Teaching Research Methods: A Writing and Research Intensive Approach

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Those who teach political science research methods courses at the undergraduate level may encounter several major challenges: (1) explaining the relevance of the subject matter to the broader field of political science; (2) helping students differentiate political science research from political commentaries and political philosophy, while, at the same time, explaining the importance of all three approaches to studying or covering politics; (3) having students understand how political scientists conduct research; (4) getting students to use research methods skills to develop and enhance their own analytical skills; and (5), perhaps most difficult of all, getting students to enjoy the course. My own experience teaching political science research methods suggests that one can succeed with regard to meeting the first four challenges. By the end of each semester most students acquire adequate knowledge of the basic political science research process, and come to appreciate its relevance to the political science curriculum. Some students even enjoy their first encounter with political science research. However, success depends upon using a teaching approach carefully designed with those challenges in mind. My last eighteen years of experience in teaching political research methods can be characterized as a constant quest to fine tune the course to effectively meet those challenges. There is no one single approach to teaching methods, and each teaching approach will need constant revisions. However, after years of student feedback and laborious redesigning, I can confidently state that the approach I use to teach political research methods has helped me effectively meet the challenges to teaching research methods at the undergraduate level.

My Political Research course has three important characteristics: (a) it follows the standard steps of the social science research process in their logical order; (b) it includes

both lectures and a weekly lab hour that allows students to practice what they learn in class; and (c) it is writing and research intensive. I will discuss in turn these characteristics and the benefits they afford.

Following the Standard Steps of the Social Science Research Process

During my first few years of teaching at Siena College, political science majors were required to take a statistics course in the fall semester of their sophomore year, followed by the research methods course in the spring. Although I taught both courses, I was not comfortable with this sequence, which, incidentally, I also had to take when I was a student. While the statistics course exposed students to a relatively wide range of statistical techniques, this breadth advantage was outweighed by two major disadvantages. As hard as I tried to make sure that the problems we practiced were relevant to political science, since the various statistical tests were covered outside the actual research process context, students had trouble understanding the relevance of statistics to the political science curriculum. "Why should a political science major know about chi-square tests of significance or multiple regression analysis?" was a frequent question. I would reply offering what I thought were thorough explanations of the interconnections between statistics and social science research. Often, faced with more skepticism and befuddlement, I would resort to the line "You will understand all of this better when you take the research methods course next semester."

Did the students understand things better the following semester? Did they succeed in placing the statistics they had already learned in the broader research context? Some did. However, by the spring semester many students seemed to have forgotten

most of their statistics. Moreover, they saw research methods as a separate and completely different course, another of those requirements that they should take in order to graduate. Some now asked another troublesome question: "Why should a political science major take a research methods course to graduate?" In response to what was obviously a problem I proposed a significant change in the research methods requirement. Instead of teaching a two-semester course sequence (statistics/research methods), we would require just one research methods course in which statistics would be taught within the appropriate step of the research process, that is, after covering data collection. Moreover, we would add a one-hour weekly lab to the three hours of lecture so that students could practice what they had learned in class. Coupled with the adoption of a writing and research intensive approach, the new methods requirement showed a lot of promise from the very beginning.

The new way of offering methods presented obvious advantages, even though it also had one disadvantage. The students more clearly saw the role of statistics in social science research. Since the statistics topics were covered during the second half of the semester, after they had already studied the earlier steps of the research process, the students now had the right context in which to place statistics. Moreover, the several hypothesis testing exercises in the lab reinforced the idea that the use of statistics was indispensable in the hypothesis centered, empirically based research that we were conducting. Offering a one semester research methods course had one obvious disadvantage: it was impossible to cover as wide a range of statistical techniques as in more specialized statistics courses. However, the goal of a research methods requirement at the undergraduate level should not be, I thought, to necessarily teach ANOVA or

multiple regression analysis, as to make the students knowledgeable about the research process and to realize where statistics fit in this process. This can be done using a few important, but simple, statistical techniques (e.g., chi square tests of independence) within the research context. In describing the approach they use in their textbook, Johnson and Reynolds have pointed out that while "one must have a basic knowledge of statistics and how to use statistics in analyzing and reporting research findings, the empirical research process that we describe here is first and foremost a way of thinking and a prescription for disciplined reasoning" (2005, 2). I could not agree more with this statement. The redesigned requirement has proved to be more effective than the old two-course sequence in teaching students about the research process, and in making them realize that in order to read or conduct political science research one has to acquire the right frame of mind, a particular "way of thinking" that involves a systematic and "disciplined" approach to studying politics.

