

**RESEARCH METHODS IN POLITICAL SCIENCE
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
FALL 2021 COURSE SYLLABUS**

Course Number: 21:790:491:63
Instructor: Dr. James Amemasor
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Classroom Location: Hill Hall 204
Class Hours: Thursday 6:00 – 9:00 P.M.
Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description & Objectives

This course will introduce students to the fundamentals of research methods in political science. The course is designed to help students learn research, writing, and communications skills that they can apply to all academic and professional pursuits. The course will focus on helping students: 1) turn their research interests into research puzzle; 2) formulate appropriate research questions; 3) conduct helpful literature reviews; and 4) identify an effective research design. The goal is to complete a well-written, strongly argued and thoroughly documented research paper.

Learning Goals

The course is designed to help students:

Objective	Assessment
A) Acquire and demonstrate political science research and writing conventions and processes.	Class discussions and written assignments
B) Familiarize themselves with what drives the political scientist through the scholarly research process.	Class discussions
C) Develop their ability to ask appropriate research questions and conduct political science research in contemporary and historical contexts.	Class discussions and written assignments
D) Select and conduct rewarding literature reviews.	Written assignments
E) Critically evaluate their own research designs and the work of others and develop effective presentation skills.	Class discussions, written assignments
F) Enhance their ability to overcome the different challenges to making inferences (e.g., avoiding poor research questions).	Presentations, class discussions, Term Paper
G) Enhance their research and writing skills and be able to conduct good political science research and analysis.	Class discussions, written assignments

Required Text

Maryann Barakso, Daniel M. Sabet and Brian F. Schaffner, *Understanding Political Science Research Methods: The Challenge of Inference* (New York and London: Routledge, 2014).

Wayne Booth, Gregory Colomb, Joseph Williams, Joseph Bizup, and William T. Fitzgerald, *The Craft of Research*, 3rd Edition (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2016).

These texts are available for purchase at Rutgers University-Newark Bookstore.

Supplementary Readings

In addition to the texts selected for this course, students will be required to examine book chapters and journal articles provided as supplementary readings for a broader understanding and integration of the topics and themes discussed in class. Most of these materials are available in electronic format in the course's Canvas page.

Course Requirements and Grades

- 1) Readings are assigned for each class session. All readings will provide background information on the topics and themes presented in the course. It is *imperative* that students complete all required readings on time in order to be able to participate actively in class discussions. *Class discussions are an important part of the learning process.*
 - 2) Regular and punctual attendance is a course requirement. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of every class session. Please note that more than two unexcused absences will draw a penalty on the participation portion of your grade. Attendance is, however, meaningful if you are involved in class discussions.
 - 3) Starting from the second week, a team of 2-3 students will open class sessions with a 20–25 minute oral presentation based on assigned readings. The presenters will be required to survey what they think are the most significant dimensions of the readings and to present the class with a series of points for discussion.
 - 4) Final Paper: The due date for the research paper (10-12 double-spaced typed pages, not including the bibliography) is *Thursday, December 9*. Students are required to submit a preliminary one-page proposal on a research topic of their choice within the realm of political science, which must be approved by the instructor. The proposal is due on *September 16 in class*. The final paper must have a cover page, title, and abstract.
 - 5) All written assignments for this class are to be in Times New Roman, 12-point font with one-inch margins. No space is to be left between paragraphs, which are to be indented on the first line. Details of the term paper assignment will be available on the course's Canvas page.
- 1) Papers should utilize one of the *Chicago Manual of Style* citation formats. The guidelines for these formats are on the course's Canvas page.

The final grade earned in this course will be based on student performance in the following areas:

- a.) Attendance & Participation – 15%
- b.) Research Proposal – 10%
- c.) Preliminary Literature Review – 10%
- d.) Thesis/Research Strategy – 10%
- e.) Preliminary draft – 15%
- f.) Oral Presentation – 10%
- g.) Final Paper - 30%

Please note that make-ups for assignments and extensions will only be granted with a valid and documented excuse, subject to the instructor's approval.

Course Format

Class meetings are divided into lectures, student presentations, and class discussions. These formats are intended to complement one another and are integral parts of the course. The lectures provide context to political science research methods and contents for students' consideration. Class discussions are an integral part of the learning process.

Academic Integrity

As scholars of Rutgers-Newark, all students are held to the university's Academic Integrity and Student Conduct Codes as well as to their instructor's expectations, which include NO engaging in obscene or offensive behavior and NO utilizing inappropriate language or profanity. As an academic community dedicated to the creation, dissemination, and application of knowledge, Rutgers-Newark is committed to fostering an intellectual and ethical environment based on the principles of academic integrity. Academic integrity is essential to the success of the University's educational and research missions, and violations of academic integrity constitute serious offenses against the entire academic community. Academic dishonesty and/or plagiarism on term papers and exams will not be tolerated and may result in an immediate and final course grade of "F." Please note that such cases will be reported to the Chair of the Department of Political Science, and may result in possible academic probation and/or suspension from the University. See Academic Integrity Policy at Rutgers University at <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu>.

