

**Political Science Research Methods**  
**with special topics of Asian politics and communities**

**PLS 210, Fall 2019**

Professor: Sejin Koo

Room: see Registrar

Office hours: W 2:30-4:10 & TH 2:30-4:10  
or by online appointment

Class time: see Registrar

Office: 6.214

Email: se-jin.koo@nu.edu.kz

**Course Description and Purpose**

This course introduces you to the scientific study of politics. Political science enables us to use rigorous methods and approaches to satisfy our curiosity of the natural world. For example, why some countries are more democratic than others? What make citizens support or critical of political leaders of their country? Why do some citizens more actively participate in politics than other citizens? By the end the semester, you will start to think and approach political questions using the scientific method. This course covers the basics of research design, research question formation, conceptualization, hypothesis writing, and how to present/visualize your data. One goal of the course is to introduce various approaches and methods to conduct scientific research and provide skills to be a competent consumer of political science literature. By the end of the course, students will utilize their acquired skills to develop a social scientific research project.

The goals of this course are:

- Introduce political science research topics.
- Define, understand, and use concepts and terms relevant to the empirical study of contemporary political science.
- To be a competent consumer of political science research.
- Develop a research design within the political science discipline and present it in a public forum.

**Required Readings:** There are two textbooks (citation below) for this course. They are available at NU Library.

- Johnson, Janet Buttolph and H. T. Reynolds. Political Science Research Methods 8th edition. Los Angeles, CA: CQ Press.

For the rest of this syllabus I refer to this textbook as J&R. You are responsible for the material presented in the 8th edition, the use of previous editions does not guarantee adequate coverage of current material. Also,

- Kellstadt, Paul M., and Guy D. Whitten. 2015. The Fundamentals of Political Science Research, Second Edition. New York: Cambridge University. 3rd edition.

For the rest of this syllabus I refer to this textbook as K&W. There is also a supplementary textbook:

- Acock, Alan C. A Gentle Introduction to Stata, revised third edition.

I reserve the right to add readings from time to time during the semester. In most cases, such readings will represent areas that require additional instruction or help clarify points arising from discussion.

## Course Requirements and Grading Policy

I will assign your final course grade as follows:

### ➤ Research Paper

A research paper on a topic of your choice. Your goal in writing the paper is to apply the skills that you have learned in the class. That is, you will conduct an empirical analysis of a political science research question and seek to transmit the results of your research using clear, jargon-free prose and compelling visual aids. **The final paper (20%)** should be between 2500 and 3000 words (double spaced, Times New Roman, 12pt, 1 inch margins) including tables, figures and references. It is **due Nov 28 by midnight via Moodle**. Include word count as a header.

In order to help you complete a research paper, there are two take-home writing assignments.

- **Introduction draft (min. 500 words) (5%) due: midnight Oct 13.**
- **revised introduction and literature review (min 1200 words) (15%) due: midnight Oct 27.**

Students will make **a poster presentation (15%)** on their research at the end of the semester. The presentations are scheduled on **Nov 15 & 18**, during the class time.

### **ALL THE PAPERS IN THIS COURSE MUST INCLUDE PAGE NUMBERS AS A HEADER.**

Also, students must discuss their **revised introduction & literature review and their final paper with the Writing Center before the paper submissions. This means that writing tasks must be undertaken early enough, in consideration of scheduling an appointment with the Writing Center before each paper deadline.**

### ➤ Peer-Review (5%)

During poster presentation sessions, every student must make a one-page critical review for another research (350-400 words). An instruction outlining the components of a critical review will be given through Moodle. Due Nov 18.

### ➤ Review Presentation (10%)

Students will be assigned to present an academic article in social sciences for a 15-17 minute \*group\* presentation. To facilitate your understanding of the given material, you will form a group of two students. The goal of the presentations is to inform you and your classmates of important topics and theories in social sciences, to facilitate class discussions and help you and your classmates to understand various research methods employed in social science research. Therefore, your presentation should summarize the main points of the argument developed in the reading as well as the research methods used in the paper. You will be graded based on the accuracy of your summary as well as the organization and clarity of your presentation. **You must provide a one-page outline of your presentation to be distributed to the entire class before your presentation.** I will provide later more details regarding who will be assigned which reading.