Helping Students Understand the Relevance of the Subject Matter of This Course to the Broader Field of Political Science

Faced with students' initial skepticism and befuddlement about a course that they oftentimes dread taking and whose purpose they do not necessarily understand, it is important to go beyond a simple discussion of its relevance to our discipline. Together with pointing out how a research methods course can help understand the literature covered in many other more content based courses, I found it useful to get students involved, very early in the semester, in class exercises that show the nexus between descriptive treatments of such topics as roll call behavior or voting participation and the

empirical political science studies upon which such discussions are based. Most students understand, and are receptive to the largely descriptive discussions of political science topics found in textbooks. Indeed, this is what some of them believe to be not a mere presentation but the actual cumulating of political science knowledge. Beginning with textbook discussions of empirically verifiable topics my exercises encourage students to identify all those statements that are likely based on the findings of political research. These exercises go like this: (a) we look at a brief section of an American politics textbook (e.g., a discussion on the factors that influence voting participation in the United States); (b) I ask the students to summarize the main points of the discussion and to present them briefly to the class; (c) we discuss/evaluate the descriptive approach used by the author in terms of clarity and accessibility; (d) I further ask the students to indicate which of the statements that the author makes are empirically verifiable and very likely based on the conclusion of political science research; (e) after a longer discussion about this point, I ask students to look at the footnotes that identify the actual empirical studies whose findings the author has summarized; (f) I assign some of those empirical studies for discussion in the following class. The transition that this exercise asks the students to make from a basically descriptive and numberless discussion of an important political science topic to the actual empirical studies used to write that discussion, conveys well the notion that much of the political science knowledge is based on the results of very laborious empirical research. The number of students who still ask "What does this course have to do with political science?" typically drops significantly after this exercise. And if it doesn't at this point, there are many other opportunities that one can use to try to convert the remaining skeptics.

Helping Students Differentiate Political Science Research from Political Commentaries and Political Philosophy

Undergraduate political science students are not necessarily clear about what political science is. During my years of teaching political research I have encountered several students who objected to taking the methods course because, as they put it, they were more interested in just taking courses on Congress, elections, or public policy. Some would state that they thought that, as political science majors, they would just learn about Locke, Rousseau, etc. Moreover, it is not that uncommon to find undergraduate political science majors who have a hard time understanding the difference between political science and less formal approaches to covering politics. Hence the expectation that some students have that discussions about political science topics should be based on political news items and commentaries about current events found in newspapers and magazines. Understanding how political science knowledge differs from both political philosophy and political news increases the chance that the students will reach some clarity about the nature of political science research and knowledge, and that, instead of rejecting them as irrelevant, students will understand the nature and aims of political research courses. The acceptance and full understanding of the aims of a research methods course is the important first step to learning political research.

To help students make this distinction between the different approaches to studying and covering politics I use an in-class assignment that asks them to discuss, for example, a brief section from John Locke's *The Second Treatise on Civil Government*, a newspaper article that discusses, let's say, voter participation in the United States, and a

political science article that focuses on the same issue. Through this kind of exercise students realize that the hypothesis centered, empirically based studies found in political science journals are very different in focus and approach from the normative discussions of political philosophers, and also different from the discussions about politics found in newspapers and magazines. Lest the students were to conclude after this exercise that one approach to covering politics is better than the others, I stress the fact that all three approaches can help us in different ways understand the complexities of politics, and that it is important that political science majors have a good understanding of political philosophy, and that they keep informed about politics by reading newspapers and magazines. However, I also stress the fact that it is essential that those who study political science develop an appreciation of and the ability to understand the political science literature.

Helping Students Understand how Political Scientists Approach the Study of Political Science Phenomena

In addition to the exercise I described earlier in which students are required to find and discuss the empirical studies on which textbook discussions may be based, during the first few weeks of the course we have in-depth class discussions of at least two political science articles. These discussions cover (1) the structure and organization of each article (title, abstract, introduction, literature review, research design, tables and data analysis, conclusion, footnotes, references), (2) the theoretical assumptions of each study, (3) the hypothesis (-es) and variables, (4) the data used to test the hypothesis (-es), (5) the major findings, and (6) the basic conclusions of each study.

