

SYLLABUS
PLSC 395: Who Represents Us? (Honors in Political Science)
Spring 2025

TTh 1:00 – 2:15 pm
Information Commons 230

Instructor

Dr. Eric Hansen

Email: ehansen4@luc.edu

Office Location: Coffey Hall 325

Office Hours: TTh 10 – 11:30 am; or by appointment for remote meetings

Course Description and Objectives

The primary focus of this 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 disproportionate presence of white-collar professionals in elected office affect U.S. economic policy? While existing research in the U.S. often focuses on race and gender, these questions can apply to any group sharing a politically salient identity or experience.

The second focus of the course is *data & measurement*. While popular discourse often takes social group membership for granted, politically salient groups are socially constructed and drawing boundaries of group membership is complicated and contested. Students will confront these challenges by collecting data about the descriptive characteristics of elected state legislators.

By completing this course, students should be able to:

- 1) Describe how the identities and experiences of elected officials contribute to decision making
- 2) Discuss the complications measuring group membership
- 3) Understand how quantitative data are collected, including the challenges and shortcomings of different collection methods
- 4) Explain the strengths and weaknesses of using quantitative data to understand politics

Required Texts

Schryvers, Peter. 2020. *Bad Data: Why We Measure the Wrong Things and Often Miss the Metrics that Matter*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books. [NOTE: This book is available for free online via LUC Libraries.]

Grades

Final grades for the course will be based on the following scale. I reserve the right to adjust 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:

Participation: 15%

Reading Quizzes: 15%

Class Data Collection Project: 40%

 Data Collection: 20%

 Data Validation: 20%

Reflection Papers: 20%

 First Half of Class: 10%

 Data Collection: 10%

Final Exam: 10%

Participation

Students are expected to participate in class discussions of the course material. There is no formal attendance requirement, but participation points cannot be earned without regular class attendance. Students will earn full participation credit by speaking up in class at least once a week.

Reading Quizzes

Students will be given six pop quizzes throughout the semester to check for reading completion. Reading quizzes are fair game on any day there is assigned reading. All assigned readings must be completed by the beginning of the class period on the day listed on the reading calendar below. Questions will assess students' comprehension of the major themes of the assigned readings. At the end of the semester, I will drop each student's lowest reading quiz grade from the calculation of the overall course grade.

All quizzes must be completed in class. No makeup quizzes will be given. If I receive written communication from another university official (e.g. dean, athletics official) requesting me to

excuse an absence, then I will remove the missed quiz from the calculation of that student's course grade. 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. If a student expects to miss class for extended periods, for example due to ongoing medical or family issues, they should communicate with me *ahead of time* to negotiate a solution. I will not excuse missed quizzes retroactively for any reason outside of communication from another university official.

Class Data Collection Project

Students will collect publicly available data about elected state legislators. The project will proceed in several stages during the week labeled "Data Lab" in the reading calendar below.

Data Collection by Hand

Students will be assigned two or three states. For each state, students will gather publicly available data online about the occupational background, educational attainment, gender, race/ethnicity, and year of birth for every incumbent state legislator. I will provide further instructions for this data collection.

Validation

Student-collected data will be compared to data I will gather from ChatGPT. I will mark discrepancies between data sets. Each student will be provided with the legislators on which another student and ChatGPT disagreed and asked to collect the data anew. These new data will be used to validate the two data sets. I will present the results of the validation to students in class before the reflection essay is due.

Reflection Papers

#1: Measurement Challenges

Each student will write a three-page essay reflecting on the literature covered in the first half of the course. Students will choose their own thesis and support it. I will not require a response to a more focused prompt, but here are a few questions a student might choose to address: What surprised you most about the difficulties measuring group membership? What other measurement challenges (not covered in this lit) do you see in understanding descriptive representation? What new concept or measure would you like to see in the study of descriptive representation? Students may use outside academic sources, but they are not required.

#2: Data Collection

Each student will write a three-page essay reflecting on their experience collecting the original and validation data. I will not require a response to a more focused prompt, but here are a few questions a student might choose to address: What challenges did you face collecting the data? Where were the sources of uncertainty? Given what you saw throughout the process, how much confidence do you have in the data collection process? How much confidence do you have in data and statistics you encounter elsewhere in the political world?

Late reflection papers may be submitted at any time between the due date and the final exam period with a 10-percentage point penalty. Please submit late papers to Sakai and inform me that you've submitted them late so I don't overlook them when calculating final grades.

Final Exam

The final exam will be an in-person, Blue Book exam. I will supply the Blue Books. Students will be offered a choice of essay prompts to respond to. The final exam will take place Friday, May 2 at 1:00 pm. I will not offer the exam at any other time unless the student has petitioned their dean's office for a change in exam time.

Punctuality

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 or outside of business hours. I may not reply to questions about course material an hour before 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 allow the use of laptops, tablets, or other electronic devices (besides phones) during class. Most of class time will involve lecture or discussion of articles and concepts related to the course. I expect that students will use devices to refer to assigned articles or to find information further the class discussion. If I observe students abusing technology privileges (i.e. by playing games during class), I reserve the right to rescind my permission for students to use devices in class.

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>.

Notice of Reporting Obligations for Responsible Campus Partners

As an instructor, I am a Responsible Campus Partner (“RCP”) under Loyola’s Comprehensive Policy and Procedures for Addressing Discrimination, Sexual Misconduct, and Retaliation (available at www.luc.edu/equity). While my goal is for you to be able to engage fully and authentically with our course material through class discussions and written work, I also want to be transparent that as a RCP, I must notify the Office for Equity & Compliance (“OEC”)/Title IX Coordinator when I have any information about conduct that reasonably may constitute Title IX Sex-Based Discrimination.

