STAT 162: POLITICAL RESEARCH METHODS AND APPROACHES

Research Paper Directions and Guidelines

Together, this research paper counts towards 30% of your overall class grade. There are four parts to this research paper

> Part I: Research Question and Literature Review (5%)
>
> - Due September 15 at 11:55pm (via Moodle)
>
> Part II: Theory and Hypotheses (5%)
>
> - Due October 11 at the beginning of class (bring a hard copy)
>
> Part III: Descriptive Statistics (5%)
>
> - Due November 29 at 11:55pm (via Moodle)
>
> Final Version: polished parts I – III + bivariate data analysis & conclusion (15%)
>
> - Due December 6 at 11:55pm (via Moodle)

The directions and guidelines are written as a checklist. Use the checklist.

Late work is heavily penalized. You will receive a zero for Parts I through III if the paper is late for any reason (printer breaks, you oversleep, etc.). For the final version, there is an automatic 15 point deduction for the first 24 hours and 30 point deduction for anything later than 24 hours.

You may write this research paper with a classmate of your choosing. In fact, I encourage you to do so; social science research is collaborative. The expectations and requirements are exactly the same for working with a coauthor as not.

Part I: Research Question and Literature Review (2/5 pages)

Due: September 15 11:55pm (MS Word, which is preferable, or PDF via Moodle)

Requirements

1. Introduction and Research Question on a social science topic 20 points
   Example: "What causes voter turnout to vary between countries?" Are Republicans, on average, becoming more conservative and Democrats more liberal in their congressional voting? If so, why? This must be both

   a. _____ Clear.

   b. _____ Answerable.

2. Discussion of the importance of the problem / the research question 10 points
   Why is this (e.g. turnout) an important question? Don't explain why *you* find this interesting. Tell the **reader** why this is an important issue in general.

   a. _____ Convincing argument why this is an important problem.

3. Literature review 70 points total

   Consult at least 10 sources and discuss how these sources go together. This should be in paragraph form and cited with in text citations (APA Style). A good literature review does not just list what other scholars have said about this question. Instead, this is where you identify and describe debates that researchers have had and where you find common themes behind articles/books. In other words: instead of listing the content of 10 articles, you find common themes between these articles and group them according to this theme.

   a. _____Consultation of at least ten sources (10 points)
   b. _____Correctly cited sources using in-text citations (APA Style) (10 points)
   c. _____Paragraph form (10 points)
   d. _____Outlines what scholars have said about this before (20 points)
   e. _____Organization according to common themes / debates (20 points)

Part II: Theory and Hypothesis (2/4 pages)

Due: October 11 at the beginning of class (bring a hard copy)

Requirements

Here you provide the answer to your research question. Recall that a theory has a causal statement and a causal explanation. In other words, you need to make a clear statement which variables cause your phenomenon of interest (e.g. varying turnout levels) and you need to explain in great detail why you expect this effect. From your theory, you then deduce testable hypotheses. For this project, you are required to have 2 testable hypotheses (1 dependent variable / 2 independent variables).

Example: To use the question on turnout, the United States does not require citizens to register to vote. Voter registration requirements varies by country. I might argue that this institutional difference causes the discrepancy in voter turnout because it makes voting easier for some citizens and harder for others (taken from Pollock p. 233).

This theory is testable and falsifiable (science!).

- We could create a hypothesis for this theory. Ex: Countries that require citizens to register to vote are more likely to have low voter turnout in elections.
- We could test this hypothesis. We could collect data on how/if countries conduct voter registration and collect data on voter turnout.
- We could also be wrong about this. Perhaps voter turnout has little to do with government requiring citizens to register to vote. Perhaps a voter's satisfaction with democracy drives his/her decision to vote in a given election.

