

POL 196E 002: Research Methods for Political Science and Public Policy
UC Center Sacramento
Fridays 10:00 - 11:50AM

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 9:00-11:00am, UCCS Room 312

Course Objectives

POL 196E is a course designed to bridge the internship experience with the academic study of related disciplines such as political science and public policy. The ability to translate empirical evidence for use in policy debates is central to policymaking. As a member of the policy community, students require a sophisticated understanding of a variety of types of data and policy analysis. This course will introduce strategies for data collection and analysis, study design, and principles for evaluating research. Topics will include: experimental design, small- n studies, measurement construction and reliability, data collection and analysis, data visualization, and hypothesis testing. Students will work with a dataset to analyze a research question of their choosing and present the findings at the end of term Undergraduate Research Showcase.

Course Outline:*

Friday, 1/9: Course Introduction

Friday, 1/16: Fundamentals of Research Design and Observational Studies

Friday, 1/23: Data Sources: Pulling and Working with Data

Friday, 1/30: Measurement and Variable Construction

Sunday, 2/1: **Data Proposals Due**

Friday, 2/6: Research Posters and Intro to Data Visualization

Friday, 2/13: Data Analysis I: Intro to Hypothesis Testing

Friday, 2/20: Data Analysis II: Correlation and Regressions

Friday, 2/27: Elevator Speeches and Peer Editing of Graphics

Sunday, 3/1: **Research Poster Rough Draft Due**

Friday, 3/6: Practice Poster Presentation

Wednesday, 3/11: UCCS Undergraduate Research Showcase

Friday 3/13: Course Wrap Up - **Final Posters/Recorded Presentations Due**

*Course schedule subject to change/adjustment.

Grading and Assignments

Course Grading

Course grades for POL 196E are based on the following components:

- Attendance and Participation [20%]
- Data Proposal [20%]
- Research Poster Rough Draft [20%]
- Research Poster Final Draft [27.5%]
- Research Poster Final Presentation [12.5%]

Assignments

Assignments will be scaffolded to build toward a data analysis project for a final research presentation. Therefore, it is important to stay on top of all assignments for the class and communicate early and proactively with any questions and concerns. All work must align with the UC Davis Code of Academic Conduct.

Students will choose one of the following datasets to work with throughout the quarter:

Available Datasets

- American National Elections Study (ANES)
- Congressional Elections Survey (CES)
- U.S. Census and the American Community Survey (ACS)
- California Department of Education (CDE) DataQuest Database
- UC Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES)
- California Health Interview Survey (CHIS)

Students will be expected to identify a research question and hypothesis that will shape their data analysis. Students will present their results at the Undergraduate Research Showcase.

Data Proposal Assignment - due Week 4

Students will submit a 2-3 page data proposal to propose the research projects they will work on throughout the term. This assignment should list the dataset you choose to work with for the quarter. It should contain a proposed research question and hypothesis to guide your data analysis, as well as the **specific questions** from the dataset you chose that you intend to analyze as your independent, dependent, and control variables.

Research Poster Rough Draft - due Week 8

To prepare for the Undergraduate Research Showcase, students will submit a rough draft copy

of their original research poster at the end of Week 8. This draft should include an overview of your central research question, hypothesis, and research design, as well as preliminary data visualizations, analysis, and findings.

Research Poster Final Draft - due Week 10

Students will revise their research poster rough drafts based on the feedback they receive from instructors into a final poster. This poster, as well as the accompanying presentation, serves as the final project for the course. Students will present their final posters at the Undergraduate Research Showcase held at UCCS on **Wednesday, March 11**. Additional information on the poster and presentation will be provided in class and made available on Canvas. The Research Poster will be due, via Canvas, during the last week of the course.

Research Poster Final Presentation - due Week 10

Students will prepare a short "elevator pitch" used to present their projects at the Undergraduate Research Showcase at UCCS. A recording of this presentation, alongside a digital copy of the student's final research poster will also be submitted via Canvas. This presentation and the final poster serves as the final project for the course.

Course Policies

Attendance and Participation

Attendance on Fridays (10:00am – 11:50am) is mandatory and will be taken at the start of every class period. Students arriving 10 or more minutes late to class will be marked absent. Attendance is weighted differently for each class session. Students should come to class prepared to complete the in-class assignments. Grades will be based off attendance and participation in class activities including class discussion, in-class assignments, group work, elevator speeches, and practice poster presentations. Students who constructively contribute to class discussion regularly, attend office hours, and fully participate in other in-class activities will receive a boost to their attendance and participation grade.

