

PS 302: Political Research and Analysis
Dr. Martha Kropf
University of Missouri-Kansas City
Tuesday, Thursday, 11-12:15
Fall 2004

Course Description

This course provides an introduction to the social science research process and will help you to develop a working understanding of political research. In particular, the purpose of this course is to introduce you to social science research methods and to provide you with the critical skills necessary to conduct and evaluate research, and to be discerning consumers of research. The research process can be interesting, exciting, challenging and fun. Social research is a process of discovery that helps us answer important questions about our understanding of politics. Empirical research provides us with the tools to test existing theories, to develop new ones and to examine new questions. Social science research helps us to investigate interesting and compelling questions about our world.

In this course, we will learn what questions to ask when we conduct a critique of a research article and how to evaluate research studies. We will discuss alternative research methodologies and survey some of the major approaches to political research so that you develop the ability to read, comprehend and evaluate research. We will address a number of issues that face every researcher as he or she conducts their empirical inquiry such as research design, measurement, sampling, data collection and analysis.

The most important thing you can do in this class is to begin to observe the world around you. Ask questions about phenomena which you may normally just take for granted. For those who are worried about it, this is not a math class, but rather a class that will teach us how to ask and answer questions in a systematic way. For much of the research in this class, a “numbers sense” will be important, but math skills are not necessary.

Class meetings consist of lectures and discussions. In order to take part and learn from all of these activities, it is absolutely essential for you to keep up with the course schedule. This means that all reading must be completed before each class. All assignments are due in class by the date listed on the schedule unless I indicate otherwise.

Required Reading (Suggested Texts for Purchase):

Schutt, Russell K. *Investigating the Social World: The Process and Practice of Research*. Pine Forge Press (4th Edition). Get the one without SPSS.

Suggested: Scott, Gregory and Stephen Garrison. *The Political Science Student Writer's Manual*. Prentice Hall, (4th Edition).

Read at least one newspaper each day (*Kansas City Star*, *Washington Post* (www.washingtonpost.com), *New York Times* (www.nyt.com), or *Wall Street Journal*).

Suggestions

Watch local evening television newscasts, The Jim Lehrer Newshour (6pm, Channel 19), CNN, and listen to National Public Radio's *Morning Edition* and *All Things Considered* (89.3 FM; ME: 5:00am-10:00am and ATC: 4:00pm-6:30pm).

Contacting the Professor

My office phone number is 816-235-5948. Please feel free to reach me via email at KropfM@umkc.edu. My office is located in 304B Manheim Hall.

My office hours will be Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings from 10:30-12:00. I will also be available at other times. Call me to see if I'm there or make an appointment with me.

Grades

Your final grade for the course will be based upon current events, homework, a midterm and a final paper.

*Current Events	100 points (5 @20 points each)
*Homework (3)	150 points
*Midterm	200 points
*Final	200 points
*Final Paper	350 points

Grades are assigned based on the following:

930-1000:	A
900-929:	A-
870-899:	B+
830-869:	B
800-829:	B-
770-799:	C+
730-769:	C
700-729:	C-
670-699:	D+
630-669:	D
600-629:	D-
599 and below:	F

Expectations and Assignments

I believe strongly that politics can best be understood and realized in a community. If we intend to study politics, we must work and question together (that includes me!). Therefore, attendance at all classes is expected, and missing more than **three** classes (unexcused) will result in ten points deducted from your final grade per absence.

Current Events (100 points)

You will hand in five newspaper article summaries (one every other week starting with Thursday of week #2; CURRENT EVENT DAYS ARE NOTED ON THE SYLLABUS).

For the newspaper article summaries, I will expect you each to read and write a summary of a newspaper article or website dealing with some aspect of political or social research. This summary should be typewritten and will be no more than three paragraphs. Each student will include the newspaper article clipping or printout with the assignment. Each student should identify a problem with the research they are presenting or a strength. Each student will summarize their article on "current event days", every two weeks. The best summaries deal with the research questions about which you are particularly interested, so that you can see how your research question is studied in the media.

Homework (150 points)

Students will be given three required homework assignments at various points during the semester. These homework assignments will be geared toward preparing you for creating a research design and understanding different research methods.

Midterm/Final (200 points each, November 4/December 14)

The midterm will cover all the information up to that point. The final will be cumulative, but only to the extent that you are expected to apply the concepts you learned. The tests will be in-class consisting of multiple choice questions, true/false, and short answer/identification.