As we look at the organization and content of each study, we pay attention, among other things, to: (1) the systematic way with which these studies are organized, (2) the purpose and content of each section of the article (e.g., we discuss the kind of information that goes into an abstract, or why each article has a research design and the type of information that goes into a research design), (3) the specificity of the research hypothesis and how it differs from a more general research question, (4) the different types of variables (dependent, independent, control) and their specific measurement, (5) the basic findings and how they relate to the hypothesis (-es), and (6) the "circular" nature of these studies (as they begin with a discussion of the theoretical assumptions and justifications for the study in the introduction, they end with a discussion of the theoretical implications of the results of the study). Throughout our discussions I remind the students that they should use these articles as models to follow as they conduct their own research and as they put together their own final research paper, which is a major requirement of my course.

Through these detailed class discussions of political science studies, the students begin to acquire a good understanding of how political science research is done and reported. To reinforce this type of learning I require students to write an article review (first short paper) that thoroughly discusses a third political science article. To help students identify the most relevant information in the article, I ask them to complete a literature review form (see Appendix B), prior to actually writing the essay. The students are required to hand in both their essay and the literature review form. This assignment helps students further understand how political scientists approach their research.

Helping Students Do Political Research

The teaching approach I use introduces students to political research gradually. However, they become engaged with the research process from the very beginning of the semester. This research intensive approach requires them to test several research hypotheses throughout the semester. This is done in weekly lab sessions with no more than ten students. Each lab session focuses on the discussion and testing of a specific research hypothesis, and on the analysis of the obtained results (see Appendix F for an example of a lab exercise). It also requires them to write an in-depth review of an empirical study (first short paper), and a data analysis (with tables) based on one of the hypothesis testing lab exercises (second short paper). The writing of these two short papers is seen as a preliminary and preparatory step to the writing of two major sections of the research project, which is the major requirement of my course. The first short paper (article review) helps the students with the literature review section of their research project, for which they have to review a minimum of five articles. The second short paper helps them with the data analysis section.

The culmination of the research intensive approach that I use in my course is the major research project. This project is worth fifty percent of the final grade, and it is developed in stages prior to being submitted in its entirety at the end of the semester. Students are required to complete the different stages by deadlines that are set throughout the semester. I make those deadlines and the policy that pertains to them clear in my syllabus (Appendix G). I also distribute a table that summarizes the various paper deadlines to help students keep track of them and hand in their work on time (see Appendix A). Since I want to make sure that they receive feedback on all of their work,

students are required to meet deadlines for first and final drafts of the two short papers, their research proposal, the literature review, the research design, and the data analysis. The complete list of the steps of the final research project includes:

a. The research proposal with an annotated bibliography, which includes a minimum of five relevant political science articles;
b. The writing of a literature review based on the proposed bibliography and including, as a preliminary step, the completion of a literature review form (see Appendix B) for each article;
c. The formulation of a specific research hypothesis;
d. The writing of a research design (I make the research design checklist shown in Appendix C available to help students with this step);
e. The obtaining of the statistical results in the form of an SPSS output. This step, which typically involves the use of secondary survey data, is completed in the lab. The students are introduced to the ICPSR data archive and are responsible for finding the data they need to test their hypotheses. They learn how to search, retrieve, and use (with the help of the codebooks) secondary survey data sets available through ICPSR;
f. A data analysis with tables that summarize the statistical results and that are organized using examples that I distribute in class;
g. The organization of these different steps into a complete research paper whose outline I suggest (see Appendix D);
h. A PowerPoint presentation that the students are required to give to the class at the end of the semester. I provide a general example for this presentation

through a web page that I have built to organize all the project relevant information.

While it is not uncommon that at the beginning of the semester students see the different phases of the project as almost independent from each other, this is no longer the case at the end of the process. By requiring them to organize all the pieces (literature review, research design, etc.) together to make sure that the final project reads as just one well integrated and well written paper, rather than a series of unrelated sections, the students acquire a very good overall understanding of the research process that they just completed. At this point I usually hear appreciative comments that indicate the achievement of this goal.

The Writing Intensive Approach in This Course

I teach my research methods course starting with a basic assumption: almost no student comes to this course with prior knowledge of research methods. A few may have had some basic training in statistics. This assumption has two important consequences with regard to my teaching approach: (a) the students will have to be shown and helped throughout the research process; and (b) the students will need frequent feedback on every requirement that they try to fulfill.

