PS30: Political Inquiry

Spring 2009
Lectures: MW 12:00-12:50, Peterson Hall 108

Prof. Langche Zeng
Zeng@ucsd.edu
Office Hours: MW 2:30-3:30, SSB 399

Sections and Teaching Assistants:

- Wednesdays 1-1:50, Thurs 11-11:50. Will Terry, wterry@ucsd.edu. Office hours: W 11-12, SSB 341.
- Wednesdays 2-2:50, 3-3:50. Chris Dawes, cdawes@ucsd.edu. Office hours: Th 1-2, SSB 328.
- Fridays 10-10:50, 12-12:50. Ellen Moule, emoule@ucsd.edu. Office hours: Th 1-2, SSB 331.

Course homepage (this page; where lecture notes, homework assignments, announcements, etc. will be posted):
http://dss.ucsd.edu/~lazeng/ps30

Course Description

This course introduces you to the fundamentals of social inquiry and familiarizes you with some basic methods and tools for obtaining and making sense of empirical data. The goal of the course is to help you understand social science research and enable you to conduct research of your own, and to benefit you as informed, effective citizens of our information society. We will discuss issues of research design and causal inference; the collection, description, summary of empirical data, and statistical methods for inference from the data. We will also introduce you to the use of a statistical package for analyzing data.

Books, Software, and Datasets

There are two required texts, available at the UCSD bookstore:

Statistics: Concepts and Controversies. 7th edition. By David Moore and William Notz. W.H. Freeman & Company. 2009. ISBN: 1429229918. Companion website

The Essentials of Political Analysis, 3nd Edition. By Philip H. Pollock III. Congressional Quarterly Press. 2009. ISBN: 9780872896062

You will learn to use a statistical package called Stata , which is available in many computer labs on campus (such as Solis 105. You may also like to purchase your own copy at a discount price under GradPlan, an arrangement between UCSD and the Stata company.) The following book on using Stata is recommended and is available in the bookstore:
"A Stata Companion to Political Analysis", by Philip Pollock. CQ Press, 2006, ISBN-13: 978-1-59718-043-6.
There are also many useful on-line resources that can help you learn and use Stata. An excellent site at UCLA is here . A good and concise tutorial is here , and a more in-depth introduction can be found here .

Some useful Stata datasets:
General Social Survey, National Election Study, States, World

Course Requirements

There are two lectures and one discussion session each week. It is essential that you attend all 3 meetings every week.
Evaluation of course work will be based on 3 homework assignments, an in-class mid-term exam, the final exam, and section participation, as follows:

45% Homework
30% Final (Wednesday, June 10, 11:30-2:30)
15% Midterm (Wednesday, May 4, in class)
10% Section participation

The exams will be closed book, and stress understanding and interpretation. They can be composed of multiple choices, short answer questions, math problems, and open ended questions/essays. The final exam will be comprehensive, though may emphasize the materials from the second half of the course.

Course Policies

Please know that NO early or late exams, extensions for assignments, incomplete grades, and so on will be granted. The ONLY exception would be for cases of documented illness and emergency situations absolutely beyond your control. Please contact your TA immediately if you find yourself in such a situation.
Any request for grade changes must be made formally to your TA within one week of getting back your graded work. Requests must be typed and double spaced with one inch margins. Review of a grade may result in either a higher or a lower grade.

The course policies are *strictly* enforced.

Course Plan

The following is an initial plan for the course. Some adjustment in pace or coverage or the schedule for homework assignments may become necessary. More specifics on readings and any other late minute course details will be communicated in class or via the course homepage.

[The lecture notes and homework assignments will be available by the scheduled dates. The lecture notes are created using OpenOffice on a Linux computer, and "exported" to .pdf and .ppt. The .pdf version should have no loss of information. The .ppt version should allow you to print multiple slides on a single page to save paper should you like hard copies, though *may* incur some loss of information (such as the fonts may not be truthful to the original).]

1. M. 3/30. Introduction to the Course. Scientific Inquiry (pdf). ppt version.
Readings: Pollock, Introduction (pp.1-5). Moor and Notz, "Prelude", "Statistics and You" (pp.xxvii-xxxiv).

