

SYLLABUS
PLSC 300A: Research Seminar on Descriptive Representation (“Who Represents Us?”)
Spring 2022

T/Th 2:30 – 3:45 pm
Dumbach 6

Instructor

Dr. Eric Hansen

Email: ehansen4@luc.edu

Office Location: Coffey Hall 326B

Office Hours: T/Th 1:00 pm – 2:30 pm, or by appointment

Course Description and Objectives

Information about politics is everywhere, but much of what we think we know about politics boils down to assumptions, rationalizations, and stories we like to tell ourselves. How can we make more accurate claims about political phenomena?

Political science draws upon a diverse range of methods to describe and explain the political world. This course will introduce students on how to think about politics like a scientist. Students will also learn by doing. In small groups, students will complete research design projects. Collectively, students will contribute to a class research project by collecting data and participating in decisions about its analysis.

The substantive focus of this research class is *descriptive representation*, which is the representation of groups in political institutions by members who belong to or identify with the group. Examples of questions that this line of research addresses: Are Black representatives stronger advocates for the policy interests of Black constituents than white representatives? How does the religious affiliation of members of Congress inform the types of bills they sponsor? How does the disproportionate presence of white-collar professionals in elected office affect U.S. economic policy? While the existing research in the U.S. mostly focuses on representation on the basis of race, gender, and, class, these questions can apply to any group sharing a politically salient identity.

By completing this course, students should be able to:

- 1) Articulate research questions
- 2) Locate and utilize academic information resources
- 3) Synthesize academic literature
- 4) Identify potential data sources and convert them to usable quantitative data
- 5) Comprehend and critique multiple approaches to social scientific inquiry
- 6) Understand the basic procedures for a variety of research methods
- 7) Be conversant in current questions of descriptive representation

Course Structure

After the first two weeks, Tuesdays will be “learning days” and Thursdays will be “application days.” On Tuesdays we’ll discuss the assigned reading and draw connections between the theory of social scientific research and its application to specific questions on descriptive representation. On Thursdays, we’ll engage in active discussions and research tasks—either data collection, peer review, or group discussion of analysis.

Required Texts

Kellstedt, Paul M., and Guy D. Whitten. 2018. *The Fundamentals of Political Science Research: Third Edition*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Grades

Final grades for the course will be based on the following scale. I reserve the right to make adjustments to individual grades based on overall performance in the course and/or extenuating circumstances. There will be **NO** extra credit provided.

Letter Grade	Percentage Score
A	93-100
A-	90-92.99
B+	87-89.99
B	83-86.99
B-	80-82.99
C+	77-79.99
C	73-76.99
C-	70-72.99
D+	67-69.99
D	60-66.99
F	59.99 or below

The proportion of each assignment as part of your overall grade is as follows:

Research Design: 55%

 Research questions: 5%

 Annotated bibliography: 10%

 Pre-meeting memo: 5%

 First draft: 10%

 Presentation: 5%

 Peer Review: 5%

 Final draft, including memo explaining revisions: 15%

Contributions to Class Research Project: 20%

Reading Quizzes: 15%

Attendance/Participation: 10%

Research Design

In small groups, students will design a research project intended to answer an empirical question. This is the major individual project for the semester, so the project will be broken into the following discrete stages.

Research Questions

Students will submit three potential research questions. Each question must be accompanied by one paragraph contextualizing the question and justifying why it's an important question to ask. Students will receive feedback both from me and from peers before they choose a final question to pursue as a group.

Annotated Bibliography

Students will individually submit bibliographies with no fewer than 15 academic sources that speak to their group's research question. Each entry of the bibliography must be accompanied by a paragraph that (a) summarizes the main hypotheses, findings, and methods of the source and (b) explains why the source is relevant to helping answer the research question.

Pre-meeting Memo

In advance of their group's one-on-one meeting with me, groups must submit a one-page memo summarizing their plans for the research design. This document will form the basis of our discussion in the meeting.

First Draft

Students will submit a full first draft of a research design. The draft must identify a research question, synthesize the existing literature related to that question, articulate a hypothesis, and describe an empirical strategy for testing that hypothesis. Students will receive feedback from peers and from me to which they will be required to respond in the final draft.

Presentation

Students will prepare a five-minute presentation of their first draft for class. The presentation should explain introduce the research question and succinctly summarize the main points of the lit review.

Peer Review

Students will be required to write a short memo identifying the strengths, weaknesses, and unanswered questions of the research designs of two peer groups.

