

Scope & Methods

PSC 315-002—Fall 2006—W 3:05 - 5:50—FH 400

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Introduction

The purpose of this course is to give you the tools necessary to design, carry out, and present logical, rigorous research. To achieve this goal, this course examines the scope of political science, covers methods used in political science, logic and reasoning, qualitative and quantitative research methods, and preparing and presenting research. By the end of this course, you should be able to design a research project, evaluate others' research, demonstrate analytical and critical analysis skills, and present your ideas in a clear and verifiable way.

Readings

The following text is suggested for the course as a reference for your paper proposal writing. Required readings will be linked to your course webpage at www.nku.edu/~weirk/courses.html.

- Leedy, Paul D., and Jeanne Ellis Ormrod. 2005. **Practical Research: Planning & Design**, 8th Ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, Merrill, Prentice Hall. ISBN: 0131108956.

Contact Information

Office hours and location are as listed above. If you cannot come to office hours, you can arrange to meet me by appointment. If you need to contact me, you will get a much faster response by emailing me, as I generally check my email at least once a day Monday through Friday.

Occasionally it may be necessary to contact you outside of class. For any correspondence outside of class, I will send messages to your NKU email account. I generally try to post this information on your course webpage as soon as is possible as well.

Course Requirements

- 2 Exams (@ 20% each)= 40% of overall grade
- Research proposal paper =40% of overall grade
- Research proposal presentation using PowerPoint = 15% of overall grade
- Class Participation= 5% of overall grade

Exams: Exams will be take-home. All exams must be typed, double-spaced, in Times Roman 12 pt. font (or something similar for Mac users), with standard margins and page numbers. Penalties described under *Late Assignments* below will be assessed on any late assignments.

Research proposal paper: A research proposal paper is a project that details and outlines the basis for writing a research paper. A proposal paper essentially involves everything you should be doing when you write a paper, up to the point of actually compiling and examining the results. This includes all of the preliminary work you should be doing for a research paper, without actually conducting any original research and reporting those findings.

The research proposal paper requires identifying a problem to solve, seeing what others have already done related to the problem, identifying potential methods for researching the problem, and identifying variables that might explain the problem. See *Research Proposal Paper Structure & Guidelines* below for requirements.

As part of the research proposal process, you will be required to hand in **three additional assignments** as part of the greater project. **Each of these must be typed and in hard copy form to submit at the assigned due date.** These will not be individually graded, but if you fail to submit any of these to me by the assigned due date, you will receive a zero for the research proposal paper. Penalties described under *Late Assignments* below will be assessed on your research proposal paper on any late assignments.

- **Research question ideas:** This is a list of a few questions you would like to examine with a research project.
- **Research question decision:** This is the research question you have decided to examine for your research project.
- **Research question proposal:** This paper will include the question you decided to research in question form, your hypothesis, and the dependent and independent variables you have initially identified.

You are also required to have a library consultation for your research project. A signed and dated slip from the librarian with whom you met must be submitted to me no later than 10/24. If you fail to meet for a library consultation and submit your slip, you will receive a zero for the research proposal paper. Penalties described under *Late Assignments* below will be assessed on your research proposal paper on any late assignments.

Research paper proposals are due at the start of class on 11/28. You must also send me an **email attachment** of your paper by that time to randomly run through the plagiarism software. Penalties described under *Late Assignments* below will be assessed on any late assignments, including the email attachment.

Additionally, if at any time after you have submitted your research question decision you wish to change your research question, I must approve the change. If you hand

in a research paper proposal with a question that is different than your research question decision, research question proposal, or PowerPoint presentation, you will automatically receive a zero for your research proposal paper assignment.

Research proposal paper using PowerPoint: At the end of the semester, you will present your research proposal to the class with a PowerPoint presentation. You will have 10 minutes to give your PowerPoint presentation and 5 minutes to field questions. See *Presentation Evaluation* below for criteria on which you will be evaluated.

You must give me a stapled, hard copy (black & white is fine) of your PowerPoint presentation slides on the due date (see *Presentation Evaluation* for details). If you fail to give me a hard copy of your PowerPoint presentation at the start of your presentation, you will automatically lose 10% off of your overall presentation grade.

Presentation times will be determined on a voluntary basis about two weeks before presentations begin. Once presentation times are established, if you fail to give your presentation on the established date, you will automatically lose 20% off of your overall presentation grade. The only exception to this is if you contact me before the start of class and have documentation for me to review, at which time I will review it and determine whether your absence can be legitimately excused and your presentation rescheduled. If so, your presentation will be at the start of the class to which you return.

