

POLS 3003 - Research Methods in Political Science

Spring 2024

Department of Government, Law & Policy
Arkansas State University

5/10/2024

Course Overview

This upper-level undergraduate course introduced students to research methods used in political science, including survey research, experimental design, statistical analysis, and qualitative methods.

Course Details

Students: 24

Meeting Time: TR 2:00-3:15 PM

Location: HSS 2015 (Computer Lab)

Prerequisites: POLS 1013, STAT 2003

Learning Outcomes Achieved

Students successfully learned to: - Design research questions and hypotheses - Conduct literature reviews - Analyze quantitative data using SPSS - Understand sampling and survey methodology - Write research proposals and reports

Major Assignments

Research Proposal (40% of grade)

Students developed original research proposals on topics of their choice: - **Topics ranged from:** voter turnout, social media influence, policy attitudes - **Average grade:** 88.5% - **Skills developed:** Literature review, hypothesis formation, research design

Data Analysis Project (35% of grade)

Using real political science datasets: - **Software:** SPSS and Excel - **Datasets:** American National Election Study, General Social Survey - **Focus:** Descriptive and inferential statistics

Methodology Critique (25% of grade)

Students evaluated published political science research: - **Critical thinking:** Research design evaluation - **Academic writing:** Formal critique papers - **Class presentations:** Student-led discussions

Technology Integration

- **SPSS training:** Hands-on statistical software experience
- **Online surveys:** Created using Qualtrics
- **Data visualization:** Introduction to graphing best practices
- **Research databases:** JSTOR, Political Science Complete

Course Reflection

This was a challenging but rewarding course that prepared students for senior capstone projects and graduate school. The small class size allowed for individualized attention and peer collaboration.

What Worked Well

- Hands-on computer lab sessions
- Real data analysis projects
- Peer review of research proposals
- Guest speaker from university survey center

Areas for Improvement

- More qualitative methods coverage
- Additional statistics review sessions
- Earlier introduction to research software