Final Draft, including Response Memo

Equipped with written feedback from me and peers, students will revise their first draft into a final draft. Students must also prepare a short memo that directly responds to each point of criticism from me and peer reviewers. The memo should either (a) explain how the student revised the manuscript in response to the criticism or (b) defend the student's point of view against the criticism.

Class Research Project

Students will collect publicly available data about municipal elected officials in Illinois. I will explain the project in detail in the first week of class. Students may also participate in decisions about what data will be collected and how it will be analyzed.

Reading Quizzes

Six times throughout the semester, I will give pop quizzes in which students will summarize the assigned reading for the day. The quiz will always take the format of writing out the research question, main hypothesis, dependent variable, independent variable, and conclusion of the article. Quizzes will be open-note but not open-book. (I encourage students to take notes as they're reading.) At the end of the semester, I will drop the lowest quiz grade from the overall course grade.

All quizzes must be completed in class. No makeup quizzes will be given unless I receive written communication from another university official (e.g. dean, athletics official) requesting me to excuse an absence. I do not request or accept doctors' notes. I understand students must sometimes miss class for reasons outside their control, which is why I drop the lowest quiz grade.

Attendance and Punctuality

Students are expected to attend class to participate in discussions of the course material. There is no formal attendance requirement, but students who regularly attend class will be at an advantage in understanding the content and performing well on class assignments and exams.

I will begin class promptly at our designated meeting time. Students should arrive five minutes before class begins in order to find a seat and make any preparations of materials before class starts. Getting to class ahead of time is also a courtesy to other students, who may become distracted by late arrivers. Students who must routinely arrive late due to circumstances outside their control (for example, a class immediately before mine on the opposite side of campus) should inform me at the beginning of the semester.

Communication, Office Hours, Question about Grades

Please direct all communication with me outside class or office hours through my campus email account, which can be found in the header of this syllabus. I check my campus email account several times daily and will try to reply to student emails as quickly as possible. That being said, students should not necessarily expect me to reply immediately to emails sent to me at the last minute. I may not be able to reply to questions about course material the morning of an exam or provide resources for an assignment the night before it is to be turned in.

My office hours exist solely for you to visit me with questions about this class. If you can't make those times, email me to schedule a more convenient appointment time. Email is only for brief communications. If you have long and complicated questions, come to my office hours. I will not send grades over email—check Sakai for the latest updates. After I have graded and returned your assignments, there is a 24-hour moratorium before I will answer questions about that assignment.

Technology Use

I will not allow the use of computers, tablets, or other electronic devices during class. There may be some days when I will ask you to bring a computer with you (if there is an online activity, for example). Most of class time will involve lecture or discussion of articles and concepts related to the course—this can be accomplished without computers.

The use of cell phones or other mobile communication devices is strictly prohibited during class, except in the event of an emergency. Cell phones minimally should be put on silent but preferably should be turned off. Students discovered using their phones during class time will be asked to turn off their phones and place them out of reach.

Student Accessibility

Loyola University provides reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. Any student requesting accommodations related to a disability or other condition is required to register with Students Accessibility Center (SAC), located in Sullivan Center, Suite 117. Students should provide me with an accommodation notification from SAC, preferably within the first two weeks of class. Students are encouraged to meet with me individually in order to discuss their accommodations. All information will remain confidential. For more information or further assistance, please call (773) 508-3700 or visit <http://www.luc.edu/sac>.

Academic Integrity

Students are responsible for adhering to university policy on academic honesty by avoiding acts of plagiarism or cheating. Students can find more information about what constitutes plagiarism at the Writing Center's website: (<http://www.luc.edu/writing/studentresources/onlineresources>). Consult the College of Arts and Sciences' statement to learn more about college policy: (<http://www.luc.edu/cas/advising/academicintegritystatement>). I reserve the right to exercise case-by-case discretion in assigning penalties for acts of academic dishonesty. Generally speaking, however, students should expect to receive a score of "0" on any assignment or exam where they are observed plagiarizing, cheating, or passing off someone else's ideas as their own. If more than one instance occurs during the semester, offending students should expect to fail my course. I report deliberate acts of academic dishonesty to the office of the Dean of College of Arts and Science.

Readings

Students are expected to complete weekly reading assignments in preparation for class. Students should read carefully and be ready to discuss the material, as discussions based around these readings will form the basis of the participation grade. I reserve the right to make changes to the reading list and will inform students well in advance of any changes.

