Research Methods II – Graduate (Spring 2013)

Political Science/GIA 5116 (15792/13649)  Craig L. Brians, Ph.D.
www.psci.vt.edu/brians/  cbrians@vt.edu
(Lab)          W  1:00p-1:55p  Torg 1080  Office Hours:  W  4:00p-5:00p
(Seminar)    W  2:00p-3:50p  MajWill 502  522 Major Williams Hall  231-7544

Texts and Readings:


Additional readings from academic journals are listed in the week-by-week calendar, while other readings may be posted on the course Scholar site.

Course Description:
As the second course in the Political Science/Govt & International Affairs research methods sequence, PSCI/GIA 5116 builds on the skills you acquired in PSCI 5115 and in previous methods courses. This research methods course provides an introduction to data analysis, premised on the principle of “learning by doing.” Here, we focus on the measurement and interpretation of relationships. You will evaluate the class readings in weekly short papers. By the end of the semester you will have refined your qualitative and quantitative research and analytic skills. You will demonstrate your research competence through a group term project.

The text for this seminar provides the methodological background for the concrete examples found in the supplemental articles. *Empirical Political Analysis* (Brians, Willnat, Manheim, and Rich 2011 [hereafter, BWMR]) specifically focuses on the research methods currently used in Political Science, and includes examples drawn from our discipline. The techniques in EPA will be illustrated using examples from both academic and popular periodicals. Several scholarly journal articles will be assigned for each week’s seminar. These articles are chosen to illustrate the methods being studied, and citations to the articles will be posted on the course web page prior to that week’s seminar. Most weeks, seminar discussions will focus on critiquing the application of the research techniques presented in a given chapter of EPA, as presented in the assigned research articles.

The Lab section, in particular, offers many opportunities for guided, hands-on experience with the research process. Lab assignments presented in Brians (2011) range from organizing research in Word, to researching with the Web, to using the SPSS statistics software or Excel for quantitative analysis. Some pencil and paper statistics exercise will also be assigned. Lab readings and exercises will generally be posted on the course website before the Lab section meets.

This class encourages students to make full use of business and professional communication media. This syllabus is available as a PDF on the Web (www.psci.vt.edu/brians/). Students are likewise encouraged to utilize the wealth of political information and research available at links from the course Web page. Your instructor is best contacted by phone (231-7544), via e-mail (cbrians@vt.edu), or during scheduled class or office hours. If you email, please follow business protocol by identifying your emails with a descriptive subject, to avoid being confused with spam. For example, in the subject line of each message, please place the class number (e.g., PSCI 5116 or GIA 5116) first, then the subject of your message. If the message is not referring to a specific course, please note "PSCI" or “GIA” before the subject. This additional cue should make it much easier for us to communicate. Every effort will be made to reply to emails within 24 hours on business days. Many class or research-oriented questions require interactive responses and may be better addressed by phone or in person; therefore, include your name and phone contact info in any emails.
Grading:
Like most graduate (and many undergraduate) courses, your learning in this class culminates in a term project. The readings and exercises in this course are designed to offer you direct experience with a variety of tools that will facilitate researching and writing this term project, as well as your Thesis. Thus, this course features a range of assignments: weekly 2 to 3 page critical lit. reviews that analyze the assigned journal articles in light of the week’s textbook reading (30% of grade), participation in class discussion of the week’s topic (10%), lab homework assignments (20%), and a group research project (40%).

Principal responsibility for the content of seminar discussions rests on your shoulders. Each week, you must come fully prepared to lead a discussion of the supplemental readings in light of the textbook material. In preparing for this, substantial effort should be put into your weekly 2 to 3 page written analysis of the readings. These papers will summarize the research method being studied (with information cited from the textbooks), and then evaluate and critique each of the articles, based upon the quality of the technique’s application. These reading critiques will be emailed to your instructor (in Word 2003 format) each week by 4pm Monday afternoon.

Participation by each student in the seminar is crucial to each student’s and all students’ experience this term. These contributions are factored into grading to reinforce the importance of the role played by students in these seminars.

Each week, reading and homework assignments will be required in the Wednesday Lab section. While the Lab will involve more direct professorial instruction than seen in the seminar, each student must read all of the applicable material and be fully prepared for each Lab session. All Lab assignments are due (in hard copy) at the beginning of the next lab session.

The major research project conducted in this course will require teams of students to study an assigned topic, using the available literature, qualitative data and quantitative data. Specific details will be provided when the project is assigned in the middle of the term.

An incomplete (“I”) is assigned only to a student who is otherwise passing the class and only in cases of unavoidable or unforeseen circumstances (e.g., major illness) that prevents a student from completing the course requirements. Verifiable documentary evidence, such as a Medical Doctor’s note, is required.

Any student who feels that he or she may need an accommodation because of a disability (e.g., learning disability, attention deficit disorder, psychological, physical, etc.) should make an appointment to see me during or outside of office hours.

