

Indiana University
POLS-Y 580
Summer: Full Semester
June 6, 2022 - July 30, 2022
Asynchronous Online

Professor

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Course Number and Title

POLS-Y580, *Research Methods in Political Science*

Course Description

This is a hands-on course that teaches core concepts and analytical skills for evidence-based political research. Students will learn how political scientists frame research questions, how they collect and analyze information, and how they craft arguments to persuade other scholars. Organized in a modular fashion to facilitate learning, selected topics include how to define concepts and variables, how to formulate hypotheses to examine research questions, how to collect relevant evidence, and how to conduct appropriate literature reviews. These topics will be learned along with readings of current research on a wide range of domestic and international topics, so students will get broad exposure to recent political research as well.

This course has four modules. Modules 1-3 contain seven lessons that teach the nuts and bolts of political research. A final module includes a research and teaching practicum component, as part of the Graduate Certificate in Political Science offered by IU Online. Throughout the summer session, students will get practice formulating a research project and incorporating political thinking and research skills literacy into their regular teaching activities.

Learning Outcomes

The purpose of this course to acquaint all students with the nuts and bolts of political research, in order to enhance their ability to evaluate political debates and published studies. The course is especially targeted at high school and community college instructors who are interested in incorporating critical thinking and research skills into their own teaching.

The course has a scaffolding structure that facilitates learning from a beginner's perspective. By the end of the term, students will be able to:

1. *Write clear conceptual definitions of political ideas and political phenomena*
Assessment methods: *Research skills assignment # 1.*
2. *Define variables with four different degrees of precision*
Assessment methods: *Research skills assignment # 2.*
3. *Write operational definitions to gather information to measure concepts*
Assessment methods: *Research skills assignment # 3.*
4. *Formulate research questions amenable to empirical analysis*
Assessment methods: *Research skills assignment # 4 and Research Practicum # 1.*

5. *Relate variables to establish working hypotheses*
Assessment methods: *Research skills assignment # 5 and Research Practicum # 2.*
6. *Distinguish and evaluate multiple research designs to test hypotheses*
Assessment methods: *Research skills assignment # 6 and Research Practicum # 2.*
7. *Write original survey questions for research data collection*
Assessment methods: *Research skills assignment # 7.*
8. *Write a research-oriented literature review*
Assessment methods: *Research Practicum # 1: independent library research.*
9. *Plan an empirical research project*
Assessment methods: *Research Practicum # 2: research design and data collection plan.*
10. *Apply political thinking and research skills literacy to current teaching*
Assessment methods: *Two teaching reflections.*

Course Contents

- Political Concepts
- Variables
- Operational Definitions
- Research Questions
- Hypotheses
- Research Design
- Collecting Evidence

Learning Materials

- *Howard, Christopher (2017). Thinking Like a Political Scientist. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press). ISBN 9780226327549.¹*
- *Supplementary articles for skills exercises will be made available online through our Canvas site.*

Assessment

Regular research skills assignments, each worth 10% of your grade, will determine the bulk of your grade. A required research practicum consists of a literature review (10%) and research project plan (10%). The rest of your grade will be based on two teaching reflections.

<i>Seven Research Skills Assignments</i>	<i>70%</i>
<i>Two-part research practicum</i>	<i>20%</i>
<i>Teaching practicum</i>	<i>10%</i>

¹ **NOTE, not for publication:** *this textbook might be offered through e-texts per a previous “add new content” request of March 8; we should know by April 7 if we can get an e-book.*