Policy on Inclusiveness

It is the policy and practice of Rutgers-Newark to promote an inclusive learning environment. If you have a documented disability, you may be eligible for reasonable accommodations. Please note that students are not permitted to negotiate any applicable accommodations directly with their professors. To request accommodations or assistance, please self-identify with the Office for Disability Services-Newark (ODS), Robeson Campus Center, Suite 219, at the beginning of the semester. For more information or to register for services, please be sure to contact ODS at (973) 353-5375 or by email at ODS@newark.rutgers.edu.

Policy on Incompletes

Incompletes will be given only in exceptional cases. Students wishing to request a grade of Incomplete must provide documentation to support the request, accompanied by an Incomplete Grade Extension Form (available from the Department of Political Science Main Office), to the professor *before* the date of the final examination. If the request for an incomplete is approved, the professor reserves the right to specify the new submission date for all missing coursework. Students who fail to submit the missing course work within the new submission time period will receive a failing grade for all missing coursework and a final grade based on all coursework assigned. Any Incomplete not resolved within one calendar year of receiving it, or by the time of graduation (whichever comes first), automatically becomes an "F." It is the responsibility of the student to make sure they have completed all course requirements within the time frame allotted. Please be aware that Incompletes on your transcript will impact financial aid and academic standing.

Coronavirus Safety

In accordance with Rutgers-Newark COVID-19 safety guidelines, masks must be worn by all persons inside campus buildings when in the presence of others, and in buildings in non-private enclosed settings (e.g., common workspaces, workstations, meeting rooms, classrooms). Masks should securely cover the nose and mouth. Masks must be worn during class meetings. Each day before you

arrive on campus or leave your residence hall, you must complete the brief survey on the My Campus Pass symptom checker self-screening app found at: [myRutgers Portal](#).

- ⦿ **This syllabus is subject to change** and such a change will be announced to students. Please note that students are responsible for keeping track of all announcements and assignments.

Schedule of Classes

Week 1: Sept. 2: Organizational Meeting

Course overview and choosing a research topic

Week 2: Sept. 9: The role and challenges of inference in research

Barakso et al., pp. xi-35.

Identifying research questions, defining problems, and finding sources

Week 3: Sept. 16: What makes a good research question?

Read Barakso, et al., pp. 36-55

Booth et al., pp. 35-64.

Assignment 1: Research proposal – due in class

Week 4: Sept. 23: Discussion of research proposals

Week 5: Sept. 30: The role of theory in research and why theories are important and valuable

Barakso et al., 56-80.

Toshko, pp. 56-82.

Assignment 2: Preliminary Literature Review – due in class

Week 6: Oct. 7: The Challenge of Descriptive Inference

Barakso et al., 83-115.

Week 7: Oct. 14: **Assembling Your Research Argument**

Booth et al., pp. 105-140.

Assignment 3: Thesis Statement/ Research Strategy – due in class

Write a two-page thesis statement and research strategy that includes how your thesis relates to the state of the academic debate regarding your topic. Include what strategy you will use to assess your causal claims and the data sources you will use.

Week 8: Oct. 21: **Assembling Your Research Argument**

Meeting with students individually via zoom

Week 9: Oct. 28: **Acknowledgement and Responses to Your Argument**

Booth et al., pp. 141-172.

Week 10: Nov. 4: **Writing Your Argument**

Booth et al., pp. 173-213

Assignment 4: Preliminary Draft

Week 11: Nov. 11: **No Meeting**

Preparing your draft for public presentation

Week 12: Nov. 18: **Making revisions of draft paper**

Meeting with students individually via zoom

Week 13: Nov. 25: No Class; Thanksgiving.

Week 14: December 2: **Last Day of Class**

Presentation of Research Paper

December 9: Final Research Paper Due

ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE

Assignment 1 due September 16: Submit a 1-page research proposal on a topic of your choice that you are considering for your final paper. The topic should be within the realm of Political Science and should contain a **puzzle/research question**. The proposal should demonstrate why the topic is interesting and important. Be prepared to present the proposal to the class.

Assignment 2: Preliminary Literature Review due on September 30: Building on the research proposal, write a three-page preliminary review of at least *five* articles in *academic journals* that directly relate to your research topic. The review should compare and contrast the articles and should highlight the key arguments presented as well as areas of disagreements among the authors. More importantly, the preliminary review should propose how your research question relates to one or more debates within the academic literature.

Assignment 3: Thesis Statement/Strategy due October 14: Write a two-page thesis statement and research strategy that includes how the thesis relates to the ongoing of debate regarding your topic and the strategy you will use to assess your causal claims.

Assignment 4: Preliminary Draft due November 4: The preliminary draft of your research paper should include at least the introduction, the literature review section, and analysis of cases and data. A good paper is one that is planned and organized prior to writing it. The draft should be at least eight pages long

Assignment 5: Oral presentation of preliminary draft due December 2.

Assignment 6: Final Paper: The final paper should include the introduction, the literature review section, methodologies used to answer the research question, and the findings of the student's research. A good research paper will have three major components: an introduction, a body, and a conclusion.