

**PSCI 2300.002**  
**INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL RESEARCH**  
(JFK assassination edition)

Spring 2017  
Tuesdays and Thursdays  
3:30-4:50p  
MATT 112

**Course Description**

How do we know what we know? Research—inference drawn as a result of systematic observation. Focusing on the empirical puzzles surrounding the assassination of Pres. John F. Kennedy, this course explores social scientific research methodology. We begin with the logic of social scientific inquiry and the basics of research design, and then move on to the quantitative methods that are commonly used to study important political questions. Students will also learn to use EXCEL for statistical analysis.

**Instructor**

Dr. Elizabeth Oldmixon  
Department of Political Science  
University of North Texas  
Wooten Hall 156  
940.565.4791  
Contact via Piazza  
Office hours: Tuesday, 1.00-3:00p; Thursday, 2:00-3:00p

**Learning Outcomes**

- Formulate research questions and hypotheses.
- Identify good sources of information.
- Design empirical research projects.
- Analyze data using statistical techniques.
- Interpret bivariate and multivariate relationships.
- Effectively communicate research findings.

**Teaching Assistant**

Mr. Christopher Pace  
Wooten Hall 173  
Email via Piazza  
Office hours: Monday, 4.00-5.00p; Tuesday, 10.00a-12.00p

**Resources**

*Blackboard.* Students are responsible for regularly checking the course Blackboard page, accessible at <https://learn.unt.edu/>. This is where assignments will be submitted course information provided.

*Piazza.* We will use Piazza rather than email for all class-related electronic communications. Piazza is designed to get you help fast and efficiently from classmates, from the instructor, and from the TA. Create an account using the link in Blackboard.

*REEF Polling Account.* This is student response platform that is free to all UNT students. Create an account using the link in Blackboard.

*Remind* (optional...kind of). If you wish to receive course-related reminders via email or text, you may sign up to receive notifications at this link: [remind.com/join/psci23](http://remind.com/join/psci23) or text @psci23 to 81010.

**Class Materials**

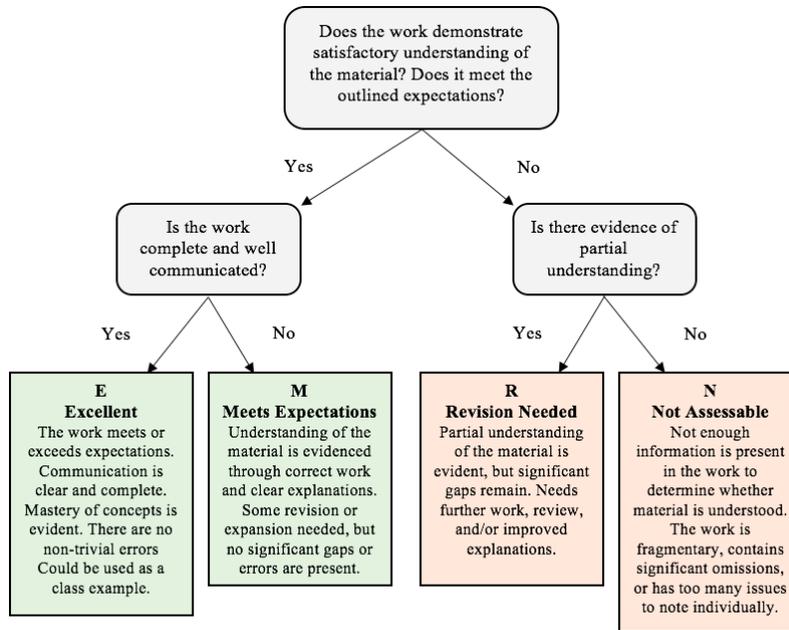
Pollock, Philip H. 2015. *The Essentials and Political Analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press.

Additional readings, including excerpts from the Warren Commission Report (WCR) and House Select Committee on Assassinations Report (HSCA), are available via Blackboard.

*Recommended:* Salkind, Neil. 2015. *Excel Statistics: A Quick Guide*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

**Grading Explanation**

Your final course grade is determined by the quality and quantity of work that you submit in the class, and it will be the only traditional letter grade (A, B, C, D, F) you receive during the semester. Assignments and exams are graded using the EMRN rubric pictured below. Work classified as E or M is satisfactory, meaning that articulated specifications have been met; work classified as R or N is unsatisfactory, meaning that articulated specifications have not been met. Unsatisfactory work will not result in credit being awarded.



Adapted from Stutzman and Race (2004): <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1717675>

Your course grade will reflect the bundles of assignments that you satisfactorily complete. The bundle of assignments required for each letter grade is listed in the table below.