Questions to ask yourself about your theory:

1. _____ Does your theory explain something? What relationship does your theory explain? (10 points)
2. _____ Is the theory causal? (10 points)
3. _____Do I explain my theory? Do I spell out exactly how my factor influences the relationship I'm trying to explain? (30 points)
4. _____Can I be wrong? How would I be wrong? (10 points)
5. _____ Can two testable hypotheses be derived from the theory? Write and explain those hypotheses. Make specific reference to your available data (40 points)

Part III: Descriptive Statistics (3 /4 pages)

Due: November 29 at 11:55pm (via Moodle)

Requirements

In this section, you describe the variables that you are using in your statistical analysis, both in text and in chart / table form. This means that you explain to the reader (1) how your variables are measured, (2) where these variables come from (did you code them yourself? Did you find them on the internet? If so, where?), (3) whether there are any shortcomings or problems with the way these variables are measured. After this section, you then describe all of your variables. This means: provide the minimum, maximum, and appropriate measure of central tendency for each variable (in a Table). Plot the distribution of each variable in an appropriate graph.

- _____ Identify your independent variables (remember: you need 2). (10 points)
- _____ Identify your dependent variable. (10 points)
- _____ Provide a discussion of the independent, and dependent variables in **paragraph form**. Questions include, but are not limited to: (1) how are your variables measured, (2) where do these variables come from (did you code them yourself? Did you find them on the internet? If so, where?), (3) Are there any shortcomings or problems with the way these variables are measured? (40 points)
- _____ Provide the minimum, maximum, and appropriate measure of central tendency for each variable in **a table.** (10 points)
- _____ Plot the distribution of each variable in an appropriate graph. (10 points)
- _____ **Explain each graph and each table** in the text. The basic rule is: readers should be able to understand the tables/graphs without reading the text and they should be able to understand the text without looking at the tables/graphs. (20 points)

Polished parts of I- III &

bivariate data analysis (2/4 pages) &

conclusion (2 pages)

Due: December 7 at 11:55pm (MS word document via Moodle). There is an automatic 15 point deduction for anything turned in past 11:55pm on December 6. <u>Nothing</u> will be accepted past 11:55pm on December 8.

The final version of your paper will include polished parts of I-III as well as a bivariate data analysis (4/5 pages), and a conclusion (2 / 3 pages).

1. Bivariate Data Analysis (4/5 pages)

For the bivariate data analysis, you need to use **all of the appropriate tools learned in class**. This list includes but is not limited to: Crosstabs (with and without control variable), Scatterplots, Difference-of-means-tests, Chi-Square tests, and Bivariate Regression. **Explain each test** in the text and interpret the output that you get. Do you reject or fail to reject your hypotheses? What does this mean for your theory?

   a. _____Difference of Means-Tests (if applicable)
   b. _____Chi-square Tests (if applicable).
   c. _____Correlation Coefficient (if applicable)
   d. _____ Bivariate Regression Analysis (if applicable)
   e. _____ Other (depending on your data).

2. Conclusion (2/3 pages)

In the conclusion, you usually first re-state your research question and you then sum-up your findings. Did you find support for your hypotheses? What are the implications of your findings for your theory? Which other variables would you have to consider in order to conduct a conclusive test of your theory?

   a. _____Re-state your research question and sum up your findings.
   b. _____Explain the implications of your findings for the theory.
   c. _____Which other variables do you have to consider?

The length of this paper will vary. Your paper needs to have between 16 and 21 double-spaced pages (12-point font; including graphics and citations). The rubric I use to grade these papers is as follows:

This will be graded according on a scale of 0-100.

Points Earned	Comments	Range	Description
		0-20 points	**Content & Style**: Paper contains a clear, well supported thesis and strong argument. The paper is structured, logical, and flows easily from one section to another.
		0-40 points	**Data Analysis**: Paper includes appropriate quantitative information (both in charts and in paragraph form).
		0-20 points	**Style:** Overall, the writing style is sophisticated, advanced, and varied. Sentence style and structure is clear and concise. Grammar and spelling are flawless.
		0-20 points	**Documentation**: All information is properly cited. Documentation follows in text citation style (APA Style). Follows all paper guidelines (double spaced throughout, Times New Roman font, etc.)
			Total Score