Administrative Unit: History and Social Sciences Department

Course Prefix and Number: POSC 390

Course Title: Political Science Research Methods

Number of Credit Hours: 3  Lecture Hours: 3  Laboratory Hours: 0

Catalog Description: An introduction to the research processes used by political science. The scope of political science research and the methods used to address political questions are studied. Prerequisite: Three previous courses in political science or government. Offered even Fall.

Prerequisite(s)/Corequisite(s): Three previous courses in political science or government.

Text(s): Most current editions of the following:


Johnson and Joslyn, Political Science Research Methods. Congressional Quarterly Press.


Any standard Political Science research text which familiarizes the students with the process generally as well as statistical analysis.

Course Objectives:

• To investigate the theory and practice of conducting political research.
• To explore ways to measure political phenomena and gather political information.
• To analyze political information quantitatively.
• To prepare a research design for a Political Science Research Project.

Measurable Learning Outcomes:

• Develop an appropriate design for a research project in the field of political science, containing the following elements, introduction, literature review, hypotheses and methods.
• Describe the characteristics and assumptions of the scientific method.
• Formulate political science research questions and
testable hypotheses.

- Distinguish among types of data.
- Operationalize concepts and variables.
- Assess the validity and reliability of measures.
- Demonstrate knowledge of sampling techniques.
- Practice developing survey instruments appropriate for political science research.
- Explain the experimental, case study and participant observation methods.
- Apply univariate, bivariate and multivariate statistics to analyze quantitative data.

Topical Outline (major areas of coverage):

- An introduction to Political Science and Political research
- An Overview of Political Research.
  - The scientific method
  - Deduction and induction theory
  - The research topic or problem
  - Motivations for research
- Literature Review
  - Purpose of review
  - Conducting a review
- Research by the Subfields of Political Science
  - American government
  - Public Administration
  - Comparative politics
  - International relations
- The Nature of Causation
  - Finding causes in political science
  - Explaining causation
- Measurement
  - Linking measurement and association
  - Validity
  - Reliability
- Research Design
  - Units of analysis
  - Experimental design
  - Non-experimental designs
  - Other types of designs
- Data Collection
  - Field research
  - Survey research
  - Sampling
- Data Analysis
  - Univariate statistics
  - Bivariate statistics
  - Multivariate statistics

Material from this course may be tested on the Major Field Test (MFT) administered during the Culminating Experience course for the degree.

Recommended maximum class size for this course: 25

Library Resources: Online databases are available at http://www.ccis.edu/offices/library/resources.asp. You may
access them from off-campus using your eServices login and password when prompted.

Prepared by:  

David Roebuck

Name  
Signature

Date:  

January 09, 2005

NOTE:  The intention of the master syllabus is to provide an outline of the contents of this course, as specified by the faculty of Columbia College, regardless of who teaches the course, when it is taught or where it is taught.  Faculty members teaching this course for Columbia College are expected to facilitate learning pursuant to the course objectives and cover the subjects listed in the topical outline.  However, instructors are also encouraged to cover additional topics of interest so long as those topics are relevant to the course’s subject.  The master syllabus is, therefore, prescriptive in nature but also allows for a diversity of individual approaches to course material.

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