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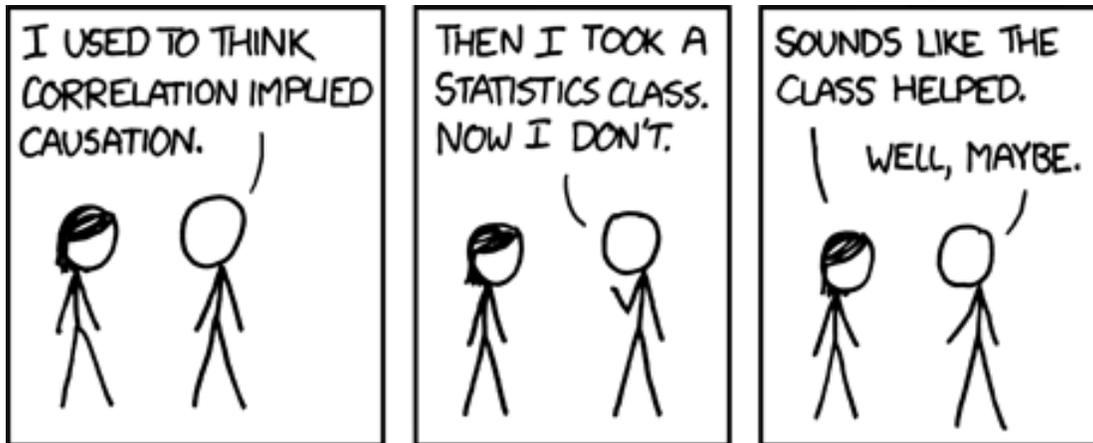
## POLI 3000:0001: Analyzing Political Data

Tues & Thurs 2:00–3:15 pm

Van Allen 474

Spring 2018

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### Course Information

Instructor: Dr. Menninga

Office: 308 Schaeffer Hall

Office Hours: Tue & Wed 9:00–10:30am, or by appointment

Phone: (319) 335-2343

E-mail: [elizabeth-menninga@uiowa.edu](mailto:elizabeth-menninga@uiowa.edu)

Class Website: [icon.uiowa.edu](http://icon.uiowa.edu)

### Course Description

This course is designed to achieve two objectives: (1) introduce you to research and quantitative analysis in political science, and (2) help you become critical (but not cynical) consumers of quantitative analysis used in political and policy-oriented reporting. While Poli 2000 is not a prerequisite, this course will focus on the various statistical tools that can be used to evaluate our theories; theory generation will mainly be left to other courses. We will tackle the challenge of what conclusions we can draw from these analyses, trying to disentangle cause and effect from observed correlations. To help our pursuit of these goals, we'll use statistical software (Stata), providing an introduction to statistical computing. Throughout the course we'll use what we've learned to think critically about the use of quantitative research and the inferences drawn from that research by analysts, reporters, politicians, and policy advocates. As such, not only will you be learning to do your own analysis this semester, but also learning to evaluate such information presented by others.

## Course Materials

The required book is available at the Iowa Hawk Shop or from your favorite on-line retailer.

- Joseph F. Healey, *The Essentials of Statistics: A Tool for Social Research 4th Edition*. 2015. Cengage Learning. (Referred to as EoS)

A recommended (free on-line) textbook will also be referenced to throughout the semester.

- Illowsky et al. *Introductory Statistics*. OpenStax. Download it here: <https://openstax.org/details/introductory-statistics#resources> (Referred to as IS)

Additionally, I recommend students who have no experience with statistical computing or know that the computing part of this course will be a challenge to purchase or borrow a Stata tutorial. Two such books are:

- Kyle C. Longest. *Using Stata for Quantitative Analysis, 2nd Edition*. 2015. Sage Press.
- Alan C. Acock. *A Gentle Introduction to Stata, 5th Edition*. 2016. Stata Press

The first book is a little cheaper and much smaller. It covers most of the introductory commands that will be used this semester. The second is a more comprehensive resource for students who expect to use Stata not only this semester but in future semesters as well. There are also many useful free online Stata resources.

