INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL RESEARCH
2016-17, 1st Semester

Instructors: Linda Basile (basile7@unisi.it), Alessandro Innocenti (innocenti@unisi.it), Pierangelo Isernia (coordinator) (isernia@unisi.it), Francesco Marangoni (marangoni@unisi.it) and Francesco Olmastroni (olmastroni3@unisi.it)
Tel. 0577-233.285/999
Fax 0577-233.520
E-mail: isernia@unisi.it
Lesson Hours: Monday 4PM-6PM – Computer Lab (2nd floor)
Student Hours: Thursday 12PM-2PM; on appointment

Course description

The course has two main aims: 1) it is an introduction to empirical political research methods; 2) it is an opportunity to develop skills in the analysis, interpretation and presentation of research findings, including standards for written research reports. Besides the regular classes, on October, 2016, Linda Basile will hold a “Crash course on STATA for Data Analysis” to introduce you to one of the most widely used statistical software in social science. It is an integral part of the course and attendance is mandatory (and very useful!).

By covering an assortment of subjects and authors, the course will stress both qualitative and quantitative research designs and “how to do” empirical analysis. The class will not cover in any depth comparative and case-study research designs, since other courses of the doctoral program are devoted to them. Rather, it will focus on different issues related to hypothesis testing under different research designs. For this purpose, the course zeroes in on issues such as data collection, measurement issues, research design, emphasizing the differences and similarities between observational and experimental designs, and elementary data analysis. Other issues, such as content analysis, fieldwork and participatory observation will not be covered here because they are offered by other courses.

This year the course will have a multiple-authors set up, in order to provide you first-hand accounts of what research means in different fields of political science. Pierangelo Isernia will coordinate the entire operation.

Through lectures and readings, discussions, individual and group exercises, statistical lab and out-of-class activities, this course wants to foster your skills in using conceptual and analytical tools that enable the student to form critical judgments on how to address empirical issues in political science as well as on the main methodological problems you might encounter in addressing what is of interest to you as a political scientist. This is an Introductory course and, as such, it is intended to be preparatory for other, more formal, statistical courses held the next semester.

Some of the assignments will require the use of computer. For this reason, you are advised to have a laptop. Students are required to use an e-mail account. In fact, course data and especially documentation will be made available either through electronic mail or using Google drive on the UNISI 2.0 web site (http://20.unisi.it/). There will be instruction on this in class.
Method of Evaluation

Your grade will be determined by the following parts:

1. **Participation in class discussion and presentations** to warm up the discussion on specific research results. [10% total]
2. **A number of assignments throughout the semester:** some of these will involve a short presentation of a research method to be discussed in class. A number of them will imply the use of computer programs such as spreadsheets and STATA statistics package to analyze data provided by the instructor. You will be able to do these in the week following the class where the methods were presented. All computations you produce _must_ be included in the assignment, including computer programming and procedure commands that were executed. Note that these assignments are due the day of class and will be used in class discussion: you will need to complete them in advance based on the readings. IMPORTANT!! All assignments sent through files have to use the following filename: *AssignN[umber of assignment]_LastName.doc*. NEVER use my last name to label files sent to me. [40% total]

3. **A Research paper:** This is the major requirement of the course and will be developed in several stages throughout the semester. The paper should use a fairly simple statistical analysis of a piece of research. The topic must be agreed upon with the instructors among a set of issues that will be referred to in class. These issues all imply survey data and they include the following topics: (a) what the Americans think of the European Union, (b) comparative attitudes toward Globalization, (c) support for the use of military force and war, (d) attitudes toward the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy, (e) Transatlantic attitudes toward China and (f) legitimacy and the use of force. I suggest you start thinking (and discussing with me) about your possible topics well in advance. You are expected to go through the entire process of paper preparation: literature review, hypothesis, data preparation, analysis and discussion of results. You will work at the paper in twins. This will foster discussion and mutual thinking among each pair of authors as well as it will start to make you used to a style of collective work that is now pretty common in political science, given the complexity of many research projects. A final decision about your topics shall be taken no later than November 15, 2016, when you will be submitting a one-page outline of your paper with a short list of references (between 10 and 20 references). You will hand in a full-fledged version of the paper by January 15, 2016. All of the intermediate steps in this assignment are required and failure to complete them on time will have a detrimental impact on your grade. [50% total]

Readings

Readings for the sessions, homework assignments, data sets, overhead projector slides used during the lectures, and an assortment of links to other political science research sites will be made available by the instructor via Google drive.

**Main Texts** (this is a handy approach to research methods for Grad students. It must be supplemented by readings and reference texts)

Reference Texts (The ones listed below are reference books you should use in the discussion throughout the course)


Tips for writing papers


Course schedule

- **October 18, 2016:** The Logic of Inference: Problems, Theories and Hypotheses (Pierangelo Isernia)

Readings:


Further Readings (starred readings are recommended):


- **October 24, 2016**: Concept Analysis (Francesco Marangoni)

Readings:


Further Readings:


- **October 31, 2016**: Measurement Issues (Francesco Marangoni)

Readings:

PP: Ch.1, pp.7-26;

Further Readings:


- **November 7, 2016**: Observational vs Experimental Logics (Pierangelo Isernia)

Readings:


Further Readings:


- **November 14, 2016**: Statistical Design: Describe your data (Linda Basile)

Readings:

PP: Ch.3, pp.51-76;

Further Readings:


- **November 21, 2016**: Statistical Design: How to read a two-way table and what to do out of it (Linda Basile)

Readings:

PP: Ch.1, pp.7-26;
Treiman (2009): Ch.2

Further Readings:


- **November 28, 2016**: Statistical Design: What happens controlling for a third variable: Spurious, Intervening, Antecedent and Conditional variables (Linda Basile)

Readings:
PP: Ch.4, pp.77-101;
Treiman (2009). Ch. 3

Further Readings:


- **December 5, 2016**: Experimental Design: Population-based experiments (Francesco Olmastroni)

Readings:

Further Readings:

- **December 12, 2016**: Lab Experiment using examples (Alessandro Innocenti)

Readings:

Further Readings:

- **December 19, 2016**: Lab Experiment using examples (Alessandro Innocenti)

Readings:

Further Readings: