California State University, Chico  
Department of Political Science

POLS 421, Methods of Political Inquiry, Section 1, Spring 2014

Instructor: Dr. Lori M. Weber  
Office location: Butte 733  
E-mail: Lweber@csuchico.edu  
Office hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays 1:00-3:30 p.m.  
Class days and times: Mondays 4:00-6:50 p.m.  
Classroom: Butte Hall 211  
Prerequisites: POLS 331 with a C- or higher  
Teaching Assistant: Christopher Aguilera—art.chris777@gmail.com

“The numbers have no way of speaking for themselves. We speak for them. We imbue them with meaning.” –Nate Silver, The Signal and the Noise

Course Usage of Blackboard Learn  
Copies of this course syllabus and major assignments may be found on Blackboard Learn. You are responsible for regularly checking the online resources, which is accessed through the Chico State Portal at http://portal.csuchico.edu.

Course Description and Goals  
This course is an introduction to the quantitative analysis of political and social phenomena. Qualitative analysis is equally as important and its distinction from quantitative research is less imperative than some scholars would have you believe.

This course does not focus on quantitative analysis because it is superior, more difficult, more systematic, or more “scientific.” Instead, it is really more of a way to provide you with “intellectual self-defense” in a world where phenomena, including political and social phenomena, are commonly reduced to numbers.

Learning quantitative analysis is like learning another language. Moreover, like with words, statistics can be used to persuade or to manipulate. Consequently, like politics, quantitative research is about power. The best way to make power less arbitrary is through education, so this is your democratic education . . .
“Flipping” the Use of Classroom Time
Learning how to conduct quantitative social science research is not simply the acquisition of correct information. What this means is that I cannot simply ‘transmit’ knowledge to you — you will have to take an active role in the learning process, particularly in a course such as this one.

With this view in mind, I have provided “online” informational materials (e.g., video lectures and web links) for the course on Blackboard Learn that would typically be given in a “lecture.” Moreover, you will be provided with weekly “comprehension” questions that will serve as a guide for your note taking both for this online information and for the weekly, required reading.

For me to present all this information again in class would be not be an efficient use of your time. If you prepare for class by completing your reading, viewing the online informational materials, and by completing your weekly “comprehension assignments,” then we can use class time to work together to develop a deeper understanding of the material and to learn how to do the applied work of quantitative social science research. This view of the use of classroom time is called the “flipped classroom.” You can read more about this teaching technique online at: [http://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/eli7081.pdf](http://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/eli7081.pdf).

Course Content Learning Outcomes
Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Identify the appropriate statistic for a given situation.
2. Calculate appropriate statistics using statistical programs—e.g., Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).
3. Hand-calculate appropriate statistics.
4. Explain the results of their statistical analyses to the general public.
5. Explain graphs and tables of statistical results.
6. Write an empirical research report from the results of their statistical analyses.
7. Make and present a poster explaining results of their statistical analyses.

Required Texts/Readings
Textbook (available for purchase in Chico State Wildcat Store in the BMU)

Other required readings/course materials
Additional required readings, web links, and video tutorials for this course will be available on the course site on Blackboard Learn. Again, you are responsible for regularly checking the online resources for this course.
Library Liaison and Helpful Information
There are research and subject guides that the library has prepared for your various majors (e.g., political science, criminal justice, international relations, legal studies, and public administration). There are also helpful guides to finding scholarly articles, and for properly citing your sources (we will use Chicago Author-Date in this course).

For additional assistance with our library resources, utilize the Reference Desk located on the second floor of the library on Monday-Friday 10 am-6 pm & Sundays 3-7 pm. This desk is staffed at these times with skilled librarians who are there to assist you. Jodi Shepherd is the Reference and Instruction Librarian and is our library liaison. You can contact her at jrshepherd@csuchico.edu.

Classroom Protocol
The classroom experience depends upon attentive, engaged students. Please refrain from the following disruptive behavior:

- side conversations, ringing cell phones or using a cell phone to talk or text
- interrupting the instructor or other students
- monopolizing class discussion and refusing to defer to instructor, or listen to others; persisting when the instructor has indicated that the student's remarks are off topic and it is time to move on
- entering late/leaving early, moving about the classroom
- filming, photographing, or taping the class without permission from instructor
- yelling, arguing, swearing, bullying, or other intimidating behavior
- reading, sleeping, eating, drinking, or not paying attention
- shuffling through papers, cleaning out a backpack or purse during lecture
- showing up to class under the influence of alcohol/drugs

Dropping and Adding
You are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures about add/drops, academic renewal, etc. found http://www.csuchico.edu/catalog/. You should be aware of the new deadlines and penalties for adding and dropping classes.

