

# Political Science 3379: Research and Writing in Political Science

Spring 2020  
M/W/F 12:00pm-12:50pm  
Dan Rather 301  
**(CHSS 495 after first session)**  
CRN: 22280  
Credit Hours 3

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Office Hours: M/W 1:00pm-4:00pm or by appointment

## Course Description

How do we properly perform social science research? How do we learn to speak the “language” of social scientific inquiry so that we can answer our questions about the world? This course is designed to introduce students to the basics of research. They will learn how to think scientifically about questions of social science, even if the behavior they’re interested in doesn’t appear so scientific. Later, students will learn about the components of a proper research project, and the basics of measurement. Throughout we will look to examples of literature to guide our writing, and students will begin to produce their own.

By the end of this course, you will all be able to pose research questions, seek out current research, understand what they are reading, and identify its strengths and weaknesses. In addition, they will be in a position to develop research and theories on their own and prepared to enter more advanced research methods courses.

Rather than conducting this class as a regular small lecture, this course will be seminar style. This means that class time will be devoted to discussion more than taking notes from a lecture. This means that having the reading done before the week’s class is especially important.

## Learning Objectives

Course expectations can always be vague. Since you will use these scores at the end of the semester to evaluate this course, looking at the learning objectives from the IDEA

evaluations will give you a better picture of what this class will be like. The most important skills you will learn follow:

1. Gaining a basic understanding of the subject (e.g., factual knowledge, methods, principles, generalizations, theories).
2. Learning how to find, evaluate, and use resources to explore a topic in depth.
3. Learning to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view.

I will go over these in more detail during the introductory portions of the course.

## Blackboard

All communication for this course will be conducted via the course's Blackboard site and University email. Any supplementary material, assignments, or changes to the course structure will be made available on this site. Each student should ensure that they have access to these materials and are able to receive emails through their student account. Please note that I cannot accept or respond to student emails that come from a non-university address.

I usually respond to emails within 24 hours of receipt, earlier if they are sent during typical business hours (9am-5/6pm). Please do not send a second email until the 24-hour waiting period is up. If there is an emergency, please take care of that first. I am always happy to work around personal emergencies when it comes to the completion of coursework.

## Course Material

There is no assigned text for this course. Instead, readings will be provided via pdf on the course Blackboard page. Each week, on the "Course Readings" page, students will find a folder corresponding to that week's topic.

Normally, it will contain one article or book selection focusing on that week's topic and one literature review provided as an example of the kind of social science writing that you will be able to produce when the course concludes. ***It is necessary that you complete these readings before the first class of the week, as we will use them over the course of discussion.***

## Grading and Course Requirements

Assignment	Points
Research Topic Proposal	5
Literature Review Draft 1	20
Literature Review Draft 2	25
Research Design	25
Final Presentation	25

**Research Topic Proposal:** After being introduced to the ideas behind thinking scientifically about politics, students will propose a research question of their own and briefly describe it. A full outline will be posted on the course Blackboard and discussed in class later in the semester.

**Literature Review Draft 1:** After we go over the purpose and process behind producing a literature review, students will write their own. This will contain the literature relevant to the topic chosen during the proposal stage. I will then provide detailed feedback on this draft. A full outline will be posted on the course Blackboard and discussed in class later in the semester.

**Literature Review Draft 2:** This is simply a corrected and expanded version of the first draft. A full outline will be posted on the course Blackboard and discussed in class later in the semester.

**Research Design Outline:** This final project is designed to build the basic foundation for taking your literature review and turning it into a full research project. A full outline will be posted on the course Blackboard and discussed in class later in the semester.

**Final Presentation:** This is where students will present the project they've been working on all semester. Everyone will tell the class their question, what they've discovered about the research on it, and how they will contribute to it.

## **Grading Scale**

A: 90-100  
B: 80-89  
C: 70-79  
D: 60-69  
F: Below 60

## **Classroom Conduct**

Students will refrain from behavior in the classroom that intentionally or unintentionally disrupts the learning process and, thus, impedes the mission of the university.

Students may use laptops/tablets to take notes, as long as they do not distract other students. If this happens, students with computers may be asked to sit towards the back of the room.

Inappropriate behavior in the classroom shall result in a directive to leave class. Students who are especially disruptive also may be reported to the Dean of Students for disciplinary action in accordance with university policy. The instructor reserves the right to ask students to cease disruptive behavior that is not listed here.

## **Academic Dishonesty**

Students are expected to maintain honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Please be aware that plagiarized work and any form of academic dishonesty will result in an “F” on the assignment. SHSU [Academic Policy Statement 810213](#) outlines the definition of academic honesty and the related disciplinary procedures.

