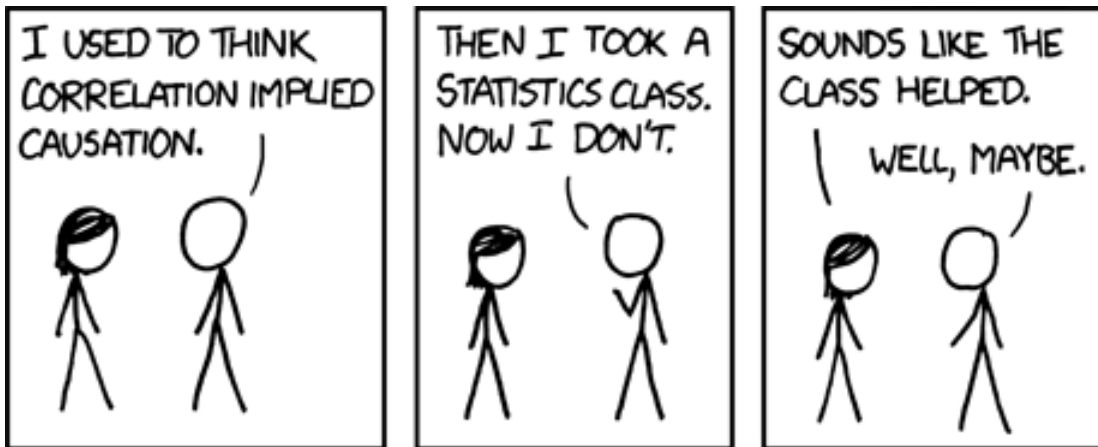

POLI 3000:0001: Analyzing Political Data

Mon & Weds 3:30–4:45 pm
in Lindquist Center, Room S120
Spring 2025



Course Information

Instructor: Thomas Dainty
Office: 317 Schaeffer Hall
Office/Drop-In Hours: Tues 9:00 am -12:00 pm, or by appointment
E-mail: thomas-dainty@uiowa.edu
Course Supervisor: Elizabeth Menninga
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Course Description

This course is designed to achieve two objectives: (1) introduce you to research and quantitative analysis in political science and (2) help you become critical (but not cynical) consumers of quantitative analysis used in political and policy-oriented reporting.

We will tackle the challenge of what conclusions we can draw from statistical analyses, trying to disentangle cause and effect from observed correlations. To help our pursuit of these goals, we'll use statistical software (Stata), providing an introduction to statistical computing. Throughout the course we'll use what we've learned to think critically about the use of quantitative research and the inferences drawn from that research by analysts, reporters, politicians, and policy advocates. As such, not only will you be learning to do your own analysis this semester but also how to evaluate information presented by others.

Course Materials

The required book is available at the Iowa Hawk Shop or from your favorite on-line retailer. I placed the e-version of the book as the textbook for the course for MyUI, as it is often cheaper than the physical copy, but you are free to use either version.

- Joseph F. Healey, *The Essentials of Statistics: A Tool for Social Research 4th Edition*. 2015. Cengage Learning. (Referred to as EoS)

Additionally, I recommend students who have no experience with statistical computing or know that the computing part of this course will be a challenge to purchase or borrow a Stata tutorial. Note that many resources are available through the library or for free on-line, so I strongly encourage borrowing before buying. Two such books are:

- Kyle C. Longest. *Using Stata for Quantitative Analysis, 2nd Edition*. 2015. Sage Press.
- Alan C. Acock. *A Gentle Introduction to Stata, 5th Edition*. 2016. Stata Press

The first book is a little cheaper and much smaller. It covers most of the introductory commands that will be used this semester. The second is a more comprehensive resource for students who expect to use Stata not only this semester but in future semesters as well. There are also many useful free online Stata resources (see ICON Stata Resources module for some of our favorites).

Any other course materials will be available electronically on the course ICON page or through the library's on-line resources. Please check each week's ICON module for any readings/activities that need be completed **before** class.

Course Requirements and Grading

There are no prerequisites for this class, however, we will assume basic mathematical skills (mainly arithmetic). Your grade for the course will be determined by performance in four primary areas: class participation, problem sets, a midterm, and a data analysis project.

Course Grade Breakdown

- Participation: 15%
- Problem Sets: 30%
- Midterm Exam: 25%
- Data Analysis Project: 20%
- 3MT Presentation of Project: 10%

Participation (15% of final grade)

Class time will be divided between lecture, discussion, and in-class activities. This class will include active learning opportunities frequently. Active involvement in activities is an easy way to boost your participation grade. Participation points are assigned based upon the quantity and quality of a student's contributions to the class. Quality is weighted significantly more heavily than quantity. Attendance is not a separate portion of your grade outside of participation. However, absences will hurt your participation grade as you cannot participate if you are not in class. Contact

me *before* a class you will miss, if at all possible, to have the absence excused.