Excused Absences
I only excuse absences from class due to illness, natural disaster, family emergencies, or a compelling academic reason that is beyond your control. Please let me know as soon as you can if this is the case, so we can make arrangements to keep you from falling behind too much. In the past I have not required proof, unfortunately many students have taken advantage of this. If you miss due to an excused absence, I now require proof. I have turned to this policy out of fairness to students who honestly have such reasons for absences.
Evaluation/Grading

Note: Guides for Exams and Applied Research Project will be provided.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weekly Assignments</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 “Comprehension” Assignments (10 points each, due weekly)</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 “Workshop” Assignments (10 points each, due weekly)</td>
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Exams

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<tr>
<td>Exam 1 (March 3rd)</td>
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<td>Exam 2 (April 7th)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exam 3 (May 12th)</td>
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Applied Research Project

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<tr>
<td>Research Plan (Due April 1st)</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Draft of Report (Due April 21st)</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Report (Due May 5th)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poster Presentation (at BSS Symposium, April 23rd, 6:30 – 8:30 pm)</td>
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Grand Total                   500

Grading Scale

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<tr>
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<th>Grade</th>
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<td>100-94</td>
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<td>93-90</td>
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<td>89-88</td>
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<td>67-64</td>
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<tr>
<td>63-60</td>
<td>D-</td>
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<td>59</td>
<td>F</td>
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Policy on Late Work

Unless you have an excused absence (see above), I will drop late assignments one-half grade per day (based upon the percentage of the total possible points for the assignment). However, I will only accept late assignments and papers for up to one week plus one day past when they were due. After that, you will not get credit. So if you find at any point during the semester that you did not receive your assignment back from me (I grade and return them the following week). Let me know within the above time period and submit a new copy immediately. It is your responsibility to make sure that I received your work. I stick to my policy on late work out of fairness to students who turn their work in on time. In addition, there will be no make-ups for the exams. If you have an excused, documented absence for assignments or exams you may submit a late assignment and in the case of a missed exam, I will replace your score on your missed exam with one of your scores on the other two exams—whichever is highest.
University Policies and Campus Resources

Academic integrity
Students are expected to be familiar with the University’s Academic Integrity Policy. Your own commitment to learning, as evidenced by your enrollment at California State University, Chico, and the University’s Academic Integrity Policy requires you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs. The policy on academic integrity and other resources related to student conduct can be found at: http://www.csuchico.edu/sjd/integrity.shtml.

Campus Policy in Compliance with the American Disabilities Act
If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability or chronic illness, or if you need to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. Please also contact the Accessibility Resource Center (ARC) http://www.csuchico.edu/arc/index.shtml, as they are the designated department responsible for approving and coordinating reasonable accommodations and services for students with disabilities. ARC will help you understand your rights and responsibilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act and provide you further assistance with requesting and arranging accommodations.

IT Support Services
Computer labs for student use are located on the first and fourth floor of the Meriam Library, Room 116 and 450, Tehama Hall Room 131, and the Bell Memorial Union (BMU) basement. You can get help using your computer (including the online course software, Blackboard Learn) from IT Support Services; contact them through their website, http://www.csuchico.edu/itss. Additional computer labs are available in Butte Hall 207 and 211 (these rooms are also used for classes, so check the lab schedule posted outside the doors).

Student Services
Student services are designed to assist students in the development of their full academic potential and to motivate them to become self-directed learners. Students can find support for services such as skills assessment, individual or group tutorials, subject advising, learning assistance, summer academic preparation and basic skills development. Student services information can be found at: http://www.csuchico.edu/current-students.

Student Learning Center
The mission of the Student Learning Center (SLC) is to provide services to assist students to become independent learners. The SLC prepares and supports students in their college course work by offering a variety of programs and resources to meet student needs. The SLC is online at http://www.csuchico.edu/slc. The University Writing Center has been combined with the Student Learning Center.