

**Spring 2023**  
**Department of Political Science**  
**Course Descriptions**

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**PL SC 503**

**Multivariate Analysis for Political Research**

**Professor Christopher Zorn**

This is the second (full) course in quantitative methods in Penn State's political science Ph.D. program. The course introduces students to regression-type models for the analysis of quantitative data and provides a basis of knowledge for more advanced statistical methods. The course assumes basic math literacy, including familiarity with probability theory, properties of estimators, rudimentary calculus, and linear algebra. The bulk of the course will focus on general models of the form  $Y = f(XB) + e$ , and will include discussions of the mathematical bases for such models, their estimation and interpretation, model assumptions and techniques for addressing violations of those assumptions, and topics related to model specification and functional forms. Under this general framework, we will also provide a very brief overview of regression models for binary, ordered, unordered, and event count variables.

**Mondays, 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.**

**304 Boucke Building**

**Spring 2023**  
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**PLSC/SOC 518 (Crosslisted)**

**Survey Design II**

**Professor Eric Plutzer**

Survey methodology is concerned with techniques designed to collect data by (a) asking people questions, and (b) aggregating those answers in ways that generate valid and reliable inferences about a population of individuals. This course, one of two courses that introduce survey methodology to students, is primarily concerned with the science of collecting data (while PLSC/SOC 519 is primarily concerned with analyzing data). Topics will include: Sample recruitment and panel study retention, Questionnaire design, Essential features of collecting data via face-to-face interviews, by live telephone interviewers, by pencil and paper questionnaires, and by surveys conducted via internet and mobile technologies.

**Tuesdays, 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.**

**208 Ford Building**

**Spring 2023**  
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**PLSC 542**

**American Political Behavior**

**Professor Suzanna Linn**

This course surveys major themes in theory and research on electoral behavior and political participation generally. Readings will cover topics in public opinion and elections including: presidential and congressional elections; economic inequality and political behavior; political participation; the nature of belief systems within the public and the evaluation of political leaders. The primary goal is to immerse students in the substance and research of political behavior and to get students to think about questions and how to answer them. This means seeing what other people have done and synthesizing it, framing questions, developing methods, and considering measurement. To that end, students will be required to do extensive reading and writing. Seminar participants will be expected to write a research proposal over the course of the semester. A final exam will be given.

**Thursdays, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.**

**302 Boucke Building**

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**PLSC 552**

**Comparative Politics Behavior**

**Professor Daniel Tavana**

This course explores mass politics, elections, and political behavior in comparative perspective using the tools of quantitative social science. The primary goals of the course are to provide students with an overview of the field and to prepare students to conduct research. We will focus on the intellectual evolution of the field, canonical debates, and emerging questions and controversies. The course will proceed thematically: each week will cover a different research area. For each research area, we will focus both on foundational texts and recent research. This approach will encourage students to think critically about how innovative research design can generate new insights into key debates in comparative politics. Because student interest in different research areas varies, topics may change across semesters. These topics include citizen values, party systems, and social cleavages; groups, ethnicity, and identity; class and economic voting; representation, responsiveness, and citizen-elite linkages; information and political knowledge; protest participation; political parties and partisanship; and ideology. Methodological questions central to the cross-national study of political behavior will be introduced alongside these substantive research areas. Canonical work in the field draws primarily from evidence from advanced democracies in Europe and North America. But we will also emphasize a growing body of scholarship that incorporates insights from across the Global South and, where appropriate, non-democratic contexts.

**Tuesdays, 1:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.**

**236 Pond Lab**

**Spring 2023**  
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**PLSC 597**

**Nationalism, Ethnic Conflict and Civil Wars**

**Professor Bumba Mukherjee**

This course is an introduction to theoretical and empirical research on nationalism, ethnic conflict and civil war. The questions that we will examine in this seminar are: What is the difference (if any) between ethnic conflict and civil wars? What are the causes of ethnic conflict, civil wars and mass killing of civilians? Do civil conflicts lead to genocide and repression of human rights and if so, when? Who are the central actors that interact with each other in the context of civil wars and repression? Why and how do internal wars end and what can the international community do to facilitate peaceful settlement of civil wars? We will read and analyze cutting-edge research that addresses these questions. We will also examine a variety of empirical techniques that scholars employ to evaluate claims in the study of civil wars. This includes not only geocoded observational data but also the increasing use of causal inference techniques (e.g., experiments) to assess theoretical predictions in the study of civil wars.

**Thursdays, 1:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.**

**004 Walker Building**

**Spring 2023**  
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**PLSC 597**

**Writing Seminar**

**Professor Douglas Lemke**

In this class we will focus on making students' MA theses as good as possible. We will pay particular attention to theoretical arguments, clear presentation of results, and framing so as to maximize interest in the finished theses. For students with a lot yet to do on their MA theses, this class will help organize their progress and help them complete on time. For students further along with their theses, this course will help them plan next steps in hopes of publishing their theses in prestigious outlets.

**Mondays, 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.**

**117 Sackett Building**

**Spring 2023**  
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**PLSC 597**

**Causal Inference**

**Professor Kevin Munger**

This course provides a current perspective on identifying and estimating causal effects in social science research. We focus on non-parametric identification methods and then non-parametric and semi-parametric estimation and frequentist inference methods. We will emphasize research design and robust estimation and inference.

**Wednesdays, 2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.**

**009 Sparks Building**

**Spring 2023**  
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**PLSC/WMNST 597 (Crosslisted)**

**Gender and Politics**

**Professor Erin Heidt-Forsythe**

Gender—specifically femininity and masculinity—structure our political world. In this course, we will observe and analyze political institutions, voter behavior, and public policies through the lens of gender in the US and comparative contexts. Given the diverse nature of women and men—particularly the ways that femininity and masculinity intersect with partisanship and ideology, race, sexuality, and economic class—this course takes an intersectional approach to the study of gender and institutions/behavior in political science. Topics in this course include leadership, representation, voter and elite behavior, national and subnational institutions, mass media, gender stereotyping, campaigns, elections and electoral politics, and political parties.

**Thursdays, 3:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.**

**236 Pond Lab**



**Spring 2023**  
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**SoDA 501**

**Big Social Data: Approaches and Issue**

**Professor Bruce Desmarais**

Interdisciplinary integration of computational, informational, statistical, visual analytic, and social scientific approaches to the creation of big social data. This course addresses computational, informational, statistical, visual analytic, and social scientific approaches to the creation of data that are both "social" (about, or arising from, human interactions) and big (of sufficient scale, variety, or complexity to strain the informational, computational, or cognitive limits of conventional social scientific approaches to data collection or analysis). Examples include text, image, audio, video, intensive spatial and/or longitudinal data, data with complex network, hierarchical and/or other relational information, data from distributed sensors and mobile devices, digitized archival data, and data exhaust from sources like social media. Possible topics include sources of social data, data structures and formats for social data, data collection and manipulation technologies, data linkage and alignment, ethics and scientific responsibility in human subjects research, experimental and observational data collection design for causal inference, measurement of latent social concepts, reliability and validity, search and information retrieval, nonrelational and distributed databases, and standards for data preservation and sharing.

**Tuesdays, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.**

**302 Boucke Building**