I am not kidding you. The tests are hard for most students. Besides doing good old-fashioned memorization, you should also be able to apply current events to research issues we have learned. Example from the midterm in 2000: "Many of the polls in New Hampshire predicted that the race between George W. Bush and John McCain would be a dead heat. However, in that open primary (where anyone of any party could vote a Republican primary ballot), John McCain won by a large margin. Could the sampling frame have accounted for the result that differed from the polls? Why or why not?" My students have reported to me that this is a difficult examination and that the differences between the answers in the multiple choice are subtle! Some are tricky and reward class attendance. Be prepared and pay attention!!

Make-up tests for excused absences will be given on an announced date. Keep in mind it is at my discretion whether or not to allow a student to make up missed tests. If you are going to miss an exam, I expect to know about it ahead of time. **DO NOT MAKE A DOCTOR'S APPOINTMENT AT THE SAME TIME AS THE MIDTERM UNLESS YOU OR YOUR IMMEDIATE FAMILY HAS A MEDICAL EMERGENCY!** I will ask for documentation.

Final Paper (350 Points)

For the final paper, you will create, but not implement, a research project about a political or social question in which you are interested. The homework assignments and class discussions will prepare you to create this "research design." Hopefully, by the end of the semester, you will have a research design largely created (literature search, research question and hypotheses created and data collection method). You will be expected to show me what you have learned throughout the class in the research design. You should show me you read the material and another thing you should show me is why the method you choose to do is the best method to use.

Late Paper Policy

All assignments are due in class by the date listed on the schedule unless I indicate otherwise. Since you are all advanced undergraduate students I expect there will not be any late papers or assignments. However, if you feel you need more time on any given project you can have it, but you will lose five percentage points of the grade for that project each day that it is late (instead of getting 90% of the points for the assignment, you will only receive 85%). I want you to know I will leave this choice to you. Exceptions may be illness or family emergency, but I expect you to discuss these problems with me in advance. I reserve the right to ask for official documentation (i.e., a note from your doctor). If you are participating in an official university function (such as a debate tournament, mock trial or an athletic event) or have an excused absence of some sort, you must let me know in advance when you will be gone. **I expect such assignments to be turned in before you leave for your event, or late points will be subtracted as usual (commencing the day the paper is late whether that is when you are gone or not).**

Final Notes

1. If you have a physical, emotional, medical or learning disability that may impact on your ability to carry out the assigned course work, please let me know sometime during the first two weeks of class so that appropriate accommodations can be made. I am most happy to work with you. I am unable to make accommodations if you talk to me after the semester is over and you are disappointed with your grade.
2. Academic honesty is expected of every student. Cheating on examinations, quizzes or written work will result in an "F" for this course. Plus, I am now required to report cheating to the proper authorities here on campus. For more information about UMKC's academic integrity policy, please see the 2003-2004 UMKC *General Catalog* (see <http://www.umkc.edu/umkc/catalog/html/append/policy/0020.html>)

According to the UMKC General Catalog, the definition of plagiarism is: "The term **plagiarism** includes, but is not limited to: (i) use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without fully and properly crediting the author with footnotes, citations or bibliographical reference; (ii) unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials; or (iii) unacknowledged use of original work/material that has been produced through collaboration with others without release in writing from collaborators."

Consider the following:

According to a statement from the high school/college dual credit program: "Plagiarism is the use of another person's writing or ideas without giving that person credit by means of source citation and (in some cases) quotation marks. All source material, whether presented through direct quotations or through summary, paraphrase, or precis, must have an adequate source citation."

UMKC's English Department says: "...You plagiarize any time you use the words or thoughts of another person in your work without attribution. This includes copying passages, phrases, and significant terms without giving the proper citation. It also includes close paraphrasing. You can even plagiarize an idea if you try to pass it off as your own. ..." Academic honesty is expected of every student. Cheating on examinations, quizzes or written work will result in an "F" for this course and students will be reported to the proper university authorities. For more information about UMKC's academic integrity policy, please see <http://www.umkc.edu/umkc/catalog/html/append/policy/0020.html>.

3. It is the policy of UMKC, and is my personal policy as well, that there will be no discrimination on the basis of racial, religious, or ethnic background, or on the basis of gender. You will be evaluated solely on the quality of your work.

COURSE OUTLINE:

The following schedule is subject to change. I will assume that announcements made in class have been heard by all. Assignments will be discussed in class.