In addition to improving your grade, participation in class can help you identify what you don't understand, ask questions, and deepen your understanding of the material. **Asking relevant or interesting questions absolutely counts as participation!** Some other ways to ensure your participation score is high is through the following:

- Venturing to offer your own questions, arguments, or opinions
- Taking initiative in answering questions that guide class lectures and discussions
- Voicing thoughtful responses to other members of the class and the instructor
- Pursuing discussion in the spirit of mutually constructive and generative debate, which includes listening carefully to other students including those with whom you may disagree
- Actively contributing to small group/pair discussions

Presentation of Misleading Statistics: At the beginning of most classes, one (or two) of you will be responsible for presenting a news article that includes misleading (or incorrect) use of quantitative analysis. This can be incorrect reporting of what a statistic means, drawing conclusions from poor samples, or any number of other ways data can be misinterpreted. The article should be recent (written within 6 months of your presentation) unless you get advanced permission to use an older article. The presentation should be a couple minutes long (no more than 3) highlighting any relevant context, but focusing mainly on how the article uses statistics misleadingly and what a more accurate/honest report would have been. You have substantial latitude here, so feel free to talk about a topic you find interesting or surprising in some way. You are welcome, but not required, to run your idea by me in advance. Please submit whatever materials you use in your presentation (PowerPoint, links to articles, etc) to the ICON assignment for this presentation before your presentation.

Tips for selecting an article: Please pick an article from a reputable news outlet. You may use news aggregators to find interesting articles, but please cite the original article (not the aggregator). You are also welcome to pick an article you initially find on social media (for example, something that may have gone viral on Twitter/X, TikTok, Instagram, etc.), so long as it ultimately ties back to a legitimate news/academic article or source that is being referenced or discussed. Please avoid news outlets that are well-known to be strongly partisan such as Fox News and MSNBC; the goal is to show that misleading statistics are in our everyday news exposure and to begin looking for and assessing the methods/statistics that are used to support policy positions. Also, note that **you can think the use of statistics was misleading even if you agree with the conclusions or implications of the article as a whole.**

Focus on the use of quantitative analysis and be respectful in your presentation.

Extra Credit Opportunity: Because the tools we are learning in this class translate to your other classes for your major, we encourage connections between what we're learning and your other classes. To this end, twice throughout the semester, you can send me an article, notes from a lecture, reading, or presentation from another class you are taking that relates to what we are learning.

When you email the article, explain the connection to Poli 3000. You get extra credit for connecting material across classes!

Problem Sets (30% of final grade)

Homework assignments will be assigned throughout the semester (approximately 5-6 total). The problem sets will be posted to ICON and are due at the start of class on the due date. As a general expectation, homeworks will be assigned at least a week in advance and due on Wednesday.

Homework assignments will be submitted through Dropbox on ICON. You do not have to type your assignments. You may hand-write answers and then scan your work in order to upload to ICON (the main library is one place where you scan your work). If you'd like to type your homework, Word's equation editor makes typing math symbols and equations rather easy. You may hand-write answers to some questions and type answers to others. Ultimately, the only requirement is that the assignment is legible and uploaded to ICON. Photos of your assignment taken with your phone will **only** count if I can read your work. I cannot grade what I cannot read. It is your responsibility to ensure the assignment is legible and has been correctly uploaded into ICON on time. Double check after submission!

Working together on homework is not only allowed, but strongly encouraged. Working together is a great way to talk through tricky concepts and improve your understanding. The final product, however, is expected to be written and understood by the student turning in the work.

Given this, please ensure that the homework submission includes your process to get to the answer where needed (in other words, show your work!). Failure to do so (e.g., including only the final answer to a computational question) will result in only partial credit (50%) for that question. You are free to show your process as you go with the final answer at the end for each question, or have the answer to each question upfront with the process (clearly labeled for each question) used to derive the answer at the end. Ultimately, I need to be able to see (1) your answer to the question and (2) how you got the answer to receive full points.

Late homework will result in a 10% penalty for each calendar day late. **Late homework will no longer be accepted after the answer key is posted, typically about 5 days after the assignment is due.**

Your lowest homework grade will be dropped at the end of the semester.

Midterm Exam (25%)

There will be one midterm exam. The exam will be closed-note and in-class (you will be given an equation sheet). This work must be done on your own without consulting other students or friends. The exam will be a combination of short answer, definitions, and computational questions. The format will be discussed more completely in class when the exam date is closer.