Class Participation: While class participation is only a small percentage of your overall grade, it is imperative that you come to class, are punctual, and are prepared to discuss and do activities related to the reading, as your preparation will unquestionably affect how you perform in the rest of the course. Your grade will also be determined by your attendance and attention to the presentations along with the quality of questions you ask.

Additional Information

Late Assignments: You have sufficient notice as to when assignments are due. While I understand that printers run out of ink and/or paper, jam, and break, Internet servers go down, email gets lost in cyberspace, and everyone needs to use the computer labs at the same time, you should plan for all of these eventualities.

I will only accept papers at the beginning of class on the due date. If you are not in class to hand in your assignment when I collect it, the assignment is considered late, which will result in a deduction of 10% (i.e., grading will begin at 90%). Papers will lose an additional 10% for each additional weekday they are late. I will only accept late assignments as late as two class sessions after the due date, with final exam time being the latest time I will accept any assignment. Thereafter you will receive a grade of zero for the assignment.

In the event that you have an emergency, are sick, or have encountered any other issue that prevents you from being in class on time to turn in your assignment, please have documentation for me to review (doctor's excuse, tow truck receipt, speeding ticket, etc), at which time I will review it and determine whether your absence can be legitimately excused.

Extra credit projects are not an option.

Syllabus amendments: I reserve the right to amend the syllabus or schedule as necessary at any time (see more specific details on Department Common Syllabus Policies).

All University policies apply, including the honor code. The work you will do in this course is subject to the Student Honor Code. The Honor Code is a commitment to the highest degree of ethical integrity in academic conduct, a commitment that, individually and collectively, the students of Northern Kentucky University will not lie, cheat, or plagiarize to gain an academic advantage over fellow students or avoid academic requirements.

Disabilities services: Students with disabilities who require accommodation(s) should contact Student Support Services (572-5138) or the Disabilities Office (572-6373).

Additional problems: If you encounter any problems throughout the semester regarding this class or your ability to participate, please let me know **ASAP**. It is not advisable to wait until the end of t

Course Schedule

Here is a rough outline of what we'll be covering and when. For necessary updates to the course schedule, refer to your course webpage.

Date	Topic	Assignment
August 8/23, 8/30	Introduction, Scope & Methods	Assignments posted online
September 9/6	Hypotheses, variables, and definitions Choosing a research problem, Sections of a research proposal	Assignments posted online **Research question ideas due
9/13	Using the library	**Research question decision due on 9/13
9/20	Doing a literature review	
9/27	Logic & Reasoning: Simple & Complex Arguments, Validity	**Research question proposal due
October 10/4	L & R: Causality, : Fallacies, Vagueness & Ambiguity	
10/11, 10/18	Individual Paper Meetings & Library Consultations	**Exam #1 due on 10/11
10/25	Qualitative Methods	
November 11/1	Quantitative Methods	
11/8	Presenting Research with PowerPoint	** Exam #2 due on 11/8
11/15	Paper Meeting Day	
11/22	Thanksgiving Break	
11/29, 12/6	Presentations	**Research Proposal Papers due on 11/29 **Email attachment of paper also due by start of class on 11/29 **PowerPoint Presentation hard copies due on date of presentation
12/13 3:05-5:05	Final Exam time: Presentations	

Research Project Paper Structure & Guidelines

Title Page (don't include this header)

- Research Question (in the form of a question) is your title
- Name
- PSC 315 & section
- Date

Introduction (1-1½ pages)

- First paragraph should introduce give some basic introduction to your research question, your hypothesis, and the purpose of your study
- You should operationalize key terms in your research question
- Set up what you're going to do in each section of your paper
 - i. This section should include a brief statement about each section and what you intend to do
 - ii. For example: In the next section, I will cover the relevant literature...In the third section, I will explain the methodology I will use to examine the research question...In the last section, I will explain my expected findings and these will affect...I will then conclude by...

Literature Review (2-4 pages)

- Should cover what others have done on your topic in a synthesized way
- Highlight different approaches (3-4 at most) others have taken to investigate/answer the question
- Show that your question is new and different enough to warrant research

Methodology (2-4 pages)

- Restate your hypothesis
- Explain and discuss with your dependent variable(s) along with each of independent variables
- Explain methodologies have others used to investigate similar topics, or if you're building onto a study someone has already done, then what that methodology is
- Explain which will be the best methodology for you to use to answer your question

Findings (2-3 pages)

- Explain what you hypothesize you will find if you actually do the research
Explain why your proposed research is significant
- Explain how your research question is relevant to the real world (American government, foreign relations, criminal justice, etc);
- Who would find your research useful and why? (campaign managers, prison guards, policy makers, counselors, etc)

Conclusion (1-2 paragraphs)

- Summarize your entire proposal and make a case for why the research is worthwhile