Week 1: August 24/26, 2004

**Introduction and Overview: The Discipline of Political Science
Reasoning about the Social World**

Schutt, Chapter 1

Johnson, Joslyn and Reynolds, Chapter 2 (Available on Blackboard)

No class on August 26: UMKC Day of Celebration

Week 2: August 31/September 2, 2004

**Introduction and Overview: The Discipline of Political Science
Reasoning about the Social World**

Thursday, September 2: CURRENT EVENT DAY

Week 3: September 7/9, 2004

The Research Process and Finding Information

Tuesday, September 7: MEET IN THE LIBRARY AT THE CIRCULATION DESK

Schutt, Chapter 2

Conceptualization and Measurement

Schutt, Chapter 4

Week 4: September 14/16, 2004

Conceptualization and Measurement, Continued

Finish Schutt, Chapter 4

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 14: HOMEWORK #1 DUE

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 18: CURRENT EVENT DAY

Week 5: September 21/23, 2004

Sampling

Schutt, Chapter 5

Week 6: September 28/30, 2004

Causation and Research Design

Schutt, Chapter 6

How to Read a Research Article (Pass out class project)

Schutt, Appendices B and C

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 28: HOMEWORK #2 DUE

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 30: CURRENT EVENT DAY

Week 7: October 5/7, 2004

Research Designs: Cross Sectional and Longitudinal How to Read a Research Article

Smith, Elizabeth. 1999. "The Effects of Investments in the Social Capital of Youth on Political and Civic Behavior in Young Adulthood: A Longitudinal Analysis." *Political Psychology* 20(3): 553-580. (Available on Blackboard)

Week 8: October 12/14, 2004

Experimental Research

Schutt, Chapter 7

Iyengar, Shanto and Kinder, Donald. 1987. Chapters 2 and 3 from *News that Matters: Television and American Opinion*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. (Roo Pak)

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 14: CURRENT EVENT DAY

Week 9: October 19/21, 2004

Overview of Quantitative Methods Using Available Data and Data Analysis

Adler and Clark, Chapters 12 (Available on Blackboard)

Schutt, Chapter 10

Knack, Stephen and Martha Kropf. 2002. "Who Uses Inferior Voting Technology?" *PS: Political Science and Politics* (September): 541-548.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 19: HOMEWORK #3 DUE

Week 10: October 26/28, 2004

Content Analysis

Adler and Clark, chapter 13

Schutt, pp. 329-331

Kahn, Kim Fridkin and Edie N. Goldenberg. 1991. "Women Candidates in the News: An Examination of Gender Differences in U.S. Senate Campaign Coverage." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 55:180-199. (Available on Blackboard)

THURSDAY OCTOBER 28: CURRENT EVENT DAY

Week 11: November 2/4, 2004

Tuesday, November 2 MIDTERM REVIEW (attendance optional)

Thursday, November 4: MIDTERM

Week 12: November 9/11, 2004

Survey Research

Schutt, Chapter 8

Schlozman, Kay Lehman, Nancy Burns and Sidney Verba. 1994. "Gender and the Pathways to Participation: The Role of Resources." *Journal of Politics* 56(4): 963-90. (Reading footnotes in this article is especially important to your understanding. Make sure you read them!!!) (Available on-line and on Blackboard)

NO MORE CURRENT EVENT DAYS

Week 13: November 16/18, 2004

Qualitative Methods: An Overview

Schutt, Chapter 8

Week 14: November 23/25, 2004

Participant Observation

Fenno, Richard. 1978. *Home Style: House Members in Their Districts*. Glenview, IL: Scott Foresman and Company, Chapters 2-3. (Available on Blackboard)

November 25 is Thanksgiving!!!

Week 15: November 30/December 2, 2004

FINISH PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

Qualitative Methods: In-depth Interviews/Elite Interviews

Chong, Dennis. 1993. "How People Think, Reason, and Feel About Rights and Liberties." *American Journal of Political Science*. 37(3): 867-899. (Available on Blackboard)

Week 16: December 7

FINISH DISCUSSION OF CHONG

Final paper due

FINAL TEST: Tuesday, December 14, 3:30-5:30pm

(NOTE: THE LATE POLICY IS IN EFFECT FOR THE FINAL PAPER, BUT PAPERS NOT TURNED IN BY 5:30PM ON THE DAY BEFORE FINAL EXAM DAY WILL RECEIVE A 0).

Arts and Sciences Reading Days: December 10 and 11