

POLS 395: RESEARCH METHODS

Spring 2024

Instructor: Dr. Neil S. Williams (he/him)	Time: M W 2:30 p.m. – 3:45 p.m.
Email: shaun.williams@louisiana.edu	Place: Mouton Hall, Room 107

Course Pages:

1. <http://www.neilswilliams.com/teaching.html>
2. <https://moodle.louisiana.edu/>

Student Hours: 12:00 pm - 2:00 pm Tuesday on Zoom
10:45 am -12:45pm Wednesday in Mouton Hall 118, or by appointment.

Required Texts:

- Llaudet, Elena, and Kosuke Imai. *Data Analysis for Social Science: A Friendly and Practical Introduction*. Princeton University Press, 2022.
- Other selected readings will be posted to Moodle

Recommended Texts:

- King, Gary, and Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. (KKV)
- Kellstedt and Whitten. 2018. *The Fundamentals of Political Science Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Brady, Henry E., and David Collier, eds. *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010.

Required free software:

- R—[download here](#)
- Rstudio—[download here](#)

Objectives:

The goal of this course is to help you understand how we study politics and to provide guidance on conducting original political science research. The course will provide you with a general understanding of what science is and a foundation in the logic and practice of systematic political inquiry. In addition to discussing general questions about the philosophy of science, we will cover fundamental issues such as arriving at a research question, theory building, hypothesis development, variable measurement and identifying and dealing with confounding factors. We will also cover a variety of

approaches to research, including experiments, regression analysis, natural experiments, case studies, process tracing, surveys, and fieldwork. In addition, a significant part of the course will be an introduction of the statistical programming language **R** and **RStudio**, which will serve as useful tools for many aspects of the research process.

Credit to Dr. Shane P. Singh (University of Georgia) for portions of this description.

General Education Student Learning Objectives

1. SB1: Evaluate data, evidence and arguments using discipline specific theory and methods.
2. SB2: Identify theories in the discipline relevant to understanding human behavior and society.
3. SB3: Distinguish the forces shaping human behavior and society.
4. SB4: Describe relations among individuals, groups and society utilizing discipline specific terminology.
5. SB5: Recognize the significance of individual, cultural and societal diversity.

Important Dates: Below are important test and due dates. Note that they, as well as everything else in the syllabus, may be changed as the semester continues. I will notify you in good time of any updates.

Problem set 1 due	Friday, February 9 th , 2024
Problem set 2 due	Friday, March 1, 2024
Problem set 3 due	Friday, March 15, 2024
Research Question Memo due	Friday, March 22, 2024
Annotated Bibliography due	Monday, April 8, 2024
Problem set 4 due	Friday, April 12, 2024
Presentations	Monday, April 22, 2024 and Wednesday, April 24, 2024
Final Research Design due	Tuesday, April 30, 2024

Grading

Late work will lose 10 points for every day late. After three days the assignment will receive a 0. Please contact me in good time with a valid excuse if there are any issues with exams for purposes of a make-up exam.

- **Attendance: (5%)** Attendance will be taken on random days.
- **Participation: (10%)** Participation will be evaluated using in-class participation. Active participation implies paying attention in class and engaging with the material and with your fellow student colleagues. You will get the most out of class if you attend class after having read assignments and are capable to discuss and respond to the assigned material. Keep in mind these points as you read:
 1. What is the main point or argument?
 2. What evidence do they use to support their argument?
 3. Is there contradicting evidence?
 4. How does the author's argument relate to the other content from the course?
- **Problem sets: (20%)** You will have four problem sets each worth 5% of your final grade. These problem sets will deal with concepts related to research design and applications of R coding. You **MAY** work on these together. Indeed, you are **encouraged** to work on these assignments with your fellow student colleagues. However, if you do the assignments together I ask you to note at the top of your submission who you worked with.
- **Final Research Project (65%)**
 1. **Research question: (10%)** Formulate a “big” question about your political science subfield. Then, revise that big question into a research question, that is answerable in the space of a paper manuscript. Derive a testable hypothesis and describe the ideal data for answering your question. This memo should be no longer than 3 double-spaced pages.