### ➤ Short Assignments (20%)

During class, I will assign various exercises or short assignments that reinforce the class material. Most of these exercises will be completed in class. They will not necessarily all be announced ahead of time. Hopefully, everyone will make a good effort on the assigned readings, exercises, or videos before class, as well as class lectures. If so, this can be a free 20%.

Short assignments include pop quizzes. If students consistently come to class unprepared, then I'll start giving pop quizzes at a frequency that seems appropriate. All of the exercises will simply be graded satisfactory (S) or not. You will receive credit only for those that you complete on time and in a satisfactory manner.

If you are not in class that day without a University excused absence, you will receive a score of zero (**you must be physically present in the classroom**). If a student misses an assignment as a result of a University excused absence, he or she will receive an "E" for that assignment. The final short assignment grade will be calculated as the number of S scores received out of all non-E assignments. There will be NO MAKE-UPS for short assignments. The number of Es cannot be exceeded 3.

➤ **Class Attendance (10%)**

Class attendance is mandatory and will be taken in each session. That is, if you show up late, you will be counted absent. Only university excused absences will be considered.

In order to learn, it is imperative that you attend class, read the material, and participate actively in class discussion. As explained above, many of the exercises will be completed in class only. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to obtain the missed material from your classmates. In addition to attending class, students are highly encouraged to ask and answer questions, and to make appropriate comments on issues covered in class.

➤ **Participation**

Engaging with the readings, practices, and assignments, both in-class and out-of-class, are crucial to success for you and the class as a whole. Students are strongly expected to consistently engage with the material **in a productive and respectful manner.**

**Grading Scale**

A	95%-105%	Excellent, exceeds the highest standards in the assignment or course
A-	90%-94.9%	Excellent; meets the highest standards for the assignment or course
B+	85%-90.9%	Very good; meets high standards for the assignment or course
B	80%-84.9%	Good; meets most of the standards for the assignment or course
B-	75%-79.9%	More than adequate; shows some reasonable command of the material
C+	70%-74.9%	Acceptable; meets basic standards for the assignment or course
C	65%-69.9%	Acceptable; meets some of the basic standards for the assignment or course
C-	60%-64.9%	Acceptable, while falling short of meeting basic standards in several ways
D+	55%-59.9%	Minimally acceptable

D	50%-54.9%	Minimally acceptable; lowest passing
F	0%-49.9%	Did not satisfy the basic requirements of the course

### **Academic misconduct policy**

Students must obey the requirements and procedures in the Student Code of Conduct for Nazarbayev University. **The penalty for any type of plagiarism or cheating will be an “F” on the test or the paper/assignment.** As commonly defined, plagiarism consists of passing off one’s own ideas, words, writings, etc., which belong to another. In accordance with the definition, you are committing plagiarism if you copy the work of another person and turn it in as your own, even if you should have the permission of the person. Plagiarism is one of the worst academic sins, for the plagiarism destroys the trust among colleagues without which research cannot be safely communicated. If you have any questions regarding plagiarism, please consult Nazarbayev University Student Code of Conduct.

Plagiarism is intentionally or carelessly presenting the work of another as one’s own. It includes submitting an assignment purporting to be the student’s original work which has wholly or in part been created by another person. It also includes the presentation of the work, ideas, representations, or words of another person without customary and proper acknowledgement of sources. Plagiarism occurs when a person:

1. Directly copies one or more sentences of another person’s written work without proper citation. If another writer’s words are used, you must place quotation marks around the quoted material and include a footnote or other indication of the source of the quotation. This includes cut and paste from the internet or other electronic sources;
2. Changes words but copies the sentence structure of a source without giving credit to the original source, or closely paraphrases one or more paragraphs without acknowledgement of the source of the ideas, or uses graphs, figures, drawings, charts or other visual/audio materials without acknowledging the source or the permission of the author;
3. Submits false or altered information in any academic exercise. This may include making up data for an experiment, altering data, citing nonexistent articles, contriving sources, etc.;
4. Turns in all or part of assignment done by another student and claims it as their own;
5. Uses a paper writing service, has another student write a paper, or uses a foreign language translation and submits it as their own original work.