Students are allowed up to two excused absences for family emergencies, medical emergencies (accompanied by a note), or internship-related activity. Students must email the professor to request an excused absence **Any student that has more than two unexcused absences will not be able to receive a passing grade for the class.**

Attendance on Wednesdays (11:00-12:30pm) is not mandatory, but students will receive participation points for consistent attendance. These sessions will include guest speakers from the California policy and academic communities making them an excellent opportunity to learn from policy professionals outside of UCCS and build your network. Furthermore, Wednesday class sessions will also be used for open office hours time and individual and small group work on projects. Consistent attendance and participation in these sessions will ***strongly*** benefit your success in the course and UCCS program.

Office Hours

Please attend office hours to address questions about course materials or get help with final projects when needed. **Students should make an effort to attend weekly office hours before requesting to schedule a separate appointment.** If students cannot attend office hours, they may email the instructor to request an appointment. Any changes to the weekly office hours schedule will be communicated to students on Canvas in advance. Demand and time permitting, additional weekly office hours may be scheduled later in the quarter to prepare for the poster session.

Email Communications

Please limit email communication to essential matters that cannot be addressed during class or office hours. Please use the subject line **POL 196E: TOPIC OF EMAIL** in all email correspondence.

Before emailing, check the syllabus, course materials, and announcements on Canvas to ensure the question has not already been answered. Allow 24-48 hours for a response, excluding weekends and holidays. Note that excessive emails or failure to follow these guidelines may result in delayed responses.

AI Policy

In this course, we may use generative AI/LLMs (such as ChatGPT) to examine the ways in which the responsible use of these tools may inform our exploration of the topics of the class. You will be informed when and how these tools may be used, along with guidance for attribution as needed. **Any use of generative AI tools outside of these parameters constitutes plagiarism and will be treated as such.** It is a violation of university policy to misrepresent work that you submit or exchange with your instructor by characterizing it as your own, such as submitting responses to assignments that do not acknowledge the use of generative AI tools. Please feel free to reach out to me with any questions you may have about the use of generative AI/LLMs before submitting any content that has been substantially informed by these technologies.

Technology Policy

In class, we will frequently do work that requires a laptop or tablet. If possible, please bring laptops/tablets to every class session. Note that laptops and tablets are permitted in-class for official purposes only. Use of technology for unauthorized purposes will result in docked participation grades in the course.

Late Policy

Requests for extensions should be communicated in advance and will be guaranteed only in the event of a medical or family emergency (with accompanying documentation). Any requests for an incomplete assignment must be accompanied by a written medical report.

Grade Appeals

Students will have one week from when grades are posted to appeal their grade. All appeals must include a typed, double-spaced statement explaining why you are requesting a grade appeal, and you must justify with evidence from your assignment. If you choose to appeal your grade, the instructor reserves the right to increase or decrease the existing grade.

Pass/No Pass Grading

If you opt to take this course P/NP, in order to receive a P (Pass), you must turn in all required assignments. Failure to do so will result in you not being able to receive a P (Pass).

UC Davis Code of Academic Conduct

As a University of California student, you have agreed to abide by the University's Code of Academic Conduct. Cheating and other violations of the code of conduct are serious offenses. Students are expected to work independently on all graded assignments. Students who engage in cheating will earn an F grade for the assignment. In addition, per Regulation 550, when "academic misconduct is admitted or is determined by adjudication to have occurred," instructors have the authority to assign a student a grade of F for the course. Please refer to the UC Davis Code of Academic Conduct for further details: <http://sja.ucdavis.edu/files/cac.pdf>

Students with Disabilities

Any student who, because of a disability, may require some special arrangements in order to meet any of the course requirements should contact the instructor as soon as possible to make necessary accommodations. It is the responsibility of the student to request accommodation for individual learning needs. UC Davis and the UC Center will make every attempt to accommodate all qualified students with disabilities.

Mandatory Reporting

Please be advised that UC Center Sacramento professors, instructors, teaching assistants, and administrators are mandatory reporters under Title IX. This means that we are required to pass on reports from students, whether communicated verbally during class discussion or office hours or as part of a written assignment or exercise, to the UC Davis Title IX officer and other relevant UC Davis officials. If you wish to seek out help or resources with a non-mandated reporter, please see <https://sexualviolence.ucdavis.edu/get-support>