Appendices

- If you have any, they go here, including:
 - i. Surveys
 - ii. Interview questions
 - iii. Supporting charts, documents, etc
- If you don't have any, then don't include this page

References Cited (AKA Bibliography)

- Minimum of **20 references**
 - All references **MUST** be cited in your paper
 - Alphabetically list all references cited in your paper
- Note:** For the purposes of this paper, please alphabetically list your references under the appropriate header

Books: (5 minimum)

Example of citation for a book:

- Inglehart, Ronald. 1997. *Modernization and Postmodernization*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.:

Example of a citation for a book chapter:

- Williams, Rhonda M. 1993. "Race, Deconstruction, and the Emergent Agenda of Feminist Economic Theory," in *Beyond Economic Man: Feminist Theory and Economics*. Marianne A. Ferber and Julie A. Nelson (Eds). Chicago: Chicago University Press. Ch 7: 144-152.

Note: Dictionaries and textbooks do not count toward your book requirement. You should **not** be referencing or quoting a dictionary in your paper.

Journal Articles: (5 minimum)

- Zedillo, Ernesto. 2000. "Against Globophobia." *New Perspectives Quarterly* 17(2):4-7.

Note: You should only list academic journal articles here. Popular periodicals like newspapers, magazines, etc, should be listed under **Other** header.

Web sources: (5 minimum)

- World Trade Organization. "NGOs attending the third WTO Ministerial Conference," http://www.wto.org/english/forums_e/ngo_e/ngoinseattle_e.htm, accessed 1/17/01.
- Texas Department of Criminal Justice. "Gender and Racial Statistics of Death Row Offenders," <http://www.tdcj.state.tx.us/stat/racial.htm>, accessed 5/20/06.

Note: Web source sites should only include those from .org, .edu, any state websites (.tx, .ky, etc), or any government (US or other) websites (.gov, .uk, .sa, etc)

Note: If you access an academic journal or book online, they should be listed under the appropriate headers.

Note: Wikipedia and any other online reference should **not** be listed as a reference, nor should they be quoted in your papers.

Other:

Note: This section may include any periodicals, websites, personal interviews, or other sources that do not fit under the above headers.

- Time Magazine. 1999. "Rage Against the Machine," *Time Magazine* 154(24), 12/13/99:34-39.
- NYTimes (5/10/06). "Poll Gives Bush his Worst Marks Yet," <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/10/washington/10poll.html?hp&ex=1147320000&en=641ddb430eab14f8&ei=5094&partner=homepage>.

THE BASICS:

I will not accept any papers that are not typed, stapled (paper-clipped **IS NOT** stapled), and in hard-copy form. If you exceed the maximum length, I will return your paper for you to edit down and it will be treated as a late assignment.

Grading for all papers will be based on following the above structure and criteria and the following points:

- Email attachment of paper by due date & time
- 2500 words maximum (about 10 pages)
- Page numbers
- Double-spaced
- Prescribed margins: 1" top and bottom margins; "1.25 right and left margins (these are the default margins in Word)
- Prescribed font: Times Roman 12 pt. font (or MAC similar)
- Headers appeared in paper
- Edited and proof-read so that paper is well-written
 - clarity in writing
 - well-organized
 - grammatically sound
 - appropriate length paragraphs
- Followed structure and content within each section
 - Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Findings, Conclusion
 - Information in appendices where appropriate
 - 20 references, with at least 5 books, 5 academic journals, 5 web sources, 5 additional/other cited within paper; use of references and sources
- Overall content

Presentation Evaluation

Presenter: _____ **Start time:** _____ **End time:** _____

General

- Stapled, hard copy (black & white is fine) of PowerPoint presentation slides
 - 4 slides to a page
 - First slide should be a title page with research proposal paper question as the title, name, presentation date, and course section listed on it.
- Well-preparedness
- Present v. Read slides
- Clear conveyance of ideas
- Clear speaking
- Eye contact
- Evoked audience interest

In terms of content

- Organization
- Clear flow of ideas from slide to slide
- Covered key points
 - Intro
 - Relevant lit
 - Methodology
 - Findings
 - Conclusion
- Explained any charts, graphs, tables, etc

Use of PPT

- Consistent background/colors/font/etc
- Visible font
- Avoided things like punctuation, bullets & numbers together, etc
- Acceptable amount of text per slide
 - Use of bullets
 - Blocks of text
- Appropriate graphics
- Use of graphs/charts/etc
- Content self-evident
- Switching between programs
- Covered all information on slides

Ability to field questions Q end time: _____

Research related comments:



**Department of
Political Science
and Criminal Justice
Common Course
Policies
Approved April 2005**

The following policies apply to all courses taught by faculty in the Department of Political Science and Criminal Justice. Please note that individual faculty may have specific applications of these policies in their syllabi.