In order to meet these needs I constantly give students directions on how to do things. My checklists and forms are examples of this. I also encourage them to stop by my office for unscheduled (during my office hours) or scheduled meetings whenever they have doubts or questions about any aspect of their project. Particularly useful is the fact

that my course is not just research intensive; it is also writing intensive. Together with requiring several written assignments, I also require multiple drafts (at a minimum a first draft and final draft) of each written assignment. More specifically, I require a first (not graded) and final (graded) draft of

a. The article review short paper;
b. The data analysis short paper;
c. The paper proposal (main research project);
d. The literature review (main research project);
e. The research design (main research project);
f. The data analysis (main research project)

I provide students with extensive written comments on each first draft. When papers need major revisions, I typically schedule individual meetings to make sure that the students understand how to write the final draft. Several students stop by my office to further discuss the comments they find on their papers. When a first draft is exceptionally good, I assign a grade to it, and I do not require a final draft. However, this occurs rarely.

Because of all this writing and rewriting and because of the many deadlines involved, students oftentimes comment on the particularly demanding nature of my course. Most students also recognize that the work they do is both necessary and useful. By guiding them through the process and by giving them frequent feedback, the vast majority of the students successfully complete their projects, and acquire a good understanding of the research process by the end of the semester. Several volunteer the

comment that they would know how to go through the same process independently if they encountered this opportunity in another class.

Conclusion

The teaching approach that I have just described is very demanding not just for the students who, in addition to all the work that I have just described, are also required to take two exams: the first on various research methods topics, and the second mainly on statistics. It is also very demanding for the instructor. With the exception of the first few weeks of the semester, the many requirements and the frequent deadlines in this course translate into an endless flow of first drafts, final drafts, and exams. And, since multiple drafts are involved, all the work has to be done in a timely fashion to make sure that the final deadline for the research project can also be met. The pressure is not just on the students, it is also on the instructor.

However, exactly because of its research and writing intensive nature, my political research course has proved to be very effective in meeting the challenges to teaching political research to undergraduate students. The students are required to work hard, but in most instances they leave the course with an appreciation of its importance and relevance to our discipline. And at the end of each semester I invariably feel that the significant amount of time required to use this teaching approach was worthwhile, since most students demonstrate that they have achieved a good understanding of the political research process.

References

Johnson, Janet Buttolph and H. T. Reynolds. *Political Science Research Methods*, 5th ed. Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 2005.

Appendix A
DEADLINES FOR PAPERS: FALL 2006

Assignment	**First Draft** (The deadline is indicated in the syllabus)	**Final Draft** (The deadline will be announced in class)
Project: Paper proposal (about one page plus annotated bibliography)	Sept. 19th	
1st short paper: article review (about 3 pages--attach completed literature form)	Sept. 28th	
Project: Literature review (5 to 6 pages--review a minimum of 5 articles--include bibliography--attach a completed literature review form for each article)	Oct. 19th	
2nd short paper: data analysis (about 3 pages--include tables--attach SPSS output)	Oct. 26th	
Project: Research design (about 2 pages)	Nov. 2nd	
Project: SPSS output	Nov. 9th	
Project: Analysis of results (7 to 8 pages, including tables—attach SPSS output)	Nov. 16th	
Project: FINAL COMPLETE DRAFT It includes: ❑ Title Page ❑ Abstract ❑ Introduction ❑ Literature Review ❑ Hypothesis ❑ Research design ❑ Analysis (with tables) ❑ Conclusion ❑ References ❑ SPSS OUTPUT	Not applicable	**DEC 5th**

Appendix B

LITERATURE REVIEW FORM

This checklist will help you identify in each article important information that you need for your literature review. You must complete a form for each article that you review.

Title of Article:_____

Author(s):_____

Journal: _____

Year: _____ Vol: _____ Pages: _____

Hypothesis:

_____

_____

Variables:

_____

_____

Measurement of Variables:

_____

_____

Sampling Strategy (if applicable):

_____

Data Sources:

_____

Statistical Procedures:

_____

Findings:

_____

_____

Appendix C

RESEARCH DESIGN CHECKLIST

You should make sure to cover the following information in your research design:

- **Time dimension** Are you doing a cross-sectional study or a longitudinal study? What specific time frame (year or years) does your study cover?
- **Units of analysis**. Are you doing an individual level study or an aggregate level one?
- **Variables**. Make sure to clearly indicate your dependent, independent and control variables.
- **Variable measurement.** How are your variables measured? Discuss both the level of measurement for each variable, and the specific way in which they are measured. Further discuss recoding when appropriate.
- **Sampling design**. If you are using secondary survey data, discuss briefly the sampling approach used by the people who collected the data originally. You will find this information in the survey codebook**.**
- **Data sources**. If you are using secondary survey data you need to indicate what specific data set you are using (Name of researchers, survey title, survey organization). Include the data citation information in your paper.
- **Statistical technique**. What statistical technique will you be using to process the data?