2. **Annotated Bibliography: (10%):** 8-10 of your main **ACADEMIC** sources that will be used in your project. Include brief descriptions of the source's theory, methodology, and application to your argument and paper.
3. **Presentations: (30%):** 8-10 of your main **ACADEMIC** sources that will be used in your project. Include brief descriptions of the source's theory, methodology, and application to your argument and paper.
4. **Research Design: (50%):** Research design related to some aspect of politics. The paper should cover or structure around the following pieces with regard to your topic:
 - Introduction
 - Background
 - Theory and Expectations
 - Proposed Method or Approach
 - Discussion

Grade Scale

A		>= 90.00
B		80.00 - 89.99
C		70.00 - 79.99
D		60.00 - 69.99
F		<= 59.99

Academic Honesty *“The University holds that all work for which a student will receive a grade or credit shall be an original contribution or shall be properly documented to indicate sources. Abrogation of this principle entails dishonesty, defeats the purpose of instruction, and undermines the high goals of the University. Cheating in any form will not be tolerated. Students shall be assumed to know the acceptable methods and techniques for proper documentation of sources and to avoid cheating and plagiarism in all work submitted for credit, whether prepared in or out of class.”* (From [University of Louisiana Lafayette page on Academic Honesty.](#)) Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and if discovered will be appropriately punished. For more information about what constitutes cheating, plagiarism, or intellectual dishonesty, consult me or the university web page.

Statement on AI software such as ChatGPT

Continuing with the previous statement on academic dishonesty, the use of ChatGPT and other AI software is prohibited for graded assignments. Using AI software is grounds for a 0 on the assignment, a 0 in the course, and a possible referral to the University. Furthermore, for assignments, we will be using Turnitin software which has tools to detect AI-generated text and responses, making the use of AI for assignments especially inadvisable.

Disability Resources: Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first be registered with the Office of Disability Services (ODS) to verify the disability and to establish eligibility for accommodations. Students may call 337-482-5252 or visit the ODS office in the Agnes Edwards Hall, room 126. Once registered, students should then schedule an appointment with their instructor to make appropriate arrangements for accommodations.

Mental Health and Wellness Resources:

- If you or someone you know needs assistance, you are encouraged to visit the Counseling and Testing Center page with tips on the [Mental Health & Wellness Resources](#) page. They will help you navigate any difficult circumstances you may be facing by connecting you with the appropriate resources or services.
- Make sure to seek help when needed. FREE counseling is available to you at the University Counseling and Testing Center. For more information, please contact the office at 337-482-6480, counseling@louisiana.edu, or stop by the Saucier Wellness Center (OK Allen Hall).

Contact me in good time for deadlines on make-up work.

Technology: I permit laptops and other devices such as Kindles and iPads if they are being used for class-related purposes. If you are off-task (Facebook, Instagram, Myspace, Tik Tok, Neopets, Club Penguin, etc.) while on these devices, it will be deducted from your participation grade.

Coronavirus Information for Students

Fall 2022 Overview

Vaccinations Required

UL Lafayette students are required to provide proof of COVID-19 vaccination, a physician's certification that the vaccine is medically contraindicated, or a written dissent. Learn more about the vaccination requirement.

Boosters are strongly encouraged.

Face masks recommended on campus

The University's Face Covering Policy was recently amended to recommend, but not require, that everyone wear face coverings in all indoor settings and outdoors while on University property.

A department or unit may require all individuals wear face coverings over their mouths and noses if it is determined to be necessary during a specific face-to-face course, in a specific classroom, laboratory, and/or private office/workspace, or other areas.

Additional exemptions and face covering guidelines are outlined in the policy. [Read the Face Covering Policy](#) on the University Policies website.

Courses to return to original delivery methods, employees to return to normal work schedules

The transmission rate of COVID-19 remains high in the Acadiana region and throughout the state, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Louisiana Department of Health. However, the University is seeing a decline in positivity rates among its students and employees.

This decrease, combined with the University's comprehensive testing protocols, is enabling a return to normal course delivery methods and operations. Classes that transitioned to remote learning at the start of the spring semester will begin to transition back to their original course delivery methods beginning Monday, Feb. 7. All courses should have returned to their original modes of instruction by Monday, Feb. 21. Students should check Moodle and with their professors for more details regarding when their classes will transition back.

In-person student organization events, including meetings, socials, and service projects, will continue to be allowed on and off campus provided masks are worn and proper social distancing can be maintained. Additionally, intramural sports will resume.

COVID-19 testing available on campus

COVID testing is available by appointment at Student Health Services on campus.

See a [list of other local COVID-19 testing sites](#) from the Louisiana Department of Health.

University's COVID-19 testing strategy As of April 7, testing of asymptomatic University employees and students (regardless of vaccination status) is suspended.

