

**PSPA 203  
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY  
SYLLABUS**

**VERITAS**

Discover Truth by finding facts and using logic

Course Objectives and requirements

1. To become aware of what questions are posed by students of politics by becoming acquainted with the majors approaches to the study of politics and administration.
2. To understand the ways in which political and administrative questions can be answered through introduction to various tools of analysis.
3. To develop enthusiasm about political science and public administration so as to stimulate the curiosity that leads to hypothesis formulation and the desire to seek answers using proper methodology.
4. To practice analytical skills and methodologies learned in class exercises and projects.

**TEXT: E. Babbie, the Practice of Social Research.**

**Exams:** Midterm 30%, Final 50%, and project 20%

Reading newspapers on a daily basis with close attention to political and administrative affairs both in Lebanon, the region and broad is a must for this course.

No make up exams without medical excuses.

I hope we enjoy thinking together this semester.

**Note: It is not impossible to pass the course without** reading the assignments listed below. To derive the maximum benefit, please have them read by the date listed to the right of the assignments and be prepared to discuss the information you have read.

# **PSPA 203 Course Syllabus**

## First week

1. Introductory session: how PSPA 203 differs from other introductory courses, the professor's role and obligations and the students' part in making the course an interesting and satisfactory learning experience.
2. What social scientists do; an explanation and illustration of the use of description, analysis, prescription, etc., in social research.
3. Introduction of major course concepts and explanation of hypothesis formation and testing in social research. Class exercise.

## Second week

4. Empirical and normative theories and models.
5. Sources of knowledge – their pitfalls and potentials and basic assumptions of social science research. Ch 1. text.
6. Errors in inquiry and their solutions.

## Third week

7. A variable language.
8. Practice session – class exercise operationalizing hypotheses.
9. Some Paradigms and an introduction to deductive and inductive reasoning. Ch. 2 text.

## Fourth week

10. Deductive and inductive reasoning illustrated – The “powerlessness and alienation” hypothesis, Durkheim's work on suicide and the search to predict a life of crime.
11. Finding causes in social science – tests for causality and necessary and sufficient cause - Ch. 3 text
12. Practice session including hypothesis testing.

## Fifth week

13. Ideographic and nomothetic models of explanation and writing research papers for PSPA.

14. Research design – units of analysis, the ecological fallacy, reductionism and cross-sectional studies. Ch 4 text.
15. Types of longitudinal studies and their weaknesses and strengths – the “nurses study” and other cases. An overview of the research process from conceptualization to Analysis.

#### Sixth week

16. Review – question and answer format.
17. Measuring everything that exists – conceptualization, variables and their attributes, indicators and dimensions. Illustrations and class practice. Ch. 5 text.
18. Levels of measurement and how to determine measurement quality – validity and reliability. See also Ch 9. for guidelines for asking questions, pp. 239 - 252 Practice exercise on finding the dimensions of complex concepts.

#### Seventh week

19. Indexes vs scales – theory. Ch. 6 text.
20. Creating indexes and scales – Likert and Bogardus – practice.
21. Review for the midterm examination.

#### Eighth week

22. Midterm based on operationalization of a hypothesis for testing and short answer questions aimed at testing students’ understanding of how to use the information conveyed in the first part of the course to conduct research.
23. The logic of sampling and common sampling errors. Populations and sampling frames. Ch. 6 text.
24. Probability sampling – the nth method and Multi-stage cluster sampling. Illustrations drawn from studies that have sampled AUB students and groups in Lebanon.

#### Ninth week

25. Probability sampling continued.
27. Nonprobability sampling – purposive, snowball and quota. Disproportionate sampling and weighting.
28. Class exercise – selecting an appropriate sampling method. Creativity in sampling techniques.

#### Tenth week

29. Experiments – the classic experiment. Selecting subjects, pre and post testing. Examples of social science experiments. Ch. 8 text

30. Sources of internal and external invalidity in experiments. The weaknesses and strengths of experimental techniques..

31. Interview Surveys – guidelines – initial research, design, question organization, and steering the interview. Problems and potentials of the technique. Ch. 9 text.

#### Eleventh week

32. Survey questionnaire formation. Ch. 9 text.

33. Qualitative field research – political anthropology – research in Lebanon and the Middle East reviewed. Ch. 10 text. Survey project proposals due – research question, hypothesis to be tested, sample frame and a brief outline of some of the questionnaire items.

34. Sampling and evidence in field research – strengths and weaknesses of the technique.

#### Twelfth week

35. Review – question and answer format.

36. Unobtrusive research: content analysis, sampling and recording. . Ch. 11 text.

37. The analysis of existing statistics and historical/comparative analysis

#### Thirteenth week

38. Practice in operationalization of hypotheses and choosing appropriate sampling technique.

39. “Do no harm” - the Ethics of social research. Ch. 18 text

40.. Social research and its uses. Determining the validity and reliability of research projects – the questions that must be answered. Ch. 19.

#### Fourteenth week

41. Course review.

42. Analyzing data. Instruction in reporting the findings of empirical research.

43. Presentation and discussion of survey projects.

#### Fifteenth week

44. Presentations

45. Presentations

46. Practice for the final exam. Papers due.