Introduction to Research Methods in Political Science  
POLS 2104-01  Fall 2018

Professor:  Dr. James H. Sunday (sunday@aucegypt.edu)  
Teaching Assistant:  TBD  
Office:  HUSS 2002 (Professor)  
Office Hours:  U 12:00-14:00; W 15:30-17:00

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Welcome to the class, and for most of you, to this next step in your major in political science.  
The goal of this course is to introduce students to qualitative and quantitative (empirical) research 
methods widely used in political science and other social science sister disciplines. The skills developed over 
our time together in this class should enhance both the career and academic potential of each student. In 
addition, methods taught in this class should help students write quality term papers in political science 
classes.

While in the introductory course of the Department each student is broadly taught what the discipline of 
political science is, this class focuses much more on how political scientists perform research. Most generally, 
qualitative methods include several procedures (approaches) including ethnography, interviews and focus 
groups, archival work, and different modes of observation.  
Similarly a key method of collecting data, quantitative methods are statistical and center on numbers 
(what is quantifiable). Students will be introduced, step by step, to some of the preliminary techniques of 
reading and interpreting tables and charts, in addition to introductory descriptive and analytical quantitative 
techniques. Once having covered these procedures, we will end the term with lessons in mixed methods 
and how to write up our political science research in an effective way.

ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION (10%)

The first step to success in this course is attendance, and each student is expected to attend all classes. 
Obviously things come up-- whether sickness, personal issues, or something else. As such, you are allowed 
in accordance with Registrar policy, the equivalence of three weeks of absences from our sessions though I 
encourage you to minimise the number as much as possible. Please note that any absence counts towards 
this three-week limit, meaning that university-sanctioned activities (e.g MUN/MAL), sickness with medical 
clinic documentation, and any other such absence counts. Without documentation that I approve, missed 
assignments are calculated as zero toward the final course mark. Any student missing more than the 
equivalent of three weeks starting at midnight following the ‘add/drop’ period (six sessions in a normal 
semester) will automatically fail the course with no exceptions. After all, I am sure we can agree that 
missing that much time would call into question what you are able to get out of this course.

By far the easiest way to guarantee a strong participation assessment is with substantive contribution to 
class discussion in our weekly meetings; that means quality takes precedence over quantity. However, I 
understand that in a class of close to 30 people, some students may not feel comfortable speaking in a crowd. 
I suggest trying to overcome that reticence, but because personalities vary, participation can also be 
maintained with visits to my office hours and e-mail contact which directly discuss the course readings, 
topics, concepts and the like. In short: make your contributions count whichever way you feel most 
comfortable; the point is to engage with the class and its material and to demonstrate clearly that you are 
doing so.
ASSIGNMENTS (40%)

There will be three assignments announced/counted throughout the term. As such, each will consist of 20% of the final grade. Please note that the lowest of the marks will be dropped. You may submit all three or only two, your choice.

- Literature Review 20%
- Research Journal 20%
- Peer Review 20%

EXAMS (50%)

There will be three exams, each one potentially counting 25% of the final grade, meaning that the lowest of the three exam grades will be dropped.

- Exam 1 25%
- Exam 2 25%
- Exam 3 25%

There will be no extra credit assignments under any circumstance.

MISCELLANEA

Finally in terms of your time in this course, please note that plagiarism is not acceptable in any form, and it will result in immediate failure of the entire course and my submitting the case to all relevant administrative bodies: the Department, HUSS Dean, and Academic Integrity Committee. If you are unsure about citations or what constitutes plagiarism, refer to the AUC policies on Academic Integrity, visit the Writing Centre, and definitely feel free to ask!

And lastly, a note about Office Hours: come to see me. You will do better in this course, and getting into the habit of engaging and talking with your professors on a regular basis will lead you to do better in your academic career. With added individual attention, I can provide you with readings on various topics, clarify things that might not be clear to you, and overall help you to do well.

READINGS FOR THE COURSE

On the general course page (website), you will find the general schedule we will follow throughout the term. For the readings themselves, everything is made available electronically via the course website, which requires you to log in with your AUC e-mail credentials:

https://sites.google.com/a/aucegypt.edu/pols-204-research-methods/

In addition to the Required Readings listed for each week, it is highly recommended to familiarise yourselves with the additional resources under each topic as they can help you to build your foundation in research methods.
SCHEDULE OF READINGS

Please note well that **ALL** of the following readings are **required** for the course. Additional ‘further readings’ can be found under the lecture topic for each week. For exact dates, please refer to the course website.

INDIVIDUAL LECTURES: PART I

**Introduction to the Course**


**Research Design**


**Literature Review**


**Research Ethics & Institutional Review Boards (IRBs)**


**Case Studies & Concepts**


**Reading & Writing Up Social Research**


**Review Session**

Exam 1
INDIVIDUAL LECTURES: PART II

Basic Logic of Qualitative Inquiry


Ethnography


Research Diaries


Focus Groups


Interviews: Formal & Informal


Historiography & Oral History


Archival Strategies & Unobtrusive Research


Research Journal Session (mandatory)
Review Session (optional)

Exam 2
INDIVIDUAL LECTURES: PART III

Basic Logic of Quantitative Inquiry


Survey Research & Questionnaires


Sampling I: Introduction


Sampling II: Probability


Estimation


Hypothesis Testing


Writing Day

Representing & Analysing Data

Mixed Methods I


Mixed Methods II