Any other course materials will be available electronically on the course ICON page or through the library's on-line resources. Please check each week's ICON module for any readings/instructions that need be completed **before** class.

## Course Requirements and Grading

There are no prerequisites for this class, however, I will assume basic mathematical skills (mainly arithmetic). Your grade for the course will be determined by performance in four areas: class participation, problem sets, a data analysis project, and exams.

### *Course Grade Breakdown*

- Participation: 10%
- Problem Sets: 25%
- Data Analysis Project: 25%
- Midterm Exam: 20%
- Final Exam: 20%

### Participation (10% of final grade)

Class time will be divided between lecture and in-class activities. This class will include active learning opportunities frequently. These have been proven to help students learn while also making the course more enjoyable. Active involvement in activities is an easy way to boost your participation grade. Participation points are assigned based upon the quantity and quality of a student's contributions to the class. Quality is weighted significantly more heavily than quantity. While

attendance will not be graded directly, absences will hurt your participation grade as you cannot participate if you are not in class.

In addition to improving your grade, participation in class can help you identify what you don't understand, ask questions, and deepen your understanding of the material. Asking relevant or interesting questions counts as participation!

*Presentation of Misleading Statistics:* At the beginning of most classes, one (or two) of you will be responsible for presenting a news article, blog post, or video clip that includes misleading (or incorrect) use of quantitative analysis. This can be incorrect reporting of what a statistic means, drawing conclusions from poor samples, or any number of other ways data can be misinterpreted. The article should be recent (written within 6 months of your presentation) unless you get advanced permission to use an older article. The presentation should be a couple minutes long (no more than 3) highlighting any relevant context or history, but focusing mainly on how the article uses statistics misleadingly. You have substantial latitude here, so feel free to talk about a topic you find interesting or surprising in some way. You are welcome, but not required, to run your idea by me in advance. Please submit whatever materials you use in your presentation (powerpoint, links to articles, etc) to the ICON assignment for this presentation before your presentation.

Tips for selecting an article: Please pick an article from a reputable news outlet. You may use Huffington Post or other news aggregators to find interesting articles, but please cite the original article (not the link to the aggregator). Please avoid news outlets that are well-known to be strongly partisan such as Fox News and MSNBC; the goal is to show that misleading statistics are in our everyday news exposure and to begin looking for and assessing the methods/statistics that are used to support policy positions.

Focus on the use of quantitative analysis and be respectful in your presentation.

### Problem Sets (25% of final grade)

Homework assignments will be assigned throughout the semester (approximately one every two weeks). The problem sets will be posted to ICON and are due at the beginning of class (2:00pm) on the due date. Homework assignments will be submitted through Dropbox on ICON. You do not have to type your assignments. You may hand-write answers and then scan your work in order to upload to ICON. If you'd like to type your homework, Word's equation editor makes typing math symbols and equations rather easy. You may hand-write answers to some questions and type answers to others. Ultimately, the only requirement is that the assignment is legible and uploaded to ICON. Photos of your assignment taken with your phone will **not** count as they are rarely (if ever) legible. It is your responsibility to ensure the assignment is legible and has been correctly uploaded into ICON on time. Double check after submission!

Late homework will result in a 10 point penalty (out of 100) for each day late. Late homework will no longer be accepted after the answer key is posted, typically about 5 days after the assignment is due.

Working together on the homework is not only allowed, but strongly encouraged. Working to-

gether is a great way to talk through tricky concepts and improve your understanding. The final product, however, is expected to be written and understood by the student turning in the work.

Your lowest homework grade will be dropped before calculating your final grade.

#### Exams (20% + 20% = 40% of final grade)

There will be one midterm and a final exam. Each is worth 20% of your final grade. Both exams will be closed-note, in-class exams. This work must be done on your own without consulting other students or friends. The final will be cumulative. Each exam will be a combination of short answer, definitions, and computational questions. The format of each exam will be discussed more completely in class when the exam date is closer.