You will need a calculator. A simple one is sufficient. You may **NOT** use a smartphone/tablet as your calculator on the exam.

After grades are back for the midterm exam, you will be given an opportunity to submit revisions to questions that were (at least partially) incorrect. These revisions are due a week after I return your midterm exam grade at the beginning of class. These revisions are graded as either correct or incorrect (no partial credit!) and are open note, with the one condition that the only person you can discuss your work with is me - not your peers or others outside the class. Correct answers will get 1/3 of the lost points back for their midterm grade.

Policy on Unexcused Absences and Exams: You are required to be present for all scheduled exams. The only allowable exception to this policy is a documented emergency or other unavoidable circumstances or University-sponsored activities (see Attendances and Absences in the final section of the Syllabus). If at all possible you should contact the instructor before the exam to discuss the emergency, provide documentation, and schedule the make-up.

Data Analysis Project (20% of final grade)

Over the course of the semester, you will write a data analysis paper in which you will analyze data to evaluate a policy/political science hypothesis of interest to you. There are several deadlines throughout the semester related to this final paper. The purpose of these deadlines is to break up the project and provide opportunities for feedback before the final paper is due. Each is worth 5% of the final grade for the project. Failing to meet one of these deadlines will result in a 0 for that portion of the grade. Refer to the schedule below and the associated assignment on ICON for due dates and more details.

Note: All assignments are expected to be submitted by the date and time listed. Late submissions will result in a 10% penalty for each calendar day late. Extensions will only be given if discussed with the instructor **before** the deadline. Exceptions to this policy will only be made after the deadline in the rare circumstances of an unexpected emergency. You are responsible for making sure submissions have been uploaded to ICON correctly.

In-Class Paper Workshop

During class on April 21, we'll have a paper workshop. The workshop will be during scheduled class time. You will share your progress on the final paper with your group and use your peers to get advice/feedback/help. To do this most effectively, you'll circulate a draft of your paper to your group in advance (draft due April 18 at 5:00pm). Your assignment for the day of the workshop will be to read your groupmates' drafts, give your groupmates comments, and discuss your comments with them in class. We find that opportunities like this substantially improve the quality of the final work. Take advantage of this opportunity!

Project Deadlines

- Topic & Hypothesis Selected: **Friday, Feb. 21 at 5pm**
- Data & Analysis Plan: **Friday, Mar. 14 at 5pm**
- Draft of Paper Submitted to Group: **Friday, Apr. 18 at 5pm**
- Feedback Submitted to Group: **Monday, Apr. 21 at 3:30pm**

- Final Paper Due: **TBD Based on “Final Exam” Time**
- 3MT Presentation: **TBD Based on “Final Exam” Time**

3-Minute Thesis Presentation (10% of final grade)

During our final exam time slot (**TBD**), instead of taking a final exam, you will give a 3-minute thesis-style presentation on your Data Analysis Project to the class. More information on this style of presentation can be found on ICON. In short, you have only 3 minutes (so you must focus on the most important pieces of information to present) and only 1 content slide. The goal is to provide an opportunity to practice oral presentation skills while also learning to extract the most important pieces of a research project. Some examples of good 3MT slides from past classes can be found under the ICON assignment.

Grading Scale

The grading scale for the course is as follows.

Letter Grade	Percentage
A+	99-100
A	93-98
A-	90-92
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
D-	60-62
F	59 or below

Expectations

Technology: Please turn your mobile phones off or to silent mode before class. On exam day your phones and any other electronic devices (e.g., smartwatch, tablet, and so on) must be silent and put away. Laptops are permitted for class purposes only. If you are using your laptops for notes or readings, sign out of everything else so you can focus on mastering the material at hand. There are days in which we will be using statistical software in class. I will try to always give you advanced warning (typically through e-mail or ICON) so you can know to bring your laptops on those days.

Software: We will be using statistical software in this course as we learn how to implement/interpret different statistical tests. We will primarily use Stata to execute these analyses. If you happen to already know a different software that you prefer, that is fine, but we will only provide technical assistance for Stata. While you may purchase a Stata license if you wish, there are free alternatives for students at Iowa. In particular, you can access Stata on your laptops through Iowa servers at <https://>

[//virtualdesktop.uiowa.edu/](https://virtualdesktop.uiowa.edu/). I strongly recommend becoming familiar with and using your H drive to make accessing your files on the virtual desktop (<https://its.uiowa.edu/support/article/104047>).

