

**POL S 205**  
**Michael Strausz**

**Political Science as a Social Science**  
**Spring 2008**

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**course time and place:** Monday and Wednesday, 8:30 am – 10:20 am, MGH 231

**e-mail:** [strauszm@u.washington.edu](mailto:strauszm@u.washington.edu)

**office hours:** Tuesdays 10:00 am – 12:00 pm, Gowen 112

**coffee hours:** Thursdays 1:00 pm – 2:00 pm, Suzzallo Espresso

**course webpage:** <http://courses.washington.edu/polsc205>

**teaching assistant:** Ian Lasas, [lasas@u.washington.edu](mailto:lasas@u.washington.edu)

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**Course Description and Objectives:** This course has two aims. First, it is my goal for you to become better *consumers* of the works of professional social scientists. You will learn skills including how to ask questions about the measurement of concepts, interpret statistical tables, and think critically about both qualitative and quantitative research designs. Second, it is my goal for you to begin to learn to use the tools of political science to become *producers* of your own social science research. You will learn to ask good questions, assemble competing explanations, gather data to test those explanations, analyze those data, and even draw conclusions. Both of these sets of skills—becoming better consumers and producers of social science research—will help you in your other courses, and they will help you in life beyond college as well.

This is not a statistics class; it is a class about how political scientists do research. Because political scientists often use statistics in their research, we will pay a lot of attention to statistics (you may have noticed that the only textbook required for this class is a statistics book) but we will also spend time thinking about things like measurement, case selection, and research design, which are important for both quantitative (statistical) and qualitative research. Moreover, we will spend the last week of class examining qualitative research techniques in depth.

**Expectations:**

1. Prepare for each lecture by carefully reading the assigned materials. If it seems that you are not doing the readings, I will give pop quizzes that will be considered as a part of your homework grade.
2. Come to lecture on time, and stay for the duration.
3. Homework and papers should be made up entirely of your original work. Copying or paraphrasing a source without acknowledging that source is plagiarism and will not be tolerated. Allowing another student to copy your work is also cheating and likewise will not be tolerated. Students determined to have committed plagiarism will be treated in accordance with the University of Washington's policy on academic honesty (<http://depts.washington.edu/grading/issue1/honesty.htm>).

**Disabled Student Services:** If you would like to request academic accommodations due to a disability, please contact Disabled Student Services, 448 Schmitz, 543-8924 (V/TDD). If you have a letter from Disabled Student Services indicating you have a disability that requires academic accommodations, please present the letter to the professor so accommodations you might need for class can be discussed.

**Grading:** Grades in this course will be determined as follows:

- Homework (8 assignments): 25%
- 4-5 page article evaluation (**Due May 15**): 25%
- 5-6 page Research Design (**Due June 4**): 25%
- Research Question (**Due April 16**): 5%
- Participation in Friday Sections: 20%

Paper and homework deadline extensions will not be allowed except in the cases of university-excused absences or illnesses, and proper documentation is required.

There will be eight homework assignments over the course of the class. These assignments will give you a chance to practice what you are learning in the class. Many of the homework assignments will require that you use SPSS. Unfortunately, the University Bookstore is selling SPSS for \$194.95, which is quite a high price, but fortunately SPSS is available in most campus computer labs including the political science computer lab (where we will be having section), the Odegaard Computing Commons, and the Center for Social Science Computation and Research on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor of Condon Hall. Lab space is limited, so please plan accordingly (i.e. inability to access a computer will not be accepted as an excuse for late homework).

In addition to the homework assignments, you there will be two papers due in this class. The first paper, due **May 16 at the beginning of section**, is an article evaluation (which should be 4-5 pages). You will be given a choice between several political science articles, and you will be asked to write a review of one article that focuses on the article's research methodology. A more specific assignment will be distributed on **April 7**.

The second paper is a research design. You will be asked to *design*, but not *implement*, a research project that addresses a political science question that interests you. You will be asked to turn in a research question on **April 16 at the beginning of class**, and the final draft of your research design will be due on **June 4 at the beginning of class**. A more specific assignment will be distributed in class on **April 9**.