To maintain a fair and untainted learning environment for all students, there must be no cheating, plagiarism, or other dishonest conduct, as defined by Virginia Tech policy. Each of these terms is defined in the Virginia Tech Honor Code (http://ghs.graduateschool.vt.edu/). Each and every graded assignment shall include a statement personally signed by the student stating that the work was performed by the undersigned student. All course work must be completed solely by the individual student, unless specifically identified in writing as a group project by your professor. Any violations of the honor code will be fully reported.

Instructions for citing other’s work are included in the Lab Manual and on the instructor’s website. The APSA style guide may be found in the left hand column of www.psci.vt.edu/brians/, under Lab Manual, by clicking on the link: Style Guide -- Parenthetical Citations and the Reference List.
### Graduate Research Methods (PSCI/GIA 5116): Spring 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seminar (Maj Will 502)</td>
<td>Techniques for summarizing research and findings</td>
<td>BWMR (2011): Ch. 22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan. 30</td>
<td>Due Lab</td>
<td>Article Critique</td>
<td>BWMR: Ch. 3</td>
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<td>Seminar</td>
<td>Summarizing Research; Outlining</td>
<td>Brians: Ch. 4</td>
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<td>Feb. 6</td>
<td>(10:00a-10:50a) VT Conference on Higher Education Pedagogy – The Inn</td>
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<td><strong>Attend: Research Talk (Location: TBA)</strong></td>
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<td>Conference Due</td>
<td>Lab Ch. 4; Article Critique</td>
<td>Brians: Intro, Ch. 1, Ch. 3</td>
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<td>Lab</td>
<td>Using Codebooks; Descriptive Data Analysis; Replication</td>
<td>BWMR: Ch. 4</td>
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Feb. 13: **Due**
	Lab **Lab Ch. 1, Ch.3; Article Critique**

Theories and Hypotheses: In the Laboratory


Seminar **Theories and Hypotheses**

BWMR: Ch. 2


Feb. 20: **Due**
	Lab **Article Critique**

Sampling and the Central Limit Theorem

Brians: Ch. 5

Seminar **Sampling**

BWMR: Ch. 7


Feb. 27: **Due**
	Lab **Lab Ch.5; Article Critique**

Working in Groups; **Assign the Research Project**


Seminar **Ethical Research – Guest Speaker:**

Dr. David Moore, Chair of the IRB

Brians: Appendix A


March 6: 
*Due*  
**Lab**  
*Article Critique*  
Relationships in Plots and Crosstabs  
Association and Statistical Significance  
**Seminar**  
Univariate Analysis  
Bivariate Analysis  

Brians: Ch. 2  
Brians: Ch. 10, 11  

BWMR: Ch. 16  
BWMR: Ch. 17  


**March 9-17:**  
**Spring Break**

March 20: 
*Due*  
**Lab**  
*Lab 2, 10, 11; Article Critique*  
Intro to Excel; Comparative data  
**Seminar**  
Comparative Analysis  

Brians: Ch. 7, Ch. 9  

BWMR: Ch. 12  


March 27: 
*Due*  
**Lab**  
*Lab Ch. 7, Ch. 9*  
Means Testing, Correlation  
**Seminar**  
Review: Bivariate Analysis  
Group Progress Reports  

Brians: Ch. 6, 12  

April 3: 
*Due*  
**Lab**  
*Lab Ch. 6; Article Critique*  
OLS Regression, Multivariate Analysis  
**Seminar**  
Multivariate Analysis  

Brians: Ch. 13, 16  
BWMR: Ch. 18  


April 10: Due Lab Ch.12, 13; Article Critique
Lab Recoding Data
Seminar Direct Observation
Brians: Ch. 14
BWMR: Ch. 19

April 17: Due Lab Ch.14; Article Critique; Group Project Research Design
Lab Qualitative Data Analysis
Seminar Elite and Specialized Interviewing
Brians: Ch. 17
BWMR: Ch. 21

April 24: Due Lab Ch.17; Article Critique
Lab Data Presentation
Seminar Focus Groups
Brians: Ch. 18
BWMR: Ch. 20

May 1: Due Lab 18; Article Critique
Lab The SPSS Syntax Language
Seminar Experimental Research
Brians: Ch. 15
BWMR: Ch. 6


May 8:  
Due  
Lab  
Seminar  
Lab Ch. 15; Article Critique  
Presenting Research  
Future Research  
Brians: Ch. 18  
BWMR: Ch. 23  
Matto, Elizabeth C., Timothy Vercellotti.  
Bos, Angela L., and Monica C. Schneider.  

May 15:  
Due  
Evaluation of Research Experience  
(i.e., individual reflection piece);  
Group Research Project  
No Lab  
Seminar  
*Group Research Presentation (12:00p-2:00p)*  
The Cellar