Also, the political science department has a small computer lab (called the collab) on the 3rd floor of Schaeffer Hall (334 Schaeffer Hall). The collab has computers you can use for your homeworks and paper as well. I will have to unlock the collab for you, so email me in advance if you would like to use this resource. It will be unlocked during all of my office hours (or if I forget, come by my office and I'll let you in). I will also set up a time to be posted later on ICON where the collab will be available besides my office hours.

Email: Email is a useful way to ask quick questions. However, replying to long questions about the readings or lectures is highly inefficient for both you and me. Regardless of question length, I will do my best to **respond to your emails within 48 hours**. E.g., if you email me on Saturday, I will try to respond before that same time on Monday.

If you want to talk about something you don't understand, come by my office hours. If you can't make my office hours, reach out about finding a separate time to talk. In general, while I respond to student emails, I prefer to talk in person. Come see me during office hours! These are hours specifically allotted to helping you, so I recommend using them. If your question involved Stata, **include a screenshot** of the error message/output you want to discuss.

Contesting a Grade: If a student wishes to have a grade reconsidered, the student must submit a written statement to the instructor within 48 hours of having the graded assignment returned. The written statement must include the student's rational for why additional points should be given. The instructor will then review the written statement and the assignment. After review, the instructor has the right to subtract points as well as add points if warranted.

University/CLAS Policies

This course is through the Department of Political Science

DEO: Brian Lai, 343 Schaeffer Hall, brian-lai@uiowa.edu

Academic Honesty and Misconduct

All students in CLAS courses are expected to abide by the [college's standards of academic honesty](#). Undergraduate academic misconduct must be reported by instructors to CLAS according to [these procedures](#). Graduate academic misconduct must be reported to the Graduate College according to Section F of the [Graduate College Manual](#).

Student Complaints

Students with a complaint about a grade or a related matter should first discuss the situation with the instructor and/or the course supervisor (if applicable), and finally with the DEO (Chair) of the department, school or program offering the course. Sometimes students will be referred to the department or program's Director of Undergraduate Studies (DUS) or Director of Graduate Studies (DGS).

Undergraduate students should contact [CLAS Undergraduate Programs](#) for support when the matter is not resolved at the previous level. Graduate students should contact the [CLAS Dean's Office](#) when additional support is needed.

Drop Deadline for this Course

You may drop an individual course before the drop deadline; after this deadline you will need collegiate approval. You can look up the drop deadline for this course [here](#). When you drop a course, a "W" will appear on your transcript. The mark of "W" is a neutral mark that does not affect your GPA. To discuss how dropping (or staying in) a course might affect your academic goals, please contact your Academic Advisor. Directions for adding or dropping a course and other registration changes can be found on the [Registrar's website](#).

Undergraduate students can find policies on dropping CLAS courses [here](#). Graduate students should adhere to the [academic deadlines](#) and policies set by the Graduate College.

Communication: UI Email

Students are responsible for all official correspondences sent to their UI email address (uiowa.edu) and must use this address for any communication with instructors or staff in the UI community. For the privacy and the protection of student records, UI faculty and staff can only correspond with UI email addresses.

Mental Health Resources and Student Support

Students are encouraged to be mindful of their mental health and seek help as a preventive measure or if feeling overwhelmed and/or struggling to meet course expectations. Students are encouraged to talk to their instructor for assistance with course-related concerns. For additional

mental health support, please see the guidance and resources at mentalhealth.uiowa.edu, including the 24-7 [UI Support and Crisis Line](#).

Additionally, the Office of the Dean of Students can help students navigate personal crisis situations. They can provide one-on-one support, help with identifying options, and access to [basic needs resources \(such as food, rent, childcare, etc.\)](#). Student Care and Assistance: 132 IMU, dos-assistance@uiowa.edu, or 319-335-1162 and more info: dos.uiowa.edu/assistance
[University Policies](#)

[Accommodations for Students with Disabilities](#)

The University is committed to providing an educational experience that is accessible to all students. If a student has a diagnosed disability or other disabling condition that may impact the student's ability to complete the course requirements as stated in the syllabus, the student may seek accommodations through [Student Disability Services](#) (SDS). SDS is responsible for making [Letters of Accommodation \(LOA\)](#) available to the student. **The student must provide an LOA to the instructor as early in the semester as possible, but requests not made at least two weeks prior to the scheduled activity for which an accommodation is sought may not be accommodated.** The LOA will specify what reasonable course accommodations the student is eligible for and those the instructor should provide.

[Free Speech and Expression](#)

[Absences for Religious Holy Days](#)

[Classroom Expectations](#)

[Non-discrimination](#)

[Sexual Harassment/Misconduct and Supportive Measures](#)

[Sharing of Class Recordings](#) (if appropriate)