

POLS 613

Research and Writing in Political Science

Matthew Fuhrmann

Fall 2021

Office: LASB 321

Meeting Time: Wednesday, 1:30pm – 4:20pm

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Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description

This course is designed to help students complete a research paper that is suitable for publication in a peer-reviewed journal. We will divide the course based on the main components of a paper: (1) the research question and why it matters, (2) theory, (3) research design, and (4) findings and implications. Throughout the semester, students will present their projects and comment on the work of their peers.

Course Prerequisites

POLS 601, POLS 602, and POLS 603. This class is intended for third-year PhD students in political science.

Course Learning Outcomes

The course is designed to develop the following knowledge and skills:

- **Write effectively.** Students will develop skills to improve their academic writing.
- **Identify original research questions.** What is worth explaining? How do you know?
- **Develop interesting theoretical arguments.** How can you build a compelling and logically sound argument?
- **Appropriately design scholarly research.** Any theory must generate testable predictions. How do you design a study to test your theory's predictions.
- **Presenting social scientific work effectively.** In our field, you will be asked to give presentations on your research at conferences and internal workshops. Obtaining a tenure-track job in academia will depend, in part, on giving a 30-45 minute presentation of your research.
- **Understanding the publication process.** Students will learn about the academic publication process, and how to make their work publishable.
- **Constructive engagement of others' work.** Scholars are frequently asked to comment on others' work

Course Structure

For each of the four components of a research paper highlighted above, the course will proceed as follows:

1. Students will give a presentation to the class.
2. Students will receive oral feedback from the instructor and their peers.
3. Students will write-up the relevant section of the paper and turn it in to the instructor, taking care to incorporate all of the feedback they received.
4. Students and the instructor will read the section and come to class prepared to provide feedback the following week.
5. Students will incorporate all of this feedback into the next iteration of their presentation.

Course Readings

There is one required book for this course:

- Deirdre N. McCloskey, *Economical Writing: Thirty-Five Rules for Clear and Persuasive Prose* (University of Chicago Press, 2019). Third edition.

Course Requirements

There are five main requirements for this seminar:

- **Presentations.** Students will give five presentations throughout the course. The first four presentations will count for **2.5 percent of the final grade each** and the final presentation will represent **5 percent**.
- **Section Write-Ups.** Students will write their papers in four main sections. They will submit each section to the instructor for review prior to completing the full paper. The individual sections constitute **20 percent of the final grade** (5 percent each).
- **Class Participation.** I expect that students will provide constructive feedback to their colleagues. Class participation represents **10 percent of your grade**. I will record participation scores at the end of each class based on the following 4-point scale:
 - 3: The student provided at least one constructive comment on each paper that was discussed during a given class period.
 - 2: The student commented on between 50 and 99 percent of the papers that were discussed during a class period.

- 1. The student participated but commented on fewer than 50 percent of the papers.
- 0. The student did not participate at all.
- **Initial Research Paper Submission.** Students will submit an initial version of their full paper. This represents **25 percent of their final grade.**
- **Revise and Resubmit.** I will review the initial submission as if I were serving as an anonymous reviewer for a journal. Through this process, you will receive detailed feedback from me and others. You will then revise the paper to address my feedback. When submitting your revised paper, you must include a revision memo that details that changes you have made to the paper in response to the feedback. The revised paper constitutes **30 percent of your grade.**
- **Final letter grade.** Your final letter grade will be determined based on the following scale:
 - A: 89.5–100
 - B: 79.5–89.49
 - C: 69.5–79.49
 - D: 59.5–69.49
 - F: below 59.5

Late Work Policy

I will accept assignments after the deadlines indicated in the syllabus. If a student is unable to complete an assignment due to illness, there will not be a penalty for turning in late work. In that case, students can turn in the assignment once they have recovered and are able to complete it. More generally, missing class due to a university-excused absence does not constitute late work. In other cases, I will subtract 10 points for each day that an assignment is late. If extenuating circumstances not previously specified arise, the student can request that this penalty be waived. I will handle requests to waive late penalties on a case-by-case basis.

Groups

The class will be divided into two groups. This is done so that students will rotate weekly between presenting and completing a writing assignment. In general, no student will present in two consecutive weeks.

Group A: Francesco Bromo, Manuela Munoz Fuerte, Lu Sun

Group B: Maisie McCormack, Chen Shen, Hank Yang

Key Deadlines

All Students

- November 23: Initial submission of full paper due.
- December 13: Final paper due.

Group A

- September 29: Write-up of research question due.
- October 13: Write-up of theory due.
- October 27: Write-up of research design due.
- November 10: Write-up of findings and implications due.

Group B

- October 6: Write-up of research question due.
- October 20: Write-up of theory due.
- November 3: Write-up of research design due.
- November 17: Write-up of findings and implications due.

Course Schedule

1. September 1. **Overview: The Fundamentals of an Effective Research Paper**
2. September 8. **The Review Process: From Submission to Publication**
 - Identify a paper that you think represents the best political science research you have read thus far. Come to class ready to explain why you think the paper is excellent.
 - Go through the most recent issue of the American Journal of Political Science: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/toc/15405907/current>. Using the paper typology provided by the instructor, code all of the papers in this issue.
3. September 15. **Pitches**. Each student will come to class prepared to describe three research ideas. They will choose the most promising idea to pursue as a paper in this course.
 - Before September 10, the instructor and the student's adviser must approve their research idea.
4. September 22. **Research Question I: Group A Presents**