You will need a calculator for both exams. You can purchase a simple one for about \$10. You may **NOT** use a smartphone/tablet as your calculator.

*Policy on Unexcused Absences and Exams:* You are required to be present for all scheduled exams. The only allowable exception to this policy is a documented emergency. If at all possible you should contact the instructor before the exam to discuss the emergency, provide documentation, and schedule the make-up.

#### Data Analysis Project (25% of final grade)

Over the course of the semester, you will write a data analysis paper in which you will analyze data to evaluate a policy/political science hypothesis of interest to you. There are several deadlines throughout the semester related to this final paper. The purpose of these deadlines is to break up the project and provide opportunities for feedback before the final paper is due. Each is worth 5% of the final grade for the project. Failing to meet one of these deadlines will result in a 0 for that portion of the grade. Refer to the schedule below and the associated assignment on ICON for due dates and more details.

Note: all assignments are expected to be submitted by the date and time listed. Exceptions will only be given for personal or medical emergencies and must be discussed with the instructor **before** the deadline whenever at all possible. You are responsible for making sure submissions have been uploaded to ICON correctly.

#### *In-Class Paper Workshop*

On April 12 we'll have an in-class paper workshop. You will share your progress on the final paper with your group and use your peers to get advice/feedback/help. To do this most effectively, you'll circulate a draft of your paper to your group in advance (draft due April 5 at 5:00pm). Your assignment for the day of the workshop will be to read your groupmates' drafts, give your groupmates comments, and discuss your comments with them in class. I find that opportunities like this substantially improve the quality of the final work. Take advantage of this opportunity!

### *Project Deadlines*

- Topic & Hypothesis Selected **Friday, Feb. 16 at 5pm**
- Data & Analysis Plan **Friday, Mar. 9 at 5pm**
- Draft of Paper Submitted to Group **Thursday, Apr. 5 at 5pm**
- Feedback Submitted to Group **Thursday, Apr. 12 at 2pm**
- Final Paper Due **Friday, April 27 at 5pm**

### **Grading Scale**

The grading scale for the course is as follows. Note that grades of A+ are reserved for exceptional circumstances when a student demonstrates intellectual capacity and rigorous scholarship.

Letter Grade	Percentage
A+	99-100
A	93-98
A-	90-92
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
D-	60-62
F	59 or below

### **Important Dates**

- Midterm Exam: March 1 (Thursday)
- Paper Draft Due to Group: April 5, 5:00pm (Thursday)
- Final Paper Workshop: April 12 (Thursday)
- Paper Due: April 27, 5:00pm (Friday)
- Final Exam: TBD

### **Expectations**

*Technology:* Please turn your mobile phones off or to silent mode before class. On exam days your phones must be powered down and put away. Laptops are permitted for class purposes only. If you are using your laptops for notes or readings, sign out of everything else so you can focus on mastering the material at hand. There are days in which we will be using statistical software in class. I will try to always give you advanced warning (typically through e-mail or ICON) so you

can know to bring your laptops on those days.

*Software:* We will be using statistical software in this course as we learn how to implement/interpret different statistical tests. We will primarily use Stata to execute these analyses. If you happen to already know a different software that you prefer, that is fine, but I will only provide technical assistance for Stata. While you may purchase a Stata license if you wish, there are free alternatives as students at Iowa. In particular you can access Stata on your laptops through Iowa servers at <https://virtualdesktop.uiowa.edu/>. In addition, computer labs throughout campus have Stata installed and available for student use. You can check which labs have the necessary software at [https://maps.uiowa.edu/study-spaces?field\\_features\\_tid%5B%5D=65&=Apply](https://maps.uiowa.edu/study-spaces?field_features_tid%5B%5D=65&=Apply). Click on the lab you are interested in and then you can click “view all software available in this lab”. I strongly recommend becoming familiar with and using your H drive to make accessing your files on different computers throughout campus convenient (<https://its.uiowa.edu/support/article/104047>).

