

DRAFT SYLLABUS

This is posted for your info to help you select or prepare for a course. An official version will be ready at or prior to your course start. Texts will be same or very similar. Please check online bookstore for exact texts.

Troy State University Research Methods in International Relations (POL 6601)

** Draft Syllabus **

Term 4, 2004

Instructor: Prof. John Morris, Ph.D.
Phone: 404.378.3754
E-mail: jmorristsu@mindspring.com
Postal Address: 140 Hibernia Avenue, Decatur, GA 30030



OVERVIEW

Course Description: A survey of Political Science research methodology including techniques and procedures for research design, data collection, data analysis, and data presentation.

The course website is: <http://spectrum.troyst.edu/~jmorris/researchmethods.htm>

Objectives: The objectives of this course are to:

- aid students to better understand the structure of the scientific method, including formulating theories, hypotheses and the fundamentals of research design
- familiarize students with the basic concepts of statistics and data analysis such as: types of data, variables, samples, populations, frequency distributions, measures of central tendency and dispersion, probability, measures of association, and basic bivariate analysis
- enable students to understand how to enter, manipulate and analyze data using Microsoft Excel, the most popular and user-friendly, off-the-shelf software
- enable students to develop empirical research designs, and formulate & test hypotheses using the techniques described above;
- enable students to become more informed “critics” of social scientific literature.

Course Relationships: This is a required course for all students in the MSIR program. It is essential that all students of International Relations have solid understanding and basic skills in research methods. Research skills sharpen analytical and critical thinking abilities, and help us move beyond descriptive and anecdotal argumentation.

Textbook: Louise White. 1998. *Political Analysis: Technique and Practice*, 4th Edition. Harcourt Brace College Publishers. ISBN: 0-15-505522-4

Course Requirements: Students will be required to write an IR research paper (divided into three distinct components), and complete one “take-home” problem set in statistics.

The main focus of this course is the IR research project. Students will develop their research projects in two steps (each one to be graded separately – see below):

1. Produce a statement of topic
2. Specify the research design, collect and analyze the data, and produce a final report

The purpose of the IR research project is for students to acquire direct familiarity with the procedures of the social scientific method:

1. formulating a research question and testable hypothesis
2. operationalizing concepts and variables
3. creating a viable research design
4. collecting data
5. analyzing and interpreting data
6. presenting data (including making charts and graphs in Microsoft Excel)

ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

The final grade will be calculated in the following manner.

Research Proposal	15%
Research Report	35%
Midterm Exam	25%
Statistics Problem Set	25%
TOTAL	100%

Research Project – 2 Assignments

Topics should not be overly ambitious since papers have to be completed in ten weeks. Students should try to find topics which interest them, keeping in mind the availability of data. You need to formulate one or more hypotheses which can be tested using techniques they understand. Furthermore, students may wish to use this opportunity to explore aspects of their thesis topics.

Students are strongly encouraged to discuss their topics with the instructor very early during the term to ensure that projects are of proper scope and difficulty.

Below are brief descriptions of these assignments. For complete explanation please see the guidelines for each assignment provided on Blackboard.

Assignment 1: Research Proposal

An explanation of your own research problem and why it merits being studied in the context of the fields of political science and international relations. This should include a literature review of at least 5 sources related to the issue under study. These should include at least three books or articles from relevant academic journals. Other sources might include relevant journalistic articles or special reports (i.e., news magazines), and research reports from commercial, governmental, non-governmental, and private research organizations. Students may use on-line sources, but should verify their origins before including them. Additionally, you must clearly identify your hypothesis, variables, operationalization of variables and overall approach. (estimated length, 5-6 pages)

Due date:

Assignment 2: Final Research Report

This should cover: (1) Research Design – detailed discussion of the conceptualization and operationalization of the research; (2) Data Gathering – a thorough description of methods of data gathering and sources; (3) Analytical Techniques – a detailed treatment of methods of data gathering and analysis chosen, including an explanation of the suitability of specific techniques compared with others and any possible problems arising from the methods selected; and (4) Data Analysis – application and execution of analytical techniques, and interpretations of findings. Chapter 14 of White is very helpful on what this should look like. (estimated length 17-20 pages)

Due date:

Midterm Examination

This examination will measure the student's ability to analyze professional, published research in IR. For this, students will produce a single essay that critically reviews an academic article provided by the professor. The academic article will be provided one week in advance of the exam period so that students may read and begin to formulate their assessment of the piece. Students will be allowed to use any materials during the exam. The response essays must be written on a computer and submitted in electronic format.

Statistics Problem Set

Students will complete one statistics problem set based on the material presented in the textbook.

*Note: This will require you to produce some simple graphs and charts in Microsoft Excel (or Corel QuattroPro). If you are unfamiliar with these programs, it is advised that you begin learning early. Graphs in any other format will not be accepted.

There are free tutorials on the Internet (just type in **Microsoft Excel tutorial** in you search engine). Two useful tutorials can be found at the following websites:

<http://www.usd.edu/trio/tut/excel/>
<http://www.fgcu.edu/support/office2000/excel/charts.html>

Depending on the nature of your research, you may also want to include graphs and data tables in your final report.

Due date:

COURSE OUTLINE & SCHEDULE OF READINGS:

Week 1: Introduction to Research Methods (March 15 – 21)

Read: White, Chapter 1-3

Week 2: Designing Research (March 22 – 28)

Read: White, Chapters 4-6

Week 3: Collecting Data (March 29 – April 4)

Read: White, Chapters 7-9

Week 4: Descriptive Statistics (April 5 –11)

Read White, Chapter 10

****Research Proposal due:**

Week 5: Measuring Relationships in Data (April 12 – 18)

Read: White, Chapter 11

Week 6: Significance Testing (April 19 – 25)

Read: White, Chapter 12

****Midterm Examination**

Week 7: Presenting / Analyzing Tabular and Graphic Data (April 26 – May 2)

Read: White, Chapter 13

****Statistics Problem Set due:**

Week 8: Research Design (May 3 - 9)

Read: White, Chapter 14

Week 9: Write Research Report (May 10 – 16)

Week 10: Write Research Report (May 17 – 23)

****Research Report must be submitted no later than DATE at 8:00 pm (EDT, US)**

Research Report Due by:

CLASS POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Americans with Disabilities Act: Any student whose disabilities fall within the ADA must inform the instructor at the beginning of the term of any special needs or equipment necessary to accomplish the requirements for this course.

Correspondence: I check my e-mail on a regular basis. I will try to respond as promptly as possible, but will not always be able to respond immediately. Please allow at least 24 hours before re-sending messages--48 hours over the weekend. Please direct all correspondence to my e-mail address: jmorristsu@mindspring.com.

Incomplete Work Policy: Incomplete grades are assigned at the discretion of the instructor. Students should refer to the Graduate Bulletin for policies regarding the removal of incomplete grades. *Note:* TSU requires the student to initiate the process of requesting an incomplete. Incompletes can only be assigned if substantial work for the course has been completed. Incompletes cannot be assigned if no work has been submitted.

Information Technology Usage Policy: The University's Information Technology System includes computing, information, technology, and network resources. All users of this technology system are obligated to utilize the various resources responsibly, legally, and ethically for their intended purpose. All students should read the policy before participating in online course activities.

Learning Resources: TSU Library Remote Services are accessed at <http://tsulib.troyst.edu>. Assistance with library instruction is through the Public Service Librarians by discipline, which in this case would be international relations or political science. No non-library laboratories or facilities are required in this course.

Standards of Conduct: The commission of or the attempt to commit any cheating and/or plagiarism are violations of the Standards of Conduct stated in the TSU Student Handbook. Students may be disciplined *up to and including suspension and expulsion*.

One of the most common offenses is *plagiarism*, for which Troy State University requires immediate expulsion. This offense is easily detected and documented. Additionally, TSU provides online facilities for submitting and analyzing papers, and automatically documenting suspected plagiarism.

Student Support: Distance Learning staff are identified at <http://www.tsulearn.net>. Assistance is available to students who experience difficulties using technology at <http://spectrum.troyst.edu/~distance/help>. Students who are proficient with the Internet generally but having specific problems with the online course materials (e.g., broken links on the page) should contact the instructor directly at jmorristsu@mindspring.com.