All reading assignments are to be completed by class time Tuesday of the indicated week. Students are responsible for obtaining their own copies of the Kellstedt and Whitten textbook (abbreviated KW below). All other articles/chapters will be posted on Sakai. Students may not share course materials with others outside of the class without my written permission.

Week	Theme/Topic	Readings for Tuesday	Readings & Activities for Thursday
1 Jan. 18	Descriptive Representation: Does It Matter? Introduction to descriptive representation, introduction to the scientific method, scope of the field	Syllabus	KW Ch. 1 Mansbridge, "Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent 'Yes'"
2 Jan. 25	Theory and Literature Generating theory and research questions, review of literature on descriptive representation	KW Ch. 2, "The Art of Theory Building" Burden, <i>Personal Roots of Representation</i> [excerpts]	Griffin, "When and Why Minority Legislators Matter" Lawless, "Female Candidates and Legislators" Krcmaric & Nelson, "Studying Leaders and Elites: The Personal Biography Approach"
3 Feb. 1	Causality, Research Questions	KW Ch. 3, "Evaluating Causal Relationships" Grossman et al., "Descriptive Representation and Judicial Outcomes in Multiethnic Societies"	Research questions due Share and critique in small groups Choose one to pursue (or create new one)
4 Feb. 8	Introduction to Research Design Observational vs. experimental studies, case/sample selection	KW Ch. 4, "Research Design" Grose, <i>Congress in Black & White</i> [excerpts]	Discuss how to navigate academic literature in the library & online
5 Feb. 15	Data and Measurement Concepts, operationalization, data collection	KW Ch. 5-6 Roth, "Racial Mismatch: The Divergence Between Form and Function in Data for	Data lab Discuss & choose variables to collect

		Monitoring Racial Discrimination of Hispanics”	Go over instructions for collection
6 Feb. 22	Survey Research Human subjects, sampling, survey design	KW Ch. 7, “Probability and Statistical Inference” Gay, “Spirals of Trust? The Effect of Descriptive Representation on the Relationship between Citizens and Their Government”	Data lab
7 Mar. 1	Hypothesis Testing Introduction to statistical analysis	KW Ch. 8-9 (skim) Hansen et al., “What Happens When Insurers Make Insurance Laws?”	Annotated bibliographies due Data lab
<i>Week of March 8 – Spring Break</i>			
8 Mar. 15	Regression Observational studies, large-n data	KW Ch. 10-11 (skim) Clark, “Black Seat Share and Policy Representation in States”	Data lab
9 Mar. 22	Meetings with Instructor	No assigned readings or class meetings. Schedule group meetings with the instructor during the week. Pre-meeting memos due 24 hours before scheduled meeting Class project data due 3/25	
10 Mar. 29	Experiments Survey, natural, lab, and field experiments	Broockman, “Black Politicians Are More Intrinsically Motivated to Advance Blacks’ Interests” Magni and Reynolds, “Voter Preferences and the Political Underrepresentation of Minority Groups”	Excel – descriptive statistics

11 Apr. 5	Qualitative Research Pt. I Talking to people: elite interviews & focus groups	Casarez Lemi, “Identity and Coalitions in a Multiracial Era: How State Legislators Navigate Race and Ethnicity” <i>Cramer, The Politics of Resentment</i> [excerpts]	Excel – cross tabs
12 Apr. 12	Presentations	Presentation of research designs First drafts of research design due	Presentation of research designs
13 Apr. 19	Qualitative Research Pt. II Case Studies, historical analysis, conceptual analysis	Haider-Markel, <i>Out and Running</i> [excerpts] Karol and Thurston, “From Personal to Partisan: Abortion, Party, and Religion Among California State Legislators”	Olsthoorn, “Conceptual Analysis” Dovi, “Preferable Descriptive Representatives” Peer Review Due
14 Apr. 26	New Frontiers of Empirical Research Machine learning, text analysis, big data, AI	Fraga, “Candidates or Districts? Reevaluating the Role of Race in Voter Turnout” McDonald et al., “Running as a Woman? Candidate Presentation in the 2018 Midterms”	Class wrap-up, evaluations
Finals Week			<i>No exam</i> Final Draft of Research Design & Memo Due

Changes to the Syllabus

I reserve the right to make changes to this syllabus at any time. If changes are made, students will be informed through email and verbally in class, and a new syllabus document will be posted on Sakai.