5. September 29. **Research Question II: Group B Presents**
6. October 6. **Theory I: Group A Presents**
 - Discussion of Group A's research question write-ups.
7. October 13. **Theory II: Group B Presents**
 - Discussion of Group B's research question write-ups.
8. October 20. **Research Design I: Group A Presents**
 - Discussion of Group A's theory write-ups.
9. October 27. **Research Design II: Group B Presents**
 - Discussion of Group B's theory write-ups.
10. November 3. **Data Collection and Analysis Workshop.** No presentations today.
 - Discussion of Group A's research design write-ups.
11. November 10. **Findings and Implications I: Group A Presents**
 - Discussion of Group B's research design write-ups.
12. November 17. **Findings and Implications II: Group B Presents**
13. November 24. **Reading Day – No Class**
14. December 1. **Revise, Revise, Revise**
 - Discussion of Group A's and Group B's findings and implications write-ups.
15. December 8. **Mini-Conference**

University Policies

This section outlines the university level policies that must be included in each course syllabus. All of the language used here was taken directly from text provided by the TAMU Faculty Senate, which established the wording of these policies.

COVID Syllabus Statement for Fall 2021

The following optional syllabus statement on the value of vaccinations and masking was developed by the Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate and approved by the Administration on August 18, 2021:

To help protect Aggieland and stop the spread of COVID-19, Texas A&M University urges students to be vaccinated and to wear masks in classrooms and all other academic facilities on campus, including labs. Doing so exemplifies the Aggie Core Values of respect, leadership, integrity, and selfless service by putting community concerns above individual preferences. COVID-19 vaccines and masking – regardless of vaccination status – have been shown to be safe and effective at reducing spread to others, infection, hospitalization, and death.

Attendance Policy

The university views class attendance and participation as an individual student responsibility. Students are expected to attend class and to complete all assignments.

Please refer to Student Rule 7 in its entirety for information about excused absences, including definitions, and related documentation and timelines.

Makeup Work Policy

Students will be excused from attending class on the day of a graded activity or when attendance contributes to a student's grade, for the reasons stated in Student Rule 7, or other reason deemed appropriate by the instructor.

Please refer to Student Rule 7 in its entirety for information about makeup work, including definitions, and related documentation and timelines.

Absences related to Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 may necessitate a period of more than 30 days for make-up work, and the timeframe for make-up work should be agreed upon by the student and instructor" (Student Rule 7, Section 7.4.1).

"The instructor is under no obligation to provide an opportunity for the student to make up work missed because of an unexcused absence" (Student Rule 7, Section 7.4.2).

Students who request an excused absence are expected to uphold the Aggie Honor Code and Student Conduct Code. (See Student Rule 24.)

Academic Integrity Statement and Policy

"An Aggie does not lie, cheat or steal, or tolerate those who do."

"Texas A&M University students are responsible for authenticating all work submitted to an instructor. If asked, students must be able to produce proof that the item submitted is indeed the work of that student. Students must keep appropriate records at all times. The inability to authenticate one's work, should the instructor request it, may be sufficient grounds to initiate an academic misconduct case" (Section 20.1.2.3, Student Rule 20).

You can learn more about the Aggie Honor System Office Rules and Procedures, academic integrity, and your rights and responsibilities at aggiehonor.tamu.edu.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Policy

Texas A&M University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. If you experience barriers to your education due to a disability or think you may have a disability, please contact Disability Resources in the Student Services Building or at (979) 845-1637 or visit disability.tamu.edu. Disabilities may include, but are not limited to attentional, learning, mental health, sensory, physical, or chronic health conditions. All students are encouraged to discuss their disability related needs with Disability Resources and their instructors as soon as possible.

Title IX and Statement on Limits to Confidentiality

Texas A&M University is committed to fostering a learning environment that is safe and productive for all. University policies and federal and state laws prohibit gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, sexual exploitation, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking.

With the exception of some medical and mental health providers, all university employees (including full and part-time faculty, staff, paid graduate assistants, student workers, etc.) are Mandatory Reporters and must report to the Title IX Office if the employee experiences, observes, or becomes aware of an incident that meets the following conditions (see University Rule 08.01.01.M1):

—The incident is reasonably believed to be discrimination or harassment.

—The incident is alleged to have been committed by or against a person who, at the time of the incident, was (1) a student enrolled at the University or (2) an employee of the University. Mandatory Reporters must file a report regardless of how the information comes to their attention – including but not limited to face-to-face conversations, a written class assignment or paper, class discussion, email, text, or social media post. Although Mandatory Reporters must file a report, in most instances, you will be able to control how the report is handled, including whether or not to pursue a formal investigation. The University’s goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available to you and to ensure access to the resources you need.

Students wishing to discuss concerns in a confidential setting are encouraged to make an appointment with Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS).

Students can learn more about filing a report, accessing supportive resources, and navigating the Title IX investigation and resolution process on the University’s Title IX webpage.

Statement on Mental Health and Wellness

Texas A&M University recognizes that mental health and wellness are critical factors that influence a student’s academic success and overall wellbeing. Students are encouraged to engage in proper self-care by utilizing the resources and services available from Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS). Students who need someone to talk to can call the TAMU Helpline (979-845-2700) from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. weekdays and 24 hours on weekends. 24-hour emergency help is also available through the National Suicide Prevention Hotline (800-273-8255) or at suicidepreventionlifeline.org.

Department of Political Science's Diversity Statement

The Department of Political Science supports the Texas A&M University commitment to diversity, and welcomes individuals from any racial, ethnic, religious, age, gender, sexual orientation, class, disability, and nationality. (See <http://diversity.tamu.edu/>). In the spirit of this vital commitment, in this course each voice in the classroom has something of value to contribute to all discussions. Everyone is expected to respect the different experiences, beliefs and values expressed by fellow students and the instructor, and will engage in reasoned discussion that refrains from derogatory comments about other people, cultures, groups, or viewpoints.