Stay home if you do not feel well.

Students

Students who feel ill should stay home and call Student Health Services at (337) 482-1293 to schedule an appointment. Students are required to report illness or a known COVID-19 exposure [via the UL Lafayette Student Quarantine and Isolation form](#).

View pdfs of the CDC's latest quarantine and isolation guidelines and what to do if you have been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19.

Staff and Faculty Members

As a reminder, staff and faculty members who test positive for COVID-19 must contact their supervisors and complete the COVID-19 positive test reporting form. Additionally, faculty and staff who have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 must complete the COVID-19 exposure reporting form.

Reporting forms must be completed by faculty and staff who work on campus or remotely, and by those who are on leave awaiting test results.

Tentative Course Outline:

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Yellow indicates important information

Credit to Dr. David Cottrell (University of Georgia) for the structure and outline of the course calendar.

Week 1: NO CLASS

Wednesday, January 10th, 2024

- **NO CLASS THIS WEEK (WEDNESDAY), I WILL BE AT A CONFERENCE**

Week 2: Introductions and Framing

Monday, January 15th, 2024

- **NO CLASS—MLK HOLIDAY**

Wednesday, January 17th, 2024

- Introductions
- Framing the course
- *Before class:*
 - **Skim:** King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. “Chapter 1: The Science in Social Science.” *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Week 3: The Scientific Study of Politics

Monday, January 22nd, 2024

- *Lecture day—Studying politics scientifically*
- *Before class:*
 - **Read:** King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. “Chapter 1: The Science in Social Science.” *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Wednesday, January 24th, 2024

- *Lab day—Introduction to R*
- *Before class:*
 - **Read:** Chapter 1. “Introduction”. Llaudet and Imai 2022.

Week 4: Measurement

Monday, January 29th, 2024

- Lecture day—Measurement
- Before class:
 - **Read:** Kellstedt and Whitten. 2018. “Chapter 5: Measuring Concepts of Interest”. *The Fundamentals of Political Science Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Wednesday, January 31st, 2024

- Lab day—Measurement in R
- Before class:
 - **Read:** Boese, Vanessa A. 2019. “How (not) to measure democracy.” *International Area Studies Review*. 22(2): 95–127.

Week 5: Descriptive Inference

Monday, February 5th, 2024

- Lecture day—Descriptive Inference
- Before class:
 - **Read:** King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. “Chapter 2: Descriptive Inference.” *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Wednesday, February 7th, 2024

- Lab day—Inference with survey data
- Before class:
 - **Read:** Chapter 3. “Inferring Population Characteristics via Survey Research”. Llaudet and Imai 2022.
- **Important Date:**
 - **Problem set 1 due Friday February 9 by 11:59 pm**

Week 6: NO CLASS MARDI GRAS

Monday, February 12th, 2024

- Reminder
 - **MARDI GRAS NO CLASS**

Wednesday, February 14th, 2024

- Reminder
 - **MARDI GRAS NO CLASS**

Week 7: Causal Inference

Monday, February 19th, 2024

- *Lecture day—Causal Inference*
- *Before class:*
 - **Read:** King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. “Chapter 3: Causal Inference.” *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Wednesday, February 21st, 2024

- *Lab day—Experimental Analysis*
- *Before class:*
 - **Read:** Chapter 2. “Estimating Causal Effects with Randomized Experiments”. Llaudet and Imai 2022.

Week 8: Analysis using Regression

Monday, February 26th, 2024

- *Lecture day—Introducing Regression*
- *Before class:*
 - **Read:** Chapter 4. “Predicting Outcomes Using Linear Regression”. Llaudet and Imai 2022.

Wednesday, February 28th, 2024

- *Lab day—Regression Analysis*
- *Before class:*
 - **Read:** Chapter 5. “Estimating Causal Effects with Observational Data”. Llaudet and Imai 2022.
- **Important Date:**
 - **Problem set 2 due Friday March 1 by 11:59 pm**

Week 9: Samples and Probability

Monday, March 4th, 2024

- *Lecture day—Introducing samples and probability*
- *Before class:*
 - **Read:** Kellstedt and Whitten. 2018. “Chapter 6: Probability and Statistical Inference”. *The Fundamentals of Political Science Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
 - **Skim:** Franzen, Axel, and Dominikus Vogl. 2013. Acquiescence and the Willingness to Pay for Environmental Protection: A Comparison of the ISSP, WVS, and EVS. *Social Science Quarterly*.