(Nazarbayev University Student Code of Conduct)

### **Grade Appeals**

Students who believe they have received an incorrect test grade should formally appeal to me. The appeal should consist of a single typed page that identifies the problem and presents concrete reasoning to substantiate why the test should be re-evaluated. Note that a request for re-evaluation means that I will examine your entire test for a second time and may lower your grade upon closer examination of your work.

Assignments turned in past due date will receive no credit, unless you have a university acceptable excuse for your paper being late. Medical excuse for class absence more than five classes will not be accepted.

**Should you have any question about any aspects of this course or experience difficulty, do not wait until the last minute to discuss it with me. You may reach me either during my office hours or by appointment.**

### **Copyright on Course Materials**

All handouts used in this course are copyrighted. By “handouts,” I mean all materials generated for this class, which include but are not limited to syllabi, exams, and in-class materials. Because these are copyrighted, you do not have the right to copy the handouts, unless I expressly grant permission.

### **Commitment to Diversity**

This course welcomes individuals from any racial, ethnic, religious, age, gender, sexual orientation, class, disability, and nationality. 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, culture, groups, or viewpoints.

### **Other Class Policies:**

While you are welcome to email anytime about any issue you may be having in the class, please use proper email etiquette. Start your email “Dr. Koo,” Dear Dr. Koo,” or Dear Professor Koo” for initial contact. I will not answer emails that use improper salutation. I will also not answer emails that can be answered by looking at the syllabus.

Second, **page numbers** must be inserted in all the papers students submit in this course. Never forget this critically important practice in academia.

Third, **your final grade is final. It is not a basis for negotiations. If you plan to graduate this spring, or if you need a good grade from this course for whatever reason, the only possible way is working hard. Awarding a student a better grade than she/he deserves based on her/his official course grading record is a violation of job ethics for me. Also, it is a crime deceiving your government and tax-paying fellow citizens.**

I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus as needed, including adding and subtracting assignments and changing due dates. I will notify you in class, via Moodle, or via email about changes (this means you are responsible for checking your email and for being in class to hear about changes). 2-3 readings (mostly research articles) per week will be added.

### **Tentative Course Outline**

The schedule is subject to change as the semester progresses. Additional readings can be assigned. Alterations to the schedule will be announced in class or on Moodle.

W	Session Content	Reading
---	-----------------	---------

1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Course Introduction</li> </ul>	J&R, Ch. 1 K&W Ch. 1
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empirical Approach to Social Science Questions</li> </ul>	J&R, Ch. 2 K&W Ch. 2
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building Blocks of Social Scientific Research: Hypothesis, Concepts and Variables</li> </ul>	J&R, Ch. 3 K&W Ch. 3
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building Blocks of Social Scientific Research: Measurement</li> </ul>	J&R, Ch. 4 K&W Ch. 5
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research Design: Making Causal Inferences</li> </ul>	J&R, Ch. 5 K&W Ch. 4
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sampling</li> </ul>	J&R, Ch. 6
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making Empirical Observation: Firsthand Observations</li> </ul>	J&R, Ch. 7
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Content Analysis</li> </ul>	J&R, Ch. 8
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survey Research and Interviewing</li> </ul>	J&R, Ch. 9
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making Sense of Data</li> </ul>	J&R, Ch. 10
11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making Sense of Data (cont'd)</li> </ul>	J&R, Ch. 10
12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Process-tracing methods</li> </ul>	J&R, Ch. 11
13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wrap-ups</li> </ul>	J&R, Ch. 11
14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student research presentations and peer review</li> </ul>	