Appendix D

RESEARCH PAPER OUTLINE

- Title Page: On the first page of your paper you should include the research title, your name, the course number, the semester, etc.
- Abstract: In the abstract summarize the assumptions, the methodology, and the results of your research. The research abstract should go on page two of the paper.
- Introduction: Explain what you are studying and why. Why is your study important/relevant?
- Literature Review (5 to 6 pages): Summarize what past researchers have found about the topic that you are studying, and discuss the methodologies that they used to test their hypotheses.
- Hypothesis: State the relationship that you expect to exist between the dependent and the independent variables as clearly as possible. Mention the control variable(s). Separate your statement of hypothesis from the rest of the text and indent it.
- Research design (about 2 pages) : Explain in detail how you are going to conduct your own study. What variables (dependent, independent, and control) are you going to use? How are your variables measured? Are you recoding any of the variables? How? What sampling strategy are you following? What is the source of your data? What statistical technique(s) are you going to use to process your data? If you are using secondary survey data do not forget to include the data citation information at the end of your paper.
- Analysis (7 to 8 pages): Put your statistical results into tables, and discuss and analyze them thoroughly.
- Conclusion: Summarize your results briefly, and indicate whether they support your hypothesis. Make references to some of the studies that you have mentioned in your literature review. Are your results similar to, or different from those you have found in other studies? Mention the direction that future research on your topic should take.
- References. Refer to APSA guidelines for the appropriate format for your references.

PLEASE DO NOT FORGET TO ATTACH THE SPSS OUTPUT TO YOUR PAPER.

Appendix E

RESEARCH PROJECT CHECKLIST

Please hand in the following items on the final due date:

1. PAPER_____

Your paper must include:

- Title Page_____
- Abstract_____
- Introduction_____
- Literature Review_____
- Hypothesis_____
- Research Design_____
- Analysis (with tables)_____
- Conclusion_____
- References_____

2. LITERATURE REVIEW FORMS_____

3. SPSS OUTPUT _____

NOTE: Please do not forget to include the data citation information in your paper.

Appendix F

LAB EXERCISE No. 4

Use the 1996 General Social Survey to test the following hypothesis:

Strong partisans were more likely to vote than either weak partisans or independents in the 1992 presidential election, controlling for education.

In order to test this hypothesis you have to

1. identify the dependent , independent, and control variables;
2. find your variables in the GSS96.POR data set (PARTYID, VOTE92, DEGREE);
3. recode the PARTYID variable to create the following categories: 1=independent, 2=independent/leaning, 3=not strong partisan, 4=strong partisan
4. recode DEGREE to create the following categories: 1=less than high school, 2=high school, 3=college
5. include values 3 and 4 of VOTE92 among the missing values;
6. run the following crosstabs procedures (with the chi-square test):

a. Dependent by Independent
b. Dependent by Control
c. Dependent by Independent by Control

What do these results tell you? Does your empirical evidence support your hypothesis? Why or why not?

Appendix G

FALL 2006 SYLLABUS

POSC-180/12
Political Research
T, Th. 4:00pm -5:20pm, SH 313
Fall 2006
Dr. Salvatore Lombardo

Office: 429 Siena Hall
Phone: (518) 783-2395.
Office Hours: T 1:30 -3:30pm, W 9:30am – 12:30pm, or by appointment.

If you need to contact me by phone, please call during my office hours. For all questions concerning the content and the requirements of the course you should stop by during my office hours since it is not easy to communicate about these matters by phone or by e-mail. DO NOT USE EITHER THE PHONE OR E-MAIL TO NOTIFY ME ABOUT ABSENCES, LATE WORK, OR TO DISCUSS GRADES.