Wednesday, March 6th, 2024

- *Lab day—Samples and probability*
- *Before class:*
 - **Read:** Chapter 6. “Probability”. Llaudet and Imai 2022.

Week 10: Natural Experiments and Uncertainty

Monday, March 11th, 2024

- *Lecture day—Natural experiments and more*
- *Before class:*
 - **Read:** Dunning, Thad. 2012. *Natural Experiments in the Social Sciences*. Chapter 2, pp. 41-62.
 - **Skim:** Posner, Daniel N. 2004. "The political salience of cultural difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas are allies in Zambia and adversaries in Malawi." *American Political Science Review* 98(4): 529-545.

Wednesday, March 13th, 2024

- *Lab day—Uncertainty*
- *Before class:*
 - **Read:** Chapter 6. "Quantifying Uncertainty". Llaudet and Imai 2022.
- **Important Date:**
 - **Problem set 3 due Friday March 15 by 11:59 pm**

Week 11: Case studies, Case Selection, and the Comparative Method

Monday, March 18th, 2024

- *Lecture day—Case studies and comparisons*
- *Before class:*
 - **Read:** Lijphart, Arend. 1971. "Comparative politics and the comparative method." *American Political Science Review* 65(3): 682-693.

Wednesday, March 20th, 2024

- *Lab day—Research Project Workshop*
- *Before class:*
 - **Read:** Geddes, Barbara. 1990. "How the cases you choose affect the answers you get: Selection bias in comparative politics." *Political Analysis* 2: 131-150.
- **Important Date:**
 - **Research Question Memo due Friday March 22**

Week 12: NO CLASS SPRING BREAK

Monday, March 25th, 2024

- *Reminder*
 - **SPRING BREAK NO CLASS**

Wednesday, March 27th, 2024

- *Reminder*
 - **SPRING BREAK NO CLASS**

Week 13: Mechanisms and Process tracing

Monday, April 1st, 2024

- *Reminder*
 - **SPRING BREAK NO CLASS**

Wednesday, April 3rd, 2024

- *Lecture day—Mechanisms and Process Tracing*
- *Before class:*
 - **Read:** Collier, David. 2011. "Understanding process tracing." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 44(4): 823-830.
 - **Skim:** Ricks, Jacob I. and Amy H. Liu. 2018. "Process-Tracing Research Designs: A Practical Guide." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 51(4): 842-846.

Week 14: Surveys

Monday, April 8th, 2024

- *Lecture day—Surveys*
- *Before class:*
 - **Read:** Lupu, Noam, and Kristin Michelitch. 2018. "Advances in survey methods for the developing world." *Annual Review of Political Science* 21(1): 195-214.
 - **Skim:** Blair, Graeme, Alexander Coppock, and Margaret Moor. 2020. "When to worry about sensitivity bias: A social reference theory and evidence from 30 years of list experiments." *American Political Science Review* 114(4): 1297-1315.
 - **Important Date:**
 - * **Annotated Bibliography due Monday April 8**

Wednesday, April 10th, 2024

- *Lab day—Survey design*
- *Before class:*
 - **Read:** Berinsky, Adam J. 2017. "Measuring public opinion with surveys." *Annual review of Political Science* 20: 309-329. 2: 131-150.
- **Important Date:**
 - **Problem set 4 due Friday April 12 by 11:59 pm**

Week 14: Fieldwork

Monday, April 15th, 2024

- *Lecture day—Fieldwork*
- *Before class:*
 - **Read:** Mosley, Layna. 2013. "'Just Talk to People'? Interviews in Contemporary Political Science" In *Interview Research in Political Science*, editors, Layna Mosley. Ithaca NY, Cornell University Press.

- **Skim:** Fenno, R.F., 1977. US House members in their constituencies: An exploration. *American Political Science Review*, 71(3), pp.883-917.

Wednesday, April 17th, 2024

- *Lab day—Fieldwork*
- *Before class:*
 - **Read:** González, Yanilda, and Lindsay Mayka. 2022. “Policing, Democratic Participation, and the Reproduction of Asymmetric Citizenship.” *American Political Science Review*: 1-17.

Week 15: Project Presentations

Monday, April 22nd, 2024

- **Presentations**

Wednesday, April 24th, 2024

- **Presentations**

Final Research Design due on **Tuesday, April 30th by 11:59 p.m. to MOoodle**