1. Classroom and Electronic Participation:

Classroom participation is essential to the educational process. It is vital to your understanding of the course material, and to your overall performance. It is also a student responsibility. Class participation is generally defined as regular class attendance, proper class preparation, completing assignments and activities in a timely manner, completing assignments in the format requested, and participating in discussions both during and outside of class (e.g. Black Board discussions). Participation also refers to regular monitoring of and responding to electronic contact by professors via email, Black Board or other means. Participation may have a specific grade percentage in your class; see your course syllabi for specifics.

2. Class Professionalism:

- A. Out of respect to your fellow learners, **electronic devices should be turned off** during class time unless you are required to be on-call by your employer. In that case, please set your beeper / phone to a non-audible signal. If you are required to leave a beeper or cell phone on during class, inform the professor of this prior to class.
- B. **Disruptive behavior or conduct** (whether in-class or electronic) that demeans fellow class members or the instructor will not be tolerated. Please see the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities Section 4.3 for "What the Professor May Expect of the Student." Instructors reserve the right to dismiss or remove a disruptive student from a classroom in accordance with the appropriate College of Arts and Science Policy. http://www.nku.edu/~deanstudents/disruption_guidelines.html
- C. It is important that work with your name attached is, in fact, **solely your work** unless properly referenced or cited. In these days of increased access to information, it is critical that you understand the meaning,

seriousness and consequences of plagiarism. If you ever have a question about giving proper credit for academic work, please consult your instructor **well in advance of an assignment due date**.

- D. The work you will do in this course and your behavior in this course are subject to the **Student Honor Code**. The Honor Code is a commitment to the highest degree of ethical integrity in academic conduct. By being a student at NKU you make a commitment that individually and collectively, you will not lie, cheat, or plagiarize to gain an academic advantage over fellow students or avoid academic requirements. You also make a commitment to behavior in a professional manner, especially when involved in academic activities off campus such as travel courses or CCSA Study Abroad. For specifics concerning the honor code, see the Dean of Students website:
http://www.nku.edu/~deanstudents/student_rights/honor_code.htm.

3. **Right to Revise a Syllabus:**

A syllabus is required for every class and will be distributed at the beginning of each semester. Faculty reserve the right to **revise the course syllabus** as needed. Changes in the specific course schedule may happen frequently, so you need to keep abreast of these changes regularly. Should a major change occur in the syllabus (e.g. moving a specified test date, changing the grading percentages, changing the assignment types, etc.) the specific change will be announced at least a week in advance of any activity due date (e.g. paper, test). Major revisions in a course grading scheme or mechanism will also be in writing, which may include paper distribution, email, or posting to Blackboard or an appropriate online forum.

4. **Student Responsibilities to Meet Course Obligations:**

You are responsible for all course assignments including class preparation, class attendance, class activities, tests, papers, labs, projects, group work or other course assignments. By reviewing the syllabus at the beginning of a course, you are responsible for meeting all specific course obligations. Additionally, some faculty may even require that each student initial a document to recognize their course obligations. Failure to attend classes, or meet course obligations is a serious matter and it is your responsibility to communicate with the instructor should you have difficulty with meeting any course obligation. Faculty may, at their discretion, reduce grades or even fail you for not meeting specified course obligations, including but not limited to, class attendance, taking tests at a specified time, turning in papers on time and in the format required and other assignments. It is the faculty's discretion to determine the consequences of not meeting a course obligation, and many times the specific provisions and penalties are

specified in the syllabus. Faculty may also require written documentation verifying your inability to meet a course obligation.

5. **Final Examination:**

With rare exception, all classes will meet at the time prescribed, will meet until the last scheduled day of classes, and will **meet during the final exam period** printed in the *Schedule of Classes*. This is an Arts and Science College policy.

Your syllabus should include the date and time of the final exam period scheduled for the course. There is also a final exam schedule posted on the NKU website. Faculty will provide an indication of the final exam's nature (cumulative final, regular test, return of take-home exam, presentation of final project, etc.) well in advance of the final exam.

There may be courses for which a cumulative final exam is not appropriate. However, these courses will still meet as scheduled during their final exam period. The final exam period will used, as appropriate for the course, including, but not limited to, a non-cumulative exam, project presentation, return of take-home exam, or paper presentation.

6. **Students with Disabilities:**

Students with disabilities who require accommodations (academic adjustments, auxiliary aids or services) for this course must register with the Office of Disability Services. Contact the Office of Disability Services immediately in University Center suite 320 or call X-6373 for more information. Verification of your disability is required in the Office of Disability Services for you to receive reasonable academic accommodations. Visit the disability services website at www.nku.edu/~disability/.