2. W. 4/1. Causal Thinking. Theories and Hypotheses. Research Design (pdf). ppt version.
Readings: Pollock, Chapters 3 and 4.

3. M. 4/6. Measurement of Concepts (pdf). ppt version.
Readings: Pollock, Chapter 1; chapter 2 (pp.26-29); Moor and Notz, Chapter 8.

4. W. 4/8. Sources of Data. Samples and Populations (pdf). ppt version.
Readings: Moor and Notz, Chapters 1 and 2.

5. M. 4/13. From Sample to Population (pdf) ppt version.
Readings: Moor and Notz, Chapters 3 and 4. Pollock, Chapter 6 (pp.113-119)

6. W. 4/15. Experiments and Causal Inference (pdf) ppt version.
Readings: Moor and Notz, Chapters 5 and 6. Pollock, Chapter 4 (pp.74-78.)

7. M. 4/20. Describing Data: Graphical Methods. Introduction to Stata (pdf) ppt version.
Readings: Moor and Notz, Chapters 10 and 11. Pollock, Chapter 2 (pp.30-39, focusing on graphical methods)

Attention!!! This week's sections (on 4/22-24) meet in Solis 105 (computer lab)

[1st Homework Assignment] Homework1 in pdf

8. W. 4/22. Describing Data: Numerical Measures (pdf) ppt version.
Readings: Moor and Notz, Chapters 12. Pollock, Chapter 2 (pp.30-39, focusing on numerical measures)

9. M. 4/27. Thinking about Chance: Probability and Probability Distributions (pdf) ppt version.
Readings: Moor and Notz, Chapters 17, 18, 20

[1st Homework Assignment Due in Class]

10. W. 4/29. Review Session (pdf) ppt version.

11. M. 5/4. *Mid-term Exam*

12. W. 5/6. The Normal Distribution. (pdf) ppt version.
Readings: Moor and Notz, Chapters 13, 18. Pollock, Chapter 6 (pp.119-130).

13. M. 5/11. Inference Using the Normal Distribution: Sampling Distribution and Confidence Intervals (pdf) ppt version.
Readings: Moor and Notz, 21. Pollock, Chapter 6 (pp.130-141)

14. W. 5/13. Hypothesis Testing (pdf) ppt version.
Readings: Moor and Notz, Chapter 22. Pollock, Chapter 7 (pp.145-154).

[2nd Homework Assignment] Homework2 in pdf

15. M. 5/18. Relationships I: Correlation and Graphical Exploration (pdf) ppt version.
Readings: Moor and Notz, Chapter 14. Pollock, Chapters 3 (pp.58-67) and 8 (pp.170-174)

16. W. 5/20. Relationships II: Bivariate Regression (pdf) ppt version.
Readings: Moor and Notz, Chapter 15. Pollock, Chapters 8 (pp.174-184)

[2nd Homework Assignment Due in Class]

17. M. 5/25. Memorial Day. No class.

18. W. 5/27. Relationships IV: Multiple Regression (pdf) ppt version.
Readings: Pollock, Chapter 5; Chapter 8 (pp.184-194)

[3rd Homework Assignment] Homework3 in pdf

19. M. 6/1. Relationships IV: Two Way Tables and the Chi-Square Test (pdf) ppt version.
Readings: Moor and Notz, Chapter 24. Pollock, Chapters 3 (pp.54-58) and 7 (pp.154-159), chap. 9

20. W. 6/3. Review session. (pdf) ppt version.

[3rd Homework Assignment Due in Class]

21. W. 6/10. *Final Exam.* 11:30-2:30.

Communication

I am severely hearing impaired and rely on speech reading and email for communication. This will certainly cause some inconvenience to you. I do not use the phone in general. When you speak I may ask you to repeat, sometimes more than once. If you sit farther in the back, I will likely need to ask someone sitting closer-by to relay your questions for me. Please do *not* refrain from asking questions, though, but do try to sit in the front rows if you know you might like to speak up, so we can minimize relaying. I appreciate your understanding.
