

Research Methodology in Political Science (Undergraduate)

Hankuk University of Foreign Studies
Spring 2025 (Tuesday 123; 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM)

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Office hours: Tuesday & Thursday 1:30–2:45 PM (Faculty House 501)

Course Description

Why do some people turn out to vote, while others do not? Why do some countries go to war, while others do not? What explains increases in political polarization? These are examples of the types of questions that political scientists address in their research. Political scientists use a variety of methods to study to politics. This course introduces students to the types of research design and quantitative methodology used in political science research. In this course, students will gain conceptual and experiential knowledge on how to design a political science research project and implement it. We will cover topics such as theory building, hypothesis testing, measuring concepts, and evaluating causal relationships. The purpose of this course is to teach students the meaning of “explanation” and “causal reasoning” as well as research strategies designed to make valid causal inferences.

Course Objectives

The overarching goal of this course is to prepare political science majors for analytical upper-level political science courses, to improve their research skills, and to increase their ability to make valid causal statements about political events and behaviors. This course uses a writing intensive approach to promote students’ progress towards the course objectives. All assignments should be written in English.

By the end of the course, students should have an understanding of how:

- To understand the major research designs used to study political phenomena.
- To analyze and evaluate empirical findings, like a table of regression results or a predicted probabilities plot, to a person without training in quantitative research methods.
- To develop theories of political processes, design appropriate empirical tests, and interpret the findings.

Required Readings

Students must complete the required reading for a given week no later than each class day. Regular attendance is essential for a successful learning experience in this course. Students are expected to come to class ready to actively participate and discuss the readings. Throughout the semester,

extra credit opportunities will be randomly offered to students in attendance of lecture.

Access to required readings will be given via e-Class.

- Kellstedt, Paul M., and Guy D. Whitten. 2018. *The Fundamentals of Political Science Research* (3rd Edition). New York: Cambridge University Press. (henceforth **FPSR**)
- Druckman, James N., Donald P. Green, James H. Kuklinski, and Arthur Lupia. 2011. *Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science*. New York: Cambridge University Press. (henceforth **CHEPS**)
- Any additional required readings will be posted to e-Class.

Course Evaluations

- Class Participation and Attendance (10%)
- Written Assignment (40%)
- Midterm Exam (25%)
- Group Project (25%)
 - Research Design Group Proposal (5%)
 - Research Design Group Project (20%)

1. Class Participation and Attendance (10%)

Although this course is a lecture series, you are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the information in the required reading materials. If any of you shirk, we all lose. I expect no absences in the course and encourage you to discuss any circumstances with me that will preclude you from attending class. I also expect you to arrive on time. If you do need to miss class, please contact me ahead of time to let me know that you will not be able to attend and to make arrangements to complete an alternate assignment. A large portion of my overall evaluation of your performance in the course will depend on the quality of your participation.

Grades for participation (including participation in discussion and attendance) will be assigned at the end of the semester, but you may ask for feedback on your performance at any time. If you have concerns about the quality and quantity of your participation in the course, I hope you will speak to me. Remember that just showing up to class is not enough. You must come to class prepared to participate in an informed discussion every week. If you just show up to class every week, but never say a word, you can expect to receive a D or lower for class participation (10% of your grade).

The following general grading scale will be used for participation and preparation:

- A: The student made a very strong contribution to the course. Class discussion, comments, and presentations reflected understanding and analysis of the material, and were constructive. ‘Constructive’ means that a student does not simply identify a weakness or problem. Rather, constructive comments identify a problem and offer suggestions for how to address the weakness or problem.
- B: The student contributed meaningfully to the course. Class participation and/or presentations went beyond repeating the assigned material, but did not make many constructive suggestions about how weaknesses might be overcome.
- C: The student did not contribute meaningfully to the course. Class participation and/or presentations were limited to repeating the assigned material rather than making connections or extensions.
- D or lower: The student attended class, but did not participate in discussions or present meaningful questions for academic debate.

2. Written Assignments (40%)

Given that this is a writing intensive course, writing-focused assignments are a tool for learning the basic principles of research design. Written assignments account for a major part of your course grade. You will submit 5 written assignments throughout the semester:

- Literature Review (100 points): Summarizes the academic literature that addresses a political (or social) science topic.
- Revised Literature Review (50 points): Incorporates the comments on the content and style of your initial Literature Review submission. **Must include** 1-2 paragraphs on a title page describing the revisions made in response to the first set of comments.
- Operationalization (100 points): Makes an argument about how to measure a political concept using academic sources to defend your operationalization.
- Regression Interpretation (100 points): Fully interprets regression results from an empirical model and discusses their implications.
- Revised Regression Interpretation (50 points): Incorporates the comments on the content and style of your initial Regression Interpretation submission. **Must include** 1-2 paragraphs on a title page describing the revisions made in response to the first set of comments.

Literature reviews

Literature reviews are one of the key components of the “front half” of an original research paper. A literature review situates a study within the broader context of what we do and do not know on a particular topic.

Operationalization

Operationalization is discussed in the “Data” section of a research paper, which is in the “middle” of the paper. Operationalization ties the theory and hypotheses to the analysis. If operationalization is not convincing, then readers may not believe your results.

Regression interpretation

Interpretation of results from an empirical model is one of the key components of the “back end” of an original research paper. Interpretation is key to communicating the extent to which a study’s evidence supports or does not support the hypothesis.

Writing guidelines

- 4-6 pages in length
- 12-point Times New Roman font, double-spaced, 1-inch margins
- Use proper citation formatting, like APSA, in the text and in the references.
- Proofread each assignment before submission.

3. Midterm Exam (25%)

About halfway through the semester you will take a multiple choice midterm exam. The purpose of this exam is to evaluate your knowledge of the course material in non-writing format. This exam will take place in class **in the week of 4/21**.

4. Research Design Group Project (25%)

The final assignment for this course is a research design that you will develop and write up in a small group of students. Along with your peers, you will address a relevant social science question by generating expectations about an explanation for an outcome and a plan for how to test those expectations. Students should aim for 5-7 pages double-spaced for the final project (20%) in addition to the one-page proposal (5%).

Your group’s research design should be formatted in the following way:

- Research design components (listed in the order they should appear):
 - Research design title, authors’ names, and date (title page or title on first page of main text)
 - Introduction including clear statement of the research question
 - Literature review using 6-8 peer-reviewed academic sources
 - Theory with discussion of causality and formally stated hypothesis/hypotheses
 - Research design including discussion of data and method used

– References

- 12-point Times New Roman font, double-spaced
- Use proper citation formatting, like APSA, in the text and in the references.

Grades

Final grades will be assigned with the following grading scale:

- A+ = 97.0 - 100
- A = 90.0 - 96.99
- B+ = 87.0 - 89.99
- B = 80.0 - 86.99
- C+ = 77.0 - 79.99
- C = 70.0 - 76.99
- D+ = 67.0 - 69.99
- D = 60.0 - 66.99
- F = 0 - 59.99

Course Schedule

This is a tentative schedule for the semester that is subject to change by the instructor. Any updates to the syllabus will be posted to e-Class. All readings listed are required unless otherwise specified.

Week 1 (3/4): Course introduction

- Syllabus (Course Introduction)

Week 2 (3/11): Scientific study of politics and literature reviews

- *FPSR*, Chapters 1-2

Week 3 (3/18): Causality

- *FPSR*, Chapter 3

Week 4 (3/25): Research design and measuring concepts

- *FPSR*, Chapter 4-5
- Assignment
 - **Literature Review (1st Draft) due Sunday of Week 4 (3/30)**

Week 5 (4/1): Descriptive statistics and probability

- *FPSR*, Chapter 6-7

Week 6 (4/8): Hypotheses and statistical significance

- *FPSR*, Chapter 8
- Recommended
 - Gelman, Andrew, and Hal Stern. 2006. “The Difference Between “Significant” and “Not Significant” is not Itself Statistically Significant.” *The American Statistician* 60(4), 328-331.
- Assignment
 - **Literature Review (2nd Draft) due Sunday of Week 6 (4/13)**

Week 7 (4/15): Basics of regression

- *FPSR*, Chapter 9

Week 8 (4/22): Midterm exam

- **Midterm Exam in class**

Week 9 (4/29): Multiple regression

- *FPSR*, Chapter 10

Week 10 (5/6): No class

- **Day off for Children’s Day**
- Assignment
 - **Operationalization due Sunday of Week 10 (5/11)**

Week 11 (5/13): Experiment I (nuts and bolts)

- *CHEPS*, Chapter 6
- Recommended
 - *CHEPS*, Chapter 8

Week 12 (5/20): Experiment II (application and examples)

- Kim, Gidong, Yu Bin Kim, and Dongjin Kwak. 2024. “Public Opinion, Rivalry, and the Democratic Peace: Experimental Evidence from South Korea.” *International Studies Quarterly* 68(2), sqae027.
- Kim, Gidong, Jae Mook Lee, and Da Bin Jung. 2020. “Political and Emotional Effects of Ambivalent Sexism: A Survey Experiment in South Korea.” *Korean Journal of Sociology* 54(4), 41-82. (in Korean)
- Assignment
 - **Regression Interpretation (1st Draft) due on Sunday of Week 12 (5/25)**

Week 13 (5/27): Categorical variables, interactions, outliers, and multicollinearity

- *FPSR*, Chapter 11
- Assignment
 - **Group Project Proposal due on Sunday of Week 13 (6/1)**

Week 14 (6/3): Mixed-methods & mini-conference I (subject to change)

- Hur, Aram. 2022. *Narratives of Civic Duty: How National Stories Shape Democracy in Asia*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. Chapter 2.
- Presentations, Peer-Review, and Discussions
- Recommended
 - Lieberman, Evan S. 2005. “Nested Analysis as a Mixed-Method Strategy for Comparative Research.” *American Political Science Review* 99(3), 435-452.
 - Kocher, Matthew, and Nuno Monteiro. 2016. “Lines of Demarcation: Causation, Design-Based Inference, and Historical Research.” *Perspectives on Politics* 14(4), 952-975.
 - Ahmed, Amel, and Rudra Sil. 2012. “When Multi-Method Research Subverts Methodological Pluralism—or, Why We Still Need Single-Method Research” *Perspectives on Politics* 10(4), 935-953.
- Assignment
 - **Regression Interpretation (2nd Draft) due on Sunday of Week 14 (6/8)**

Week 15 (6/10): Mini-conference II

- Presentations, Peer-Review, and Discussions

Week 16 (6/17): Final Week

- No class
- Assignment
 - **Final Research Design Group Project due (6/17)**