About the Course

This course is an introductory survey of political science research methods. It has four main objectives: (a) it will help you acquire a basic understanding of the assumptions and the process that political scientists use in conducting quantitative research; (b) it will help you understand the research that political scientists publish in professional journals; (c) it will provide you with the skills necessary to conduct original political science research; and (d) it will also provide you with the basic skills to present your own research.
In the course of the semester you will become acquainted with hypothesis formulation and theory formation, operationalization and measurement, various approaches (experiments and quasi-experiments, surveys, direct observation, content analysis, etc.) to the collection of data, various statistical techniques to process and analyze data, as well as other topics. You will also learn, through two short papers and a research project, to apply the theoretical concepts acquired through the readings, lectures, and class discussions.

In this course you will be evaluated based on the extent to which you have mastered the following skills:

Research process skills:

- selecting a relevant and feasible research question;
- writing a clear paper proposal with an annotated bibliography;
- writing a clear and coherent literature review to provide a background for your research;
- translating a research question into an empirically testable research hypothesis;
- correctly identifying dependent, independent, and control variables;

- organizing a detailed research design to guide the identification and the collection of the data that are needed to test hypotheses;
- distinguishing between primary and secondary data;
- finding appropriate secondary data sets for your study, and identifying relevant variables;
- processing the data statistically in order to study relationships among variables;
- discussing the statistical results and relating them to the stated hypothesis and to the results obtained by other researchers;

Statistical skills:

- understanding the difference between descriptive and inferential statistics;
- using descriptive and inferential statistics in applied situations;
- effectively using the following statistical measures and procedures: measures of central tendency, measures of dispersion, frequency distributions, chi-square tests of independence, and correlation analysis.

Communication skills:

- presenting the assumptions, hypothesis, results, and conclusion of your study clearly and in a well organized fashion;
- effectively addressing questions and comments about your research from the instructor and fellow students;

Computer skills:

- using SPSS for Windows effectively;
- using PowerPoint;
- using the Internet to search on-line library catalogs, journal indexes, journal on-line archives (J-STOR), and full text article databases (Lexis-Nexis, ProQuest Direct).
- using the Internet to search data archives holdings (e.g., ICPSR)

Library skills:

- developing a plan for a library search;
- using traditional and computerized tools to conduct a library search;
- evaluating the quality and relevance (to your project) of the identified library and Web sources;

Writing skills:

- writing a clear and well organized hypothesis centered paper;
- using a proper citation style, and organizing a bibliography following the guidelines suggested by the American Political Science Association.

<u>General Expectations</u>

For all my classes I have the following general expectations:

- you must come to class on time;
- you should not leave class before its conclusion, except in case of an emergency;
- you should not skip classes unless you have a very important reason. Registering for classes <u>is not</u> a legitimate reason for an absence;
- you are responsible for any assignment you have missed due to an absence;
- you will complete all class requirements in a timely fashion;

- you will show respect for other students and their opinions in class discussions;
- you will turn off cellular phones or other electronic devices during class times so as not to disrupt class activities;
- you will not use e-mail or other non-class-relevant programs (e.g., the Internet) during lab time.

Course Format

The topics in this course will be covered through introductory lectures, class discussion, lab sessions, two short papers and a research project. The papers and research project will allow you to use the theoretical information acquired in the course in actual research situations.

Lectures: Each topic will be introduced by a formal lecture. Lectures will not be a simple duplication of what is in the assigned readings. Both the assigned readings and the lectures are essential elements of the course.

Short Papers and Research Project: Two short papers are required in this course. Throughout the semester you are also required to work on a research project about a topic that you choose and that I will review. The project will involve the use of chi-square tests, and it will include a preliminary discussion about the rationale for the particular study, a literature review, a research design and a thorough analysis of the statistical results. **An outline of the research project is available on my Web site**. The deadlines for the completion of the several phases of the project are listed at the end of this syllabus. The due dates for the two short papers are listed in the course outline. **Each section of the project will be graded as it is completed during the semester**. The entire project (including the sections already graded) must be handed in at the end of the semester for an overall evaluation. I will give you the opportunity to revise the first drafts of your short papers and of the various sections of the project and to resubmit a revised final draft provided that you meet the following conditions:

- You submit the first draft on the due date indicated in this syllabus. **If you do not meet a due date for first drafts for any reason, you will be able to submit your work by the final draft deadline to receive a grade without the possibility of revisions**. Please plan ahead to meet the various deadlines and, if necessary, hand in your work in advance of a specified deadline.
- Your first draft is complete. **I will not accept incomplete first drafts or outlines**.

IMPORTANT: I will announce the due dates for final drafts in class. I will set these at about one week from when I return the first drafts with my comments.