Additionally, the political science department has a Technology TA who holds office hours in the Political Science Collab. The Political Science Collab is located in 334 Schaeffer Hall. The Technology TA, currently Joshua Tschantret, is available to consult with students in Political Science courses regarding technology that may be required for their homework or research projects. This might include tips on accessing or entering data and doing statistical analyses. Joshua’s office hours for Spring 2018 are Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday from 9:00AM–12:00PM. He is also available by appointment; his email address is [joshua-tschantret@uiowa.edu](mailto:joshua-tschantret@uiowa.edu).

*Email:* Email is a useful way to ask quick questions. However, replying to long questions about the readings or lectures is highly inefficient for both you and me. If you want to talk about something you don’t understand, come by my office hours. In general, while I respond to student emails, I prefer to talk in person. Come see me during office hours! If your question involved Stata, **include a screenshot** of the error message/output you want to discuss.

*Contesting a Grade:* If a student wishes to have a grade reconsidered, the student must submit a written statement to the instructor within 48 hours of having the graded assignment returned. The written statement must include the student’s rationale for why additional points should be given. The instructor will then review the written statement and the assignment. After review the instructor has the right to subtract points as well as add points if warranted.

## CLAS Teaching Policies & Resources Syllabus Insert 2017-2018

### **Administrative Home**

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is the administrative home of this course and governs matters such as the add/drop deadlines, the second-grade-only option, and other related issues. Different colleges may have different policies. Questions may be addressed to 120 Schaeffer Hall, or see the CLAS Academic Policies Handbook at <http://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook>.

### **Electronic Communication**

University policy specifies that students are responsible for all official correspondences sent to their University of Iowa e-mail address (@uiowa.edu). Faculty and students should use this account for

correspondences (Operations Manual, III.15.2, k.11).

### **Accommodations for Disabilities**

The University of Iowa is committed to providing an educational experience that is accessible to all students. A student may request academic accommodations for a disability (which include but are not limited to mental health, attention, learning, vision, and physical or health-related conditions). A student seeking academic accommodations should first register with Student Disability Services and then meet with the course instructor privately in the instructor's office to make particular arrangements. Reasonable accommodations are established through an interactive process between the student, instructor, and SDS. See <http://sds.studentlife.uiowa.edu/> for more information.

### **Academic Honesty**

All CLAS students or students taking classes offered by CLAS have, in essence, agreed to the College's Code of Academic Honesty: "I pledge to do my own academic work and to excel to the best of my abilities, upholding the IOWA Challenge. I promise not to lie about my academic work, to cheat, or to steal the words or ideas of others; nor will I help fellow students to violate the Code of Academic Honesty." Any student committing academic misconduct is reported to the College and placed on disciplinary probation or may be suspended or expelled (CLAS Academic Policies Handbook).

### **CLAS Final Examination Policies**

The final examination schedule for each class is announced by the Registrar generally by the fifth week of classes. Final exams are offered only during the official final examination period. No exams of any kind are allowed during the last week of classes. All students should plan on being at the UI through the final examination period. Once the Registrar has announced the date, time, and location of each final exam, the complete schedule will be published on the Registrar's web site and will be shared with instructors and students. It is the student's responsibility to know the date, time, and place of a final exam.

### **Making a Suggestion or a Complaint**

Students with a suggestion or complaint should first visit with the instructor (and the course supervisor), and then with the departmental DEO. (Wenfang Tang, 335-2358) Complaints must be made within six months of the incident (CLAS Academic Policies Handbook).

### **Understanding Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment subverts the mission of the University and threatens the well-being of students, faculty, and staff. All members of the UI community have a responsibility to uphold this mission and to contribute to a safe environment that enhances learning. Incidents of sexual harassment should be reported immediately. See the UI Comprehensive Guide on Sexual Harassment for assistance, definitions, and the full University policy.

### **Reacting Safely to Severe Weather**

In severe weather, class members should seek appropriate shelter immediately, leaving the classroom if necessary. The class will continue if possible when the event is over. For more information on Hawk Alert and the siren warning system, visit the Department of Public Safety website.