

# Political Science 3379: Research and Writing in Political Science

Spring 2021

M/W/F 12:00pm-12:50pm

**Meets in Person every Wednesday**

**Asynchronous Remote Work Monday and Friday**

LDB 220

CRN: 20410

Credit Hours 3

Instructor: Dr. Christopher Patane

Email: [c.patane@shsu.edu](mailto:c.patane@shsu.edu)

Campus Address: CHSS 470

Campus Phone: (936) 294-4679

Office Hours: Remote Only

Due to COVID-19 I won't be meeting with students in person in my office. However, I will be available by email, over Blackboard, and on my Discord server (see below). Other than late night emails, I should be able to get back to students with questions relatively quickly. I am also more than happy to voice or video call with any student who wants to talk or speak relatively face to face.

## **COVID-19 Changes**

Because of safety concerns around COVID-19, this in person class will operate slightly differently from what you may be used to. There will be a higher emphasis on work outside of the classroom. In person sessions will consist of brief lectures, discussions, and I will help students work on the weekly assignment. All exams and assignments will be completed online.

Since the university is still relying on a hybrid model, we will only meet in person once a week on our scheduled Wednesday's. Monday and Friday classes will be devoted to completing weekly assignments assigned remotely and submitted through Blackboard. My goal is to use our Wednesday meetings to practice the week's material as a group, and to give you all formative feedback for the skills we're working on that week.

## **Remote Instruction Option**

The university is allowing students to individually opt for remote only courses this semester. Even though this class is scheduled in person, students can **email me** to opt-in to take the course remotely. This will not affect assignments, contact with me, or

grades in any way. My goal is to provide the same access and material that you would get if you were able to be in class personally, so please make this decision based on the safety of you and your loved ones. **You can choose this option at any point in the semester.**

### **Deadlines and Late Work**

I'm sure many of you are stressed and uncertain about the semester. Nobody is sure how events will unfold, or what other changes may be needed later in the semester. Schedules are totally different from what you're used to, and you all have other classes in addition to mine.

Please do not be afraid or worried if you forget to turn in an assignment or get mixed up on an in-person meeting date. I will not lower grades for late work, nor will I shame or otherwise punish students who turn in late work or miss a class.

I will be doing my best to check in with everyone in the class each time we meet in person, and will check in regularly through email, Blackboard, and the course Discord. You all are welcome and encouraged to reach out to me if you need any support, advice, or other help in keeping up with this class. I am perfectly happy to work with students to keep them on track to pass this course and will be happy to talk with anyone who asks for that.

As always, you are free to get in touch with me however you feel comfortable to talk about what is happening in class, or for other kinds of support. At the very least I can help get you in touch with other resources at SHSU that will be able to provide any support you might need.

### **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.

## **Discord**

In addition to email and Blackboard, I am using Discord to provide a place where students and I can meet, exchange instant messages, talk over voice/video, and stream. It is entirely free and provides a less formal environment where students can talk to each other or to me. I am also hoping to use this to help with class communication since we will not be meeting in person as frequently.

To set up an account on the Discord server:

1. Visit <https://discordapp.com/>
2. If you don't already have an account, click the "Register" button.
3. Once your account is created (please keep your username class/work appropriate), click on this link: <https://discord.gg/Q3W6FJD> and you should automatically be sent to the server.

4. The service will run fine on a web browser, so there is no need to download any software. If you would like to download the app to use on your phone or home computers, the site has apps available for most platforms.

Once you are on the server, you will see that there are text and voice “channels” for each of my classes this semester. You are free to look in, chat with, and generally interact with the students in classes that are not your own—this is an informal and open space. There are also several text and voice chat rooms available as “Student Study Spaces” where groups of you can work together.

## 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
Weekly Discussion Boards	1 each
Research Topic Proposal	5
Literature Review Draft 1	5
Literature Review Draft 2	10
Research Design	10
Final Presentation	10

**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 2021 (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 13-15**

Course Introduction

### **Week 2: January 18-22**

Thinking Scientifically

Monday, January 18: No Class, MLK Day

### **Week 3: January 25-29**

Finding a Question

Proposal Due Sunday, January 29

### **Week 4: February 1-5**

Reading Well

### **Week 5: February 8-12**

Writing Well

### **Week 6: February 15-19**

Evaluating What you Read

### **Week 7: February 22-26**

Finding and Reviewing Literature

### **Week 8: March 1-5**

Building a Literature Review

### **Week 9: March 8-12**

Building your own Hypothesis and Theory

### **Week 10: March 15-19**

No Class, Spring Break

Literature Review Draft 1 Due at 11:59pm on Sunday March 21

### **Week 11: March 22-26**

Figuring out Research Design

**Week 12: March 29-April 2**

Using Evidence, I: Qualitative

Friday, April 2, No Class for University holiday

**Week 13: April 5-9**

Using Evidence II: Quantitative

**Week 14: April 12-16**

Detecting "Bullshit"

Literature Review Draft 2 Due at 11:59pm on Sunday April 18

**Week 15: April 19-23**

Countering Misinformation

**Week 16: April 26-30**

Final Presentations

**Week 17/18: December May 3-12**

Research Design due at 11:59pm on Wednesday, May 12