student tutor's office hours, creating massive support net.

6 - 6. What other suggestions (if any) do you have for the next time the course is taught?

Response Rate 12/18 (66.67%)

- No suggestions.
- Nothing.
- no other suggestions from me
- I think the course could have been more beneficial if we moved a lot faster (especially at the beginning of the course) and started the poster project later in the semester. To be honest, the first month or so working on the poster didn't feel very useful because we hadn't learned that much about the statistical methods we would be using yet. So I think it would be beneficial to start the poster project later in the semester and really focus on covering more ground with regards to coding and statistical concepts earlier.
- I think doing some independent work during the lab periods would have been helpful, just to have a balance between trying coding on our own and being led by the professor.
- None!
- I think 3 problem sets instead of 2 would be beneficial to getting more familiar with stata. Also, actually typing out the code on programming days instead of just running it. I feel like that would help us stay more engaged and learn Stata better.
- I do not have any suggestions for the course, I think it was very well done, I may not be the best person to speak on this but I had no issues.
- I really enjoyed the layout of the course so I wouldn't really change anything.
- None!
- Rely less on the Stata book, and do more hands-on work. I personally learn better when I'm being taught something step by step as opposed to learning it from the book because there is no further explanation. There are programming days but it feels very different once we are working on the problem sets. If the professor helps us through it, it's better because I get to ask at that very moment. I feel like holding at least one session to help with the first problem set would be helpful.
- More practice with stata would be great, there was certainly a time issue but having a 3rd problem set might've helped make us more comfortable with stata.

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7 - 7. What else (if anything) would you like to share about the course or the instruction?

Response Rate 13/18 (72.22%)

- It was one of the best courses I have taken at Oxy. I believe that Professor Hale is a phenomenal professor.
- Prof. Hale is amazing and a great professor. 10/10 would take the class again if I could.
- This course was very fun and enjoyable thanks to Professor Hale, and I look forward to keeping in contact with him and possibly take another class with him.
- Prof Hale is a great professor!
- Overall great instruction, knowledgable, friendly and helpful professor.
- I really enjoyed this class and felt supported the entire way, despite much of the coding being completely new to me. I feel more prepared for my Senior Comps and would not be intimidated taking on larger quantitative projects.
- Professor Hale is one of the best Professors I have had during my time at Occidental. He is extremely thoughtful, cares deeply about our success in the class, and brings humor to the subject matter (which is extremely valuable for me, as being a Politics major a lot of my course load is dealing with topics that are extremely serious and can often be a little depressing).
- Please tenure this guy. Y'all lose every good politics professor istg don't lose Hale.
- I'm super excited to take a class I will actually enjoy next semester with Professor Hale, I think he did the best job to make an un-fun subject fun. I really enjoyed the enthusiasm Professor Hale brought to class everyday and he clearly cared a lot about the subject and us learning.
- Professor Hale is a fantastic educator and has a unique ability to motivate us to become more passionate about our work, even in the most stressful of times. He was also critical of the work that we produced and would explain why we got the grades we did while teaching us how to constantly improve and develop our skills. I know that I really enjoyed taking this course with Professor Hale and myself and several of my other classmates worked hard to make sure we could get into his American Presidency class next semester because of how much we enjoyed this course with him.
- It was a very engaging class!! I'm excited to take another class from this professor next semester.
- Not much, I suppose I will say that I am of the opinion that Professor Hale is a wonderful and comprehensive professor.
- N/A