Grade	Required Elements
A	Satisfactorily complete 3 exams, earning at least 2 Es Satisfactorily complete the Assassination Project, earning an E Satisfactorily complete all 5 Homework Assignments, earning at least 2 Es Earn 70% of available REEF/Quiz Points
B	Satisfactorily complete 3 exams, earning at least 1E Satisfactorily complete the Assassination Project Satisfactorily complete 4 Homework Assignments, earning at least one E Earn 70% of available REEF/Quiz Points
C	Satisfactorily complete 2 exams Satisfactorily complete the Assassination Project Satisfactorily complete 3 Homework Assignments
D	Satisfactorily complete 1 exam Satisfactorily complete 3 Homework Assignments

*Tokens & Flexibility.* Since every element of the course is assessed on an all-or-nothing basis, it might be stressful to strive for Satisfactory (E or M), given that the stakes for not meeting that threshold may be significant. To ease the stress and build in a consistent measure of flexibility—and to maximize opportunities for learning—you will start the course with 3 virtual tokens that can be “redeemed” for some leniency or opportunities for revision. Using a token will allow you to do one of the following:

- Retake the Unit 1 or 2 exam;
- Be awarded 10 REEF/Quiz points at the end of the semester;
- Resubmit a Homework Assignment;
- Submit a Homework Assignment or the Assassination memo up to 48 hours late.

*Why are we using this grading system?* There are many advantages to this grading system. 1) You will know how much work the letter grade you wish to achieve demands from the first day of class and be strategic about your assignments. 2) This system allows you to track how you’re doing without weighted averages and can more

clearly see your strengths and weaknesses. 3) Your performance in class is tied to specific learning outcomes, not percentages. 4) This system provides a mechanism for improving unsatisfactory work. 5) This system rewards mastery instead of a “hunt for partial credit” strategy.

**Assignments and Examinations**

All specifications are listed on Blackboard.

*Examinations.* Three exams will be given. Exams will cover material from lectures and required readings. Exams will include a mixture of objective questions, short essays, and problems.

*REEF/Quiz Points.* There will be an undetermined number of REEF polling questions and in-class quizzes. Students should use a personal electronic device to respond to REEF polling questions. If you do not have a personal electronic device (smartphone, tablet, or computer) and wish to earn credit for REEF participation, please see me right away. Missed REEF questions and quizzes cannot be made up, except with the use of a token at the end of the semester. Students may refer to their notes when taking in-class quizzes.

*Homework.* Five homework assignments are due throughout the semester. Assignments will be turned in via Blackboard, and due dates are provided below.

*Assassination Project.* Having considered the evidence, competing theories of the Kennedy assassination, and the effects thereof, students will investigate an empirical puzzle related to the crime. Working in pairs, students will write an analytical paper and present a poster summarizing their research. As part of this assignment, students are expected to attend the Sixth Floor Museum Field trip on Saturday, January 28. The bus will leave from the Wooten Hall parking lot at 11:00am and return by 5:00pm. We’ll have snacks and drinks on the bus, but please bring your lunch or eat lunch ahead of time. Please inform Dr. Oldmixon immediately if you are not able to attend. (This trip is funded with a UNT SIFT Grant and by the Department of Political Science.)

**Course Schedule**

Students should plan to have all the readings completed for a topic by the date we begin the topic.

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*Unit 1: Inductive Approaches and Theories of the Crime*

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Assignment</b>
January 17	Scientific Approaches to Politics	Pollock, Introduction
January 19	What Happened in Dallas?	WCR, chapter 2
January 24	What Happened in Dallas?	--
January 26	What Happened in Dallas?	HSCA, pp. 41-63
January 31	Conspiracy Theories	McAdams, all Krock, all HSCA, pp. 95-99
February 2	Conspiracy Theories	Marrs, pp. 127-148 Shenon, all
February 7	Evaluating Competing Evidence (Bullets and Guns)	Spiegelman et al., all
February 9	Evaluating Competing Evidence (Acoustics)	Thomas, all
February 14	Evaluating Competing Evidence (“Badge Man”)	Myers (2004)

*Unit 2: Deductive Approaches and Implications of the Crime*

(In Units 2 and 3, we explore empirical puzzles following on from the assassination. These include: 1. How do assassinations affect political stability? 2. What was the effect on American society? 3. How might the assassination have affected attitudes toward Kennedy? 4. Why are some more likely to accept the Warren Report than others?)

