



Course Syllabus: Research Methods

College of Humanities and Social Sciences

POLS 1333 Section 206

Spring 2026, Tuesday & Thursday 12:30pm – 1:50pm

Contact Information

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Course Description

The purpose of this course is to prepare students to analyze political science issues using statistics. The main topics and methods covered in this course include descriptive statistics, basic probability, hypothesis testing, differences-between-groups tests, correlation, linear regression, and multiple regressions. We also examine how to generate and interpret statistical analyses through Microsoft Excel and SPSS software. By the conclusion of the course students should be able to pose specific research questions, construct a valid and reliable research design, gather empirical data, and confirm or reject their hypotheses. This course will provide students with skills that can be extended beyond the scope of this course and into their professional life after graduation from MSU.

This course begins at an elementary level, assuming no prior knowledge of statistics, and ends with intermediate/advanced techniques for running and interpreting multivariate analysis. Students will be given the opportunity to progress rapidly in their familiarity with a variety of quantitative methods for describing distributions and for analyzing the nature, significance, and strength of relationships between variables.

Textbook & Instructional Materials

Recommended textbook: Theresa Marchant-Shapiro, *Statistics for Political Analysis: Understanding the Numbers* (Sage Publications, 2015).

Required Software: Microsoft Excel & SPSS

Student Handbook

Refer to: [Student Handbook](#)

Academic Misconduct Policy & Procedures

Academic Dishonesty: Cheating, collusion, and plagiarism (the act of using source material of other persons, either published or unpublished, without following the accepted techniques of crediting, or the submission for credit of work not the individual's to whom credit is given). Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in the Office of Student Conduct.

[Office of Student Conduct](#)

Moffett Library

Moffett Library provides resources and services to support student's studies and assignments, including books, peer-reviewed journals, databases, and multimedia materials accessible both on campus and remotely. The library offers media equipment checkout, reservable study rooms, and research assistance from librarians to help students effectively find, evaluate, and use information. Get started on this [Moffett Library webpage](#) to explore these resources and learn how to best utilize the library.

Grading

Completing ALL the readings and regular attendance will be required of all students. Active participation in discussions is critical for students to succeed in this course.

Table 1: Points allocated to each assignment

| Assignments | Points |
|---|---------------|
| Midterm exam #1 | 15 |
| Midterm exam #2 | 15 |
| Final project (3 points x 10) | 30 |
| Weekly assignment | 30 |
| Engagement (Attendance & participation) | 10 |
| Total Points | 100 |

Table 2: Total points for final grade.

| Grade | Total Points |
|--------------|---------------------|
| A | 90 |
| B | 80 to 89 |
| C | 70 to 79 |
| D | 60 to 69 |
| F | Less than 60 |

Midterm Exams (30%)

There will be two midterm exams (15 points each). The exam will be administered in the computer lab and open notes when it comes to statistical formulas; therefore, it is important for students to take excellent notes and complete all weekly assignments. The exam will require students to do arithmetic calculations using Microsoft Excel and make and interpret SPSS outputs.

Final Project (30%)

A final project will be assigned to wrap up the course. Students create a research hypothesis, find data, compile a dataset, and test their hypothesis using SPSS. More details will be provided later in the semester.

Weekly Assignment (30%)

Homework assignments will be based on exercises from the textbook. All assignments and due dates will be announced in advance. Since homework will often be reviewed in class on the day when they are due, late assignments will be penalized 50%.

Engagement with the course (10%)

Your attendance and participation are vital to learning the material presented in this course. You will be expected to come to class prepared to engage thoughtfully, listen attentively, and interact with your peers respectfully. If you cannot come to class, contact me via email and provide details about your situation at your earliest convenience for your absence to be excused. Over the course of the semester, 4 absences will be excused for all students. More than 4 absences and unexcused absences will lower your final grade.

Extra Credit

There will be no assignment or activity for extra credit. However, when I determine your semester grade at the end of the semester, I may raise grades for students who have actively participated and contributed to class discussions throughout the semester.