Lab Sessions: The purpose of the lab sessions is to provide you with hands-on knowledge of research methodology, and of various statistical techniques. You will be introduced to the Windows version of SPSS and will learn various SPSS statistical procedures for data processing, presentation, analysis, and reporting. **It**

is extremely important that you attend all lab sessions, as you may not be able to catch up with the information if you miss one or more labs.

Readings

All the readings in this syllabus are required. You are expected to do the readings before the class period for which they are assigned. The readings come from the textbook and from various other sources. The readings outside the text will be available on reserve. The reserved readings are indicated by the (R) symbol.

Textbook: Janet Buttolph Johnson, H. T. Reynolds, *Political Science Research Methods*, 5th ed. (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 2005)

Examinations and Project

Examinations: The course will have two examinations that will be given during the semester. There is no final exam for this course. The first exam will include short answer and essay questions. The second exam will include short answer questions and statistics problems. The tentative dates for the exams are indicated in the course outline. You will need to use a hand calculator for the second exam. **You are also required to bring to class a hand calculator when we cover the statistics topics**.

Short Papers: These two papers should be about 3 pages each. The first paper is a review of a quantitative article. The second is a data analysis paper. The first short paper is due on Sept. 28th. The second short paper is due on Oct. 26th.

Research Project and Presentation: You are responsible for formulating, designing, and implementing a research project. The project will result in a 14 to 16 page paper. The due dates for the whole research paper and for the completion of the different phases of the research project are given at the end of this syllabus. The research paper will include a discussion of the rationale for your study, a literature review, a research design, and a longer analytical section about your statistical results. In order to complete the research project, you will have to process and analyze data using SPSS for Windows. You will also use PowerPoint to make a five minute presentation about the results of your research. Detailed information about the project is available on my Web site.

It is extremely important that you take your exams and complete your papers and research project on the dates specified in the course outline. **It is also essential that you make your presentation on the day for which it is scheduled**. The presentation time will be assigned randomly. Except for exceptional circumstances, no opportunity to make up examinations, to hand in late papers, or to change a scheduled presentation time will be provided. Failure to hand in a final draft by the specified deadline will result in a

full letter grade penalty for each day that the final draft is late. No opportunity will be given to make up missed presentations.

Attendance

You are required to come to each class and to show up on time. Absences should be kept to an absolute minimum. According to College policy an "instructor is entitled to give a failing grade (U) for excessive absences" (Siena College Catalog). In this course "excessive absences" means three absences.

Academic Integrity

The 2006-2007 Siena College Catalog (p. 13) contains the following statement concerning academic integrity:

> The concept of academic integrity lies at the very heart of any college. This is particularly true of Siena with its strong Franciscan tradition and its dedication to fostering sound moral growth. In such an environment, academic dishonesty cannot be tolerated. Students who commit such acts expose themselves to punishments as severe as dishonorable dismissal from the College.
>
> Academic dishonesty can take different forms, including, but not limited to: cheating [dishonesty in a test situation], plagiarism [dishonesty in the presentation of materials in a paper or report], and computer abuse. In any situation in which a student is unsure of what constitutes academic dishonesty, it is the student's responsibility to raise the question with his or her instructor. It is also the student's responsibility to be familiar with the student guidelines on academic honesty, "Academic Integrity and the Siena Student," which can be found in *Siena Life*.

I too consider violations of academic integrity a very serious matter, and a student should be aware that in case of a violation of this kind I will automatically assign a failing grade (F) for the course. In addition, in especially serious cases I will go by the College's policy, and I will seek a student's dishonorable dismissal from the College. I consider very serious cases of academic dishonesty the following:

- using and/or submitting as one's own a paper/project that was written by another Siena student in the past;
- using and/or submitting as one's own a paper/project that was obtained through the Internet, or some other source;
- having someone else write (even partially) or help with the writing of any of the required papers;
- having someone else do any of the computer work required for the project;
- engaging in plagiarism: using any statements (either in a verbatim or paraphrased form) found in other people's work as one's own, and without proper citations;
- cheating on an exam.

Final Grade

- First exam: 30 points (15% of the final grade)
- Second exam: 30 points (15% of the final grade)
- Short papers: 40 points (Each paper is worth 20 points or 10% of the final grade)
- Research Project: 100 points (50% of the final grade)
  - Paper proposal with annotated bibliography 10 points
  - Literature review 30 points
  - Research design 10 points
  - Analysis 30 points
  - Overall organization 10 points
  - PowerPoint presentation 10 points

The final grade for the course will be assigned as follows. No rounding off of percentages will occur for the purpose of assigning grades.

