

The Logic of Political Research

POLS 390 – Spring 2009

Professor: Jason Gainous

Office Location: 406 Ford Hall

Class Meetings: Monday and Wednesday 2:00-3:15 PM Ford Hall 305

Office Hours: Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday 3:15-5:15 PM, and by appointment

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Course Home Page: <http://louisville.edu/~j0gain01/courses/POLS390/index.html>

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Course Objectives

The purpose of this course is to introduce you to research methods in political science. Most political science courses focus on teaching you about the substance of politics. This course is different in that it focuses on helping you understand how we study social and political phenomena to “produce knowledge”. We will take up matters of design, data collection, measurement, and data analysis. By the end of the course you should have an understanding of the foundations of empirical social and political research. You will also have the basic skills necessary to produce new knowledge.

Course Requirements

Your grade will be based on three exams, class participation, and a series of computer-based assignments.

Because the material for the course varies in nature (some is theoretical and some is practical), the format of the exams will also vary. There will be a variety of types of questions including multiple choice, short answer, true-false, and essay. The details of the exams will be discussed in a review prior to each (you will get a review sheet).

Assignments will generally be due on the class day following the week they are assigned (see schedule below). As for participation, I expect each student to contribute to discussions. In order to do so, it is imperative that you have the reading and assignments done before coming to class.

	<u>Percentage of Grade</u>	<u>Date</u>
Exam #1	20%	February 9
Exam #2	20%	March 9
Exam #3	20%	April 29
Participation	20%	All Semester
Assignments	20%	See Below

Course grades will be based on the following scale:

90-100 %	A
80-89 %	B
70-79 %	C
60-69 %	D
Below 60%	F

On some days we will meet in MITC 03 instead of Ford Hall 305 so I can give you SPSS software instruction. Those days are as follows:

- January 12th
- February 11th and 25th
- March 30th
- April 15th

Course Materials

Babbie, Earl. 2005. *The Basics of Social Research*. Fourth Edition. Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing.

SPSS Supplement (This is a student version of a statistical package that comes on a CD-ROM for Windows).

SPSS Workbook for Research Methods Fourth Edition

Schedule

This is my best guess about when we will cover specific topics. As a guess, it means that I am not bound to these dates and you will have to keep up with the readings based on our class progress.

I. Introduction to Inquiry and Theory (January 7-14)

Babbie Chapters 1-2

SPSS Workbook pgs. 1-22 (do not turn this in), Chapter 1 and 2 Exercises (Due January 21)

II. Research Design (January 21-26)

Babbie Chapter 4

SPSS Workbook Chapter 4 Exercises (Due January 28)

Hall, Melinda Gann. 1992. "Electoral Politics and Strategic Voting in State Supreme Courts." *Journal of Politics* 54 (2): 427-446.

III. Conceptualization and Measurement (January 28-February 4)

Babbie Chapter 5

SPSS Workbook Chapter 5 Exercise (Due February 11)

Hill, Kim Quaile. 2001. "Multiple-method measurement of legislators' ideologies." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 26 (2): 263-274.

EXAM #1 (Monday February 9)

IV. Sampling (February 11-16)

Babbie Chapter 7

SPSS Workbook Chapter 7 Exercise (Due February 18)

Wald, Kenneth D., Dennis E. Owen, and Samuel S. Hill, Jr. 1988. "Churches as Political Communities." *American Political Science Review* 82: 531-48.

V. Experiments (February 18-25)

Babbie Chapter 8

SPSS Workbook Chapter 8 Exercise (Due March 2)

McGraw, Kathleen M., Edward Hasecke, and Kimberly Conger. 2003. Ambivalence, Uncertainty, and Processes of Candidate Evaluation. *Political Psychology* 24 (3):421-448.

VI. Surveys (March 2-4)

Babbie Chapter 9

SPSS Workbook Chapter 9 Exercise (Due March 11)

Fowler, Floyd Jackson, Jr. 1992. "How Unclear Terms Affect Survey Data" *Public Opinion Quarterly* 56 (2): 218-231.

EXAM #2 (Wednesday March 9)

VII. Field Research (March 11-23)

Babbie Chapter 10

SPRING BREAK MARCH 16-22

VIII. Unobstrusive Research (March 25)

Babbie Chapter 11

SPSS Workbook Chapter 11 Exercise (Due March 30)

IX. Evaluation Research (March 30-April 1)

Babbie Chapter 12

SPSS Workbook Chapter 12 Exercise (Due April 6)

X. Quantitative Data Analysis (April 6-8)

Babbie Chapter 14

SPSS Workbook Chapter 14 Exercise (Due April 13)

XI. Indices and Scales (April 13-15)

Babbie Chapter 6

SPSS Workbook Chapter 6 Exercise (Due April 20)

XII. Putting it all Together (April 20-22)

Babbie Chapter 15

WE WILL COLLECTIVELY DESIGN A RESEARCH PROJECT THIS WEEK INCLUDING DERIVING HYPOTHESES FROM THEORY AND TESTING THOSE HYPOTHESES.

FINAL EXAMINATION: Wed., April 29, 2:30PM - 5:00PM