If you feel that you have been graded unfairly on any course assignment, please wait 24 hours after the assignment is returned and then contact the TA with a typed statement about why you believe you were graded unfairly. This statement must provide substantive reasons why you believe that you were graded unfairly. If after the TA you still believe that you were graded unfairly after the TA has reevaluated your assignment, you may bring the assignment to the instructor. The appeal process must be started one week after the exam/homework was returned.

Late assignments will be penalized .5 per date late (4→3.5→3.0, etc.). Once grades have been officially submitted for the course, late assignments will no longer be accepted.

**Office Hours and Coffee Hours:** I encourage students to take advantage of my office hours and coffee hours in order to ask questions about course materials or to chat about issues related to the course or political science more generally. Also, if you have any comments about or problems with the course itself I encourage you to share them in my office hours or coffee hours.

If you would like to get in touch with me to ask a question or schedule an appointment, I encourage you to e-mail me.

**Course Materials:** The following book is required. It is available at the UW bookstore, but feel free to buy copies at other bookstores or online. Readings that aren't in this book will be available online, through the library's electronic reserves.

*Statistics Unplugged*, Second Edition, by Sally Caldwell

**Schedule:**

3/31 *Introduction*

4/2 *Asking Good Questions*  
Caldwell, pp. 1-16.

4/7 *Measurement: Reliability and Validity*  
Malcolm Gladwell "None of the Above: What I.Q. Doesn't Tell you About Race,"  
*The New Yorker*, 12/17/2007 (electronic reserve).  
**Article evaluation assignment distributed in class.**

4/9 *Measurement: Types of Data*  
Caldwell, pp. 18-46.  
Beer, Caroline, and Neil J. Mitchell. 2006. Comparing Nations and States: Human Rights and Democracy in India. *Comparative Political Studies* 39 (8):996-1018 (electronic reserve): skim the whole thing, but focus on the "Data and Measures" section (pp. 1004-1008). We will be returning to this article later in the quarter.  
**Research design assignment distributed in class.**

4/14 *Case Selection and Curves*  
Caldwell, pp. 49-65.  
Beer and Mitchell, 2006: this time focus on the "Democracy, Human Rights, and India" section (pp. 999-1004).

4/16 *Are We Normal?*  
Caldwell, pp. 68-87.  
**Research question due at the beginning of class.**

4/21 *Ethical Issues in Research Design*  
**Late Start! Class starts at 9:30.**  
***Movie: The Stanford Prison Experiment***  
Carl Elliot, "Guinea-Pigging: Healthy Human Subjects for Drug-Safety Trials are in Demand. But is it a Living?" *The New Yorker*, 1/7/2008 (electronic reserve).

- 4/23 *Statistics: Some Important Fundamentals*  
Caldwell, pp. 89-101.
- 4/28 *Confidence!*  
Caldwell, pp. 103-138.
- 4/30 *Hypothesis Testing in Statistics and Beyond*  
Caldwell, pp. 143-168.
- 5/5 *Which Mean is Bigger?*  
Caldwell, pp. 172-193.
- 5/7 *Nulls and Tails*  
Caldwell, pp. 197-212.
- 5/12 *ANOVA*  
Caldwell, pp. 214-242.
- 5/14 *Chi-squared*  
Caldwell, pp. 247-263.
- 5/19 **Class is cancelled** because Dr. Strausz is participating in a workshop at Syracuse University, and because you have a lot of reading to do for Wednesday!
- 5/21 *Correlations and Regression*  
Caldwell, pp. 266-295.  
Beer and Mitchell, 2006: reread the whole thing, and focus on the “Empirical Analysis” section (pp. 1008-1014).
- 5/26 **Class canceled for Memorial Day**
- 5/28 *Qualitative Analysis: Historical Case Studies, Interviews, Participant Observation, and Beyond*  
Owen, John M. 1994. “How Liberalism Produces Democratic Peace.” *International Security* 19 (2): 87-125.
- 6/2 *More Qualitative Analysis: Your Opportunity to Poke Holes in Dr. Strausz’s Research*  
No assigned reading.
- 6/4 *Conclusion*  
**Research design due at the beginning of class.**