93% or higher A
90% to 93% A-
87% to 90% B+
83% to 87% B
80% to 83% B-
77% to 80% C+
73% to 77% C
70% to 73% C-
67% to 70% D+
63% to 67% D
60% to 63% D-
Lower than 60% F

Course Outline

General Disclaimer: I reserve the right to make any changes to this course outline including the readings and test dates.

Sept. 5
General Introduction to the Course
No readings

Sept. 7
The Social Science Research Process: An Overview
- Johnson and Reynolds., chapter 1

Sept. 12, 14
The Science of Politics
- Johnson and Reynolds, chapter 2

Discussion of the following article:
- Jeffrey Koch, "Candidate Gender and Women's Psychological Engagement in Politics," *American Politics Quarterly* 1997, 25:118-133. (R)

Sept. 19, 21
Research Topics and Literature Review
- Johnson and Reynolds, chapter 5

Discussion of the following article:
- Patrick J. Kenney and Tom W. Rice, "The Effect of Contextual Forces on Turnout in Congressional Primaries," *Social Science Quarterly* 1986, 67: 329-336. (R)

Sept. 26, 28
Theory Building
- Johnson and Reynolds, chapter 4
- **The article review short paper is due on Sept. 28th**. The review will be on the following article: Mark J. Fenster "The Impact of Allowing Day of Registration Voting on Turnout in U.S. Elections from 1960 to 1992," *American Politics Quarterly* 1994, 22:74-87. (R)

Oct. 3, 5
Measurement
Johnson and Reynolds, chapter 6

Oct. 10, 12
Research Design
- Earl Babbie, *The Practice of Social Research* 9th ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2001), chapter 4 (R)

Oct. 17
FIRST EXAM

Oct. 19, 24
Sampling
- Johnson and Reynolds, chapter 9

Oct. 26, 31
Data Collection Methodologies
- Johnson and Reynolds, chapters 3, 7, 8, 10
- **The data analysis short paper is due on Oct. 26th**.

Nov. 2
Descriptive and Inferential Statistics
- Johnson and Reynolds, chapter 11
- Weinberg et al., chs. 2, 3 (R)

Nov. 7, 9, 14
Chi-Square Tests of Independence
- Johnson and Reynolds, chapter 12
- Weinberg et al., ch. 18 (R)

Nov. 16, 21, 28
Correlation Analysis
- Johnson and Reynolds, chapter 12
- Weinberg et al., ch. 16 (R)

Nov. 30
SECOND EXAM

Dec. 5, 7
Presentations. The lab times on Dec. 6th may also be used for the presentations.

Lab Sessions (Wednesday, Section W: 1:30-2:25pm - RB 428)
Sept. 6, 13, 20, 27
Oct. 4, 11, 18, 25
Nov. 1, 8, 15, 29
Dec. 6

Lab Sessions (Wednesday, Section W1: 2:35-3:30pm - RB 428)
Sept. 6, 13, 20, 27
Oct. 4, 11, 18, 25
Nov. 1, 8, 15, 29
Dec. 6

When you use the computers in the Social Science Lab you will be prompted to type in your user name and password. Please make sure that your access to the Siena network is working properly. Otherwise, seek assistance from ITS.

Tentative Due Dates for the Research Project (First drafts):
- Sept. 19th: Paper proposal (one page plus annotated bibliography).
- Oct. 19th: Literature review (5 to 6 pages. You must review a minimum of 5 articles.)
- Nov. 2nd: Research design (about 2 pages)

- Nov. 9th: SPSS output
- Nov. 16th: Analysis of results (7 to 8 pages, including tables) and SPSS output. IMPORTANT: The minimum time dimension and variable requirements for the analysis section of the paper are as follows:
  - You will use one dependent variable, one independent variable, and two control variables;
  - You will compare two points in time when studying the impact of the independent variable on the dependent variable, taking the controls into account.
- Dec. 5th: Entire paper (final version)

All submitted work must be typed using Word or some other word processing program. Please make sure to spell check the work that you submit. WHEN YOU SUBMIT THE FINAL VERSION OF YOUR PAPER YOU MUST AGAIN SUBMIT YOUR SPSS OUTPUT.