You should also familiarize yourself of [Academic Policy Statement 900823](#), which outlines the procedures for students to file an academic grievance should you wish to appeal your grade for reasons other than academic dishonesty. Please read over these policies. For a complete listing of the university policy, see:

[http://www.shsu.edu/~slo\\_www/](http://www.shsu.edu/~slo_www/)

## **Student Absences on Religious Holy Days Policy**

Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. Section 51.911 (a) (2) defines a religious holy day as: “a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20....” A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence.

University policy 861001 provides the procedures to be followed by the student and instructor. A student desiring to absent himself/herself from a scheduled class in order to observe (a) religious holy day(s) shall present to each instructor involved a written statement concerning the religious holy day(s). The instructor will complete a form notifying the student of a reasonable timeframe in which the missed assignments and/or examinations are to be completed. For a complete listing of the university policy, see:

<http://www.shsu.edu/dept/academic-affairs/documents/aps/students/861001.pdf>

## **Students with Disabilities Policy**

It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance should register with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Lee Drain Annex (telephone 936-294-3512, TDD 936-294-3786, and e-mail [disability@shsu.edu](mailto:disability@shsu.edu)). They should then make arrangements with their individual instructors so that appropriate strategies can be

considered and helpful procedures can be developed to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired.

SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a disability that may affect adversely your work in this class, then I encourage you to register with the SHSU Services for Students with Disabilities and to talk with me about how I can best help you. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: No accommodation can be made until you register with the Services for Students with Disabilities. For a complete listing of the university policy, see:

<http://www.shsu.edu/dotAsset/7ff819c3-39f3-491d-b688-db5a330ced92.pdf>

### **Visitors in the Classroom**

Only registered students may attend class. Exceptions can be made on a case-by-case basis by the professor. In all cases, visitors must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. Students wishing to audit a class must apply to do so through the Registrar's Office.

### **Copyright on Lecture and Course Materials**

Copyright 2020 (Christopher Patane) as to this syllabus and all lectures. During this course, students are prohibited from selling notes or being paid for taking notes by any person or commercial firm without the express written permission of the instructor teaching this course.

### **Emergencies, Crises, and Mental Health**

Sometimes the study of Political Science involves dealing with difficult material. In some cases, these may reflect or reference your own personal, family, or group experiences.

Other times, life events may interfere with your ability to succeed in class. We do not want neglect our own health or well-being. If you need support, the Counseling Center can be reached at 936-294-1720. The [website](#) also contains self-help resources, and those services available in the Huntsville community.

As with all other parts of the course, students are welcome and encouraged to come talk to me to voice their concerns, seek support, or discuss accommodation for coursework after a crisis. If you can, please let me know if you are falling behind or need additional help. I'm always happy to work with students to find ways to help them through the course as the rest of life goes on around them.

## **Class Outline**

I reserve the right to make changes to this syllabus at any time. Changes will be announced in class and on the course Blackboard site. It is the responsibility of the student to take note of any changes.

### **Week 1: January 15-17**

Course Introduction

### **Week 2: January 20-24**

Thinking Scientifically

**Monday, January 20: No Class, MLK Day**

### **Week 3: January 27-January 31**

Finding a Question

**Research proposal due Friday, August 24 at 11:59pm**

### **Week 4: February 3-7**

Writing Well

### **Week 5: February 10-14**

Finding and Reviewing Literature

### **Week 6: February 17-21**

Building a Literature Review I

### **Week 7: February 24-28**

TBD, Depends on Class Progress

### **Week 8: March 2-6**

**Literature Review Draft 1 due Friday, March 6 at 11:59pm**

### **Week 9: March 9-13**

**No Class, Spring Break**

### **Week 10: March 16-20**

Building your own Hypothesis and Theory

### **Week 11: March 23-27**

Operationalization

### **Week 12: March 30-April 3**

Building a Research Design

### **Week 13: April 6-10**

Using Evidence, I: Qualitative

**Friday, April 10, No Class, University Holiday**  
**Literature Review Draft 2 due Friday, April 10 at 11:59pm**

**Week 14: April 13-17**

Using Evidence II: Quantitative

**Friday, April 16, No Class, Midwest Political Science Association Conference**

**Week 15: April 20-24**

Fake News and Countering Misinformation

**Week 16: April 27-May 1**

Final Presentations

**Week 17: December 10 & 12**

**Finals Week**

**Research Design due Thursday, May 7 at 11:59pm**