Late Work

Late assignments will be accepted with a grade reduction

Important Dates

- Last day for term schedule changes: Check date on [Academic Calendar](#).
- Deadline to file for graduation: Check date on [Academic Calendar](#).
- Last Day to drop with a grade of "W": Check date on [Academic Calendar](#).
- Refer to: [Drops, Withdrawals & Void](#)

Desire-to-Learn (D2L)

Extensive use of the MSU D2L program is a part of this course. Each student is expected to be familiar with this program as it provides a primary source of communication regarding assignments, examination materials, and general course information. You can log into [D2L](#) through the MSU Homepage. If you experience difficulties, please contact the technicians listed for the program or contact your instructor.

MSU Attendance Policy

Students are expected to attend all meetings of the classes in which they are enrolled. Although in general students are graded on intellectual effort and performance rather than attendance, absences may lower the student's grade where class attendance and class participation are deemed essential by the faculty member. In those classes where attendance is considered as part of the grade, the instructor should so inform students of the specifics in writing at the beginning of the semester in a syllabus or separate attendance policy statement. An instructor who has an attendance policy must keep records on a daily basis. The instructor must give the student a verbal or written warning prior to being dropped from the class. Instructor's records will stand as evidence of absences. A student with excessive absences may be dropped from a course by the instructor. Any individual faculty member or college has the authority to establish an attendance policy, providing the policy is in accordance with the General University Policies.

Change of Schedule

A student dropping a course (but not withdrawing from the University) within the first 12 class days of a regular semester or the first four class days of a summer semester is eligible for a 100% refund of applicable tuition and fees. Dates are published in the Schedule of Classes each semester.

Refund and Repayment Policy

A student who withdraws or is administratively withdrawn from Midwestern State University (MSU) may be eligible to receive a refund for all or a portion of the tuition, fees and room/board charges that were paid to MSU for the semester. **HOWEVER**, if the student received financial aid (federal/state/institutional grants, loans and/or scholarships), all or a portion of the refund may be returned to the

financial aid programs. As described below, two formulas (federal and state) exists in determining the amount of the refund. (Examples of each refund calculation will be made available upon request).

Services for Students with Disabilities

In accordance with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Midwestern State University endeavors to make reasonable accommodations to ensure equal opportunity for qualified persons with disabilities to participate in all educational, social, and recreational programs and activities. After notification of acceptance, students requiring accommodations should make application for such assistance through Disability Support Services, located in the Student Wellness Center, (940) 397-4140. Current documentation of a disability will be required in order to provide appropriate services, and each request will be individually reviewed. For more details, please go to [Disability Support Services](#).

College Policies

Campus Carry Rules/Policies

Refer to: [Campus Carry Rules and Policies](#)

Smoking/Tobacco Policy

College policy strictly prohibits the use of tobacco products in any building owned or operated by WATC. Adult students may smoke only in the outside designated-smoking areas at each location.

Alcohol and Drug Policy

To comply with the Drug Free Schools and Communities Act of 1989 and subsequent amendments, students and employees of Midwestern State are informed that strictly enforced policies are in place which prohibits the unlawful possession, use or distribution of any illicit drugs, including alcohol, on university property or as part of any university-sponsored activity. Students and employees are also subject to all applicable legal sanctions under local, state and federal law for any offenses involving illicit drugs on University property or at University-sponsored activities.

Campus Carry

Effective August 1, 2016, the Campus Carry law (Senate Bill 11) allows those licensed individuals to carry a concealed handgun in buildings on public university campuses, except in locations the University establishes has prohibited. The new Constitutional Carry law does not change this process. Concealed carry still requires a License to Carry permit, and openly carrying handguns is not allowed on college campuses. For more information, visit [Campus Carry](#).

Active Shooter

The safety and security of our campus is the responsibility of everyone in our community. Each of us has an obligation to be prepared to appropriately respond to threats to our campus, such as an active aggressor. Please review the information provided by MSU Police Department regarding the options and strategies we can all use to stay safe during difficult situations. For more information, visit [MSUREady – Active Shooter](#). Students are encouraged to watch the video entitled “*Run. Hide. Fight.*” which may be electronically accessed via the University police department’s webpage: [“Run. Hide. Fight.”](#)

Grade Appeal Process

Update as needed. Students who wish to appeal a grade should consult the Midwestern State University [MSU Catalog](#)

***Notice:** Changes in the course syllabus, procedure, assignments, and schedule may be made at the discretion of the instructor.

Course Schedule

| Week | Topic | Due Date |
|--------------|---|--|
| Week 1, 1/20 | Course Introduction | N/A |
| Week 1, 1/23 | Chapter 1: The Political Use of Numbers | Weekly Assignment #1: Gradebook (Due date: 1/26) |
| Week 2, 1/27 | Chapter 2: Level of Measurement (Excel) | N/A |
| Week 2, 1/29 | Chapter 2: Level of Measurement | Weekly Assignment #2: Freedom House Index (Due date: 2/2) |
| Week 3, 2/3 | Chapter 3: Central Tendency | N/A |
| Week 3, 2/5 | Chapter 3: Central Tendency | Weekly Assignment #3: YT 3.1-2 (Due date: 2/9) |
| Week 4, 2/10 | Chapter 4: Measures of Dispersion | N/A |
| Week 4, 2/12 | Data & Variables (No class meeting) | Weekly Assignment #4: Pick variables (Due date: 2/16) |
| Week 5, 2/17 | Chapter 4: Measures of Dispersion | N/A |
| Week 5, 2/19 | Chapter 5: Continuous Probability | Weekly Assignment #5: YT 4.1-3 (Due date: 2/23) |
| Week 6, 2/24 | Chapter 5: Continuous Probability | N/A |
| Week 6, 2/26 | Chapter 6: Means Testing | Weekly Assignment #6: YT 6.1 (Due date: 3/2) |

| Week | Topic | Due Date |
|---------------|---|---|
| Week 7, 3/3 | Chapter 6: Means Testing | N/A |
| Week 7, 3/5 | Midterm Exam #1 | N/A |
| Week 8, 3/10 | Spring Break (No class) | N/A |
| Week 8, 3/12 | Spring Break (No class) | N/A |
| Week 9, 3/17 | Chapter 7: Hypothesis Testing | N/A |
| Week 9, 3/19 | Chapter 7: Hypothesis Testing | Weekly Assignment #7: YT 7.1-2 (Due date: 3/23) |
| Week 10, 3/24 | Chapter 12: Correlation | N/A |
| Week 10, 3/26 | Chapter 12: Correlation | Weekly Assignment #8: YT 12.1-3 (Due date: 3/30) |
| Week 11, 3/31 | Midterm Exam #2 | N/A |
| Week 11, 4/2 | Holiday Break (No class) | N/A |
| Week 12, 4/7 | Chapter 13: Bivariate Regression | N/A |
| Week 12, 4/9 | Chapter 13: Bivariate Regression | Weekly Assignment #9: Final Project Proposal (Due date: 4/13) |
| Week 13, 4/14 | Multivariate Regression (SPSS) | N/A |
| Week 13, 4/16 | Multivariate Regression (SPSS) | Weekly Assignment #10: Final Project Meeting (Zoom Available) |
| Week 14, 4/20 | Instructor's Conference Attendance | N/A |
| Week 14, 4/22 | Instructor's Conference Attendance | N/A |
| Week 15, 4/28 | Advanced Excel/SPSS Skills | N/A |
| Week 15, 4/30 | Final Project Presentation/Discussion | N/A |
| Week 16, 5/5 | Final Project Presentation/Discussion | N/A |
| Week 16, 5/7 | Final Project writing (individual meetings) | Final Project Submission (5/7) |

***Important note:** Tables are already set up for compliance. If you wish to add another table, make sure do the correct compliance setup for tables which you can find in the [How To – Word Doc ADA Compliance PDF](#).