Title IX Sex-Based Discrimination includes any of the following conduct, when the conduct was within the University's education program or activity:

- Discrimination or discriminatory harassment on the basis of sex (including sex stereotypes, sex characteristics, gender identity, sexual orientation, and Pregnancy or Related Conditions),
- Sexual harassment (including *quid pro quo* and hostile environment sexual harassment),
- Sexual assault,
- Dating and/or domestic violence, and/or
- Stalking

As the University’s Title IX office, the OEC coordinates the University's response to reports and complaints of sexual misconduct (as well as discrimination of any kind) to ensure students' rights are protected.

As an instructor, I also have an obligation under Illinois law to report disclosures of or suspected instances of child abuse or neglect (<https://www.luc.edu/hr/legal-notice/mandatedreportingofchildabuseandneglect/>).

The University maintains such reporting requirements to ensure that any student who experiences sexual/gender-based violence receives accurate information about available resources and support. Such reports will not generate a report to law enforcement (no student will ever be forced to file a report with the police). Additionally, the University’s resources and supports are available to all students even if a student chooses that they do not want any other action taken. If you have any questions about this policy, you are encouraged to contact the OEC at equity@luc.edu or 773-508-7766.

If you ever wish to speak with a confidential resource regarding gender-based violence, I encourage you to call The Line at 773-494-3810. The Line is staffed by confidential advocates

from 8:30am-5pm M-F and 24 hours on the weekend when school is in session. Advocates can provide support, talk through your options (medical, legal, LUC reporting, safety planning, etc.), and connect you with resources as needed -- *without* generating a report or record with the OEC. More information about The Line can be found at luc.edu/wellness.

Statement on Religious Holidays

As a Jesuit, Catholic university, Loyola University Chicago invites people of all faiths and traditions to be a part of our community and we are committed to supporting students to grow in their faith traditions. I will work to accommodate students if the observance of a major religious holiday interferes with a student's academic work. If a student is unable to attend a class, participate in a test or quiz, be present for a presentation, or complete an assignment on a specific day because of the observance of a religious holiday, the student will be excused and provided the opportunity to make up the work. Students will continue to be responsible for all assigned work and should notify me in advance through Loyola email of the religious observance(s) that conflict with their classes. Campus Ministry has published a list of religious holidays likely to affect Loyola students. This list can be found on the [Campus Ministry website](#).

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.

Statement on AI Use

I will allow the use of ChatGPT or other AI tools for graded assignments. However, I require students to attach disclosure statements, which are provided on Sakai, to all assignments using AI. The disclosure statement asks students (1) to confirm that they used AI and (2) to provide the text of all prompts that the student used to generate the submitted content. I reserve the right to base grading decisions in part on the extent of AI use. For example, students that use AI to generate an entire paper will receive a lower grade. You may come to my office hours if you'd like to discuss your plan for its use. Failure to disclose the use of AI will be considered a violation of the standards for academic integrity and subject to the sanctions described in the previous section. Students using AI should be careful to verify and edit submissions. I will hold all students responsible for the content of the assignments they submit, meaning papers with hallucinated or incorrect content generated by AI will be graded and penalized accordingly.

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 the beginning of class the day it is assigned. All 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 and Assignments	
		<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>
1 Jan. 14 & 16	Introduction	Syllabus	Pitkin, ““Standing For’: Descriptive Representation” in <i>The Concept of Representation</i>
2 Jan. 21 & 23	Theory and Literature	Mansbridge, “Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent ‘Yes’”	Lawless, “Female Candidates and Legislators”
3 Jan. 28 & 30	Theory and Literature	Griffin, “When and Why Minority Legislators Matter”	Carnes and Lupu, “The Economic Backgrounds of Politicians”
4 Feb. 4 & 6	Measurement Theory & Why It Matters	Kellstedt and Whitten, “Measuring Concepts of Interest” in <i>The Fundamentals of Political Science Research</i>	Hansen and Treul, “The Symbolic and Substantive Representation of LGB Americans” Saraceno et al., “Reevaluating the Substantive Representation of LGB Americans”
5 Feb. 11 & 13	Difficulties of Measurement	Hout, “How Class Works” in <i>Social Class</i>	Davenport, “The Fluidity of Racial Classifications”
6 Feb. 18 & 20	Political Construction of Categories	Mora, “Cross-Field Effects and Ethnic Classification”	Turnbull-Dugarte and McMillan, “Protect the Women!”
7 Feb. 25 & 27	Intersectional Considerations	Strolovitch, “Do Interest Groups Represent the Disadvantaged?”	Naunov, “Heteronormativity at the Ballot Box”

<i>Week of March 8 – Spring Break</i>			
8 Mar. 11	Data Lab	No reading	No reading Reflection Essay #1 Due
9 Mar. 18	Data Lab	No reading	No reading
10 Mar. 25	Data Lab	No reading	No reading
11 Apr. 1	Data Lab	No reading	No reading
12 Apr. 8	Data Lab	No reading	No reading
13 Apr. 15	Understanding and Applying Metrics	Schryvers, <i>Bad Data</i> Ch. 1-3	Schryvers, <i>Bad Data</i> Ch. 4-6
14 Apr. 22 & 24	Understanding and Applying Metrics	Schryvers, <i>Bad Data</i> Ch. 7-8	Schryvers, <i>Bad Data</i> Ch. 9-10 Reflection Essay #2 Due
Final Exam	Friday, May 2 1:00 – 3:00 pm		

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.