February 16	Conceptualization	Pollock, pp. 1-9
February 21	Conceptualization	Iqbal and Zorn, pp. 385-390
February 23	Measuring Variables	Pollock, pp. 9-17
February 28	Measuring Variables	Pollock, chapter 2
March 2	Developing Theories and Hypotheses	Sheatsley and Feldman, pp. 189-192, 197-202
March 7	Developing Theories and Hypotheses	Pollock, pp. 48-58
March 9	Research Design and Control	Oliver and Wood, pp. 952-955
March 14	No class, spring break	Pollock, pp. 58-69
March 16	No class, spring break	Pollock, chapter 4
March 21	Research Design and Control	Esaiasson and Granberg, all
March 23	Making Comparisons, Thinking about Relationships	Pollock, pp. 102-112,
March 28	Making Comparisons, Thinking about Relationships	Pollock, pp. 112-118
March 30	Unit 2 Exam	--

### *Unit 3: Statistical Techniques for Inference*

April 4	Sampling and Statistical Inference	Pollock, pp. 123-136
April 6	Sampling and Statistical Inference	Pollock, pp. 136-151
April 11	Effectively Communicating Research Results	--
April 13	Significance and Association	Pollock, pp. 156-163
April 18	Significance and Association	Iqbal and Zorn, pp. 390-391
April 20	Bivariate and Multivariate Relationships	Pollock, pp. 163-170
April 25	Bivariate and Multivariate Relationships	Pollock, pp. 183-188
April 27	Bivariate and Multivariate Relationships	Pollock, pp. 188-198
May 2	Bivariate and Multivariate Relationships	Pollock, pp. 198-208
May 4	Poster Session	Oliver and Wood, pp. 959-962
May 9	Unit 3 Exam, 1:30-3:30p	--

### **Planning for Success**

As you think about success in this class, here are two things to keep in mind.

- On average, you will read 22 pages per week.
- You should expect to spend 6 hours per week outside of class on class-related work.

#### *Remember These Dates*

Field Trip	Saturday, January 28
Homework 1	Monday, January 30, 11.59p
Unit 1 Exam	Take-home due Wednesday, February 15, 11.59p
Homework 2	Wednesday, March 1, 11.59p
Homework 3	Wednesday, March 20, 11.59p
Unit 2 Exam	In classroom Thursday, March 30
Homework 4	Wednesday, April 19, 11.59p
Homework 5	Thursday, April 27, 11.59p
Assa. Memo	Tuesday, May 2, 11.59p
Poster Session	Thursday, May 4, in class
Unit 3 Exam	In classroom Tuesday, May 9, 1.30-3.30p

#### *Making It Stick*

You will be introduced to a lot of new material in this course, and you will need to remember key information to participate and do well on assignments and exams. Recent research on the science of learning and memory suggests that the following practices facilitate durable learning.

1. Test yourself early and often. The more you practice retrieving newly-learned information from your brain, the easier it will be to recall it when you want later. Creating flashcards is a great way to test yourself, but don't wait until the week before the exam!
2. Mix is up. Shift your study back and forth

### *Getting Help*

I want you to succeed in this class and enjoy learning about research. In part, success requires taking personal responsibility for your grade. If you are having difficulty with the material, be proactive and get help! Contact me or Mr. Pace via Piazza or during office hours so we can ensure that you get the most out of the time and effort you choose to put into the course.

### **Class Policies**

For course drop information, see schedule at <http://essc.unt.edu/registrar/schedule/scheduleclass.html>.

*Makeup Exams.* No make-up exams will be given unless without a university-excused absence or a family or medical emergency that is documented and verifiable. Students who will miss an exam due to travel with UNT teams or performance groups or for observance of a religious holiday should make arrangements to take their exams prior to their absences.

*Americans with Disabilities Act Compliance.* The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information see the Office of Disability Accommodation website at <http://www.unt.edu/oda>. You may also contact them by phone at 940.565.4323.

between topics instead of studying topics one at a time. If you're using flash cards, add new content to your collection of cards as we cover new content in class and mix them up when you study.

(If you want to learn more about learning, check out Brown, Roediger, and McDaniel's 2014 book, *Making It Stick: The Science of Successful Learning*.)

*Laptops.* Research suggests that using laptops in class is negatively associated with student success. I advise against using laptops, but it is up to you. The larger problem is that laptop use negatively affects student success for the people sitting around laptop users. Laptop users should take care not to distract their peers.

*Academic Integrity.* Academic Integrity is defined in the UNT Policy on Student Standards for Academic Integrity. Any suspected case of Academic Dishonesty will be handled in accordance with the University Policy and procedures. Possible academic penalties range from a verbal or written admonition to a grade of F in the course. Further sanctions may apply to incidents involving major violations. You will find the policy and procedures at <http://faculty.success.unt.edu/academic-integrity>.

*Classroom Conduct.* Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classrooms, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student can be found at <https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct>.