



PLS 205/205A
INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH METHODS
FALL 2009
4 UNITS

(<http://www.csupomona.edu/~jlkorey/205/syllabus205.pdf>)

*Thou shalt not answer questionnaires
or quizzes upon world affairs... .
Thou shalt not sit with statisticians
nor commit a social science*
— W.H. Auden, "Under Which Lyre" (1946)

Finding out that you are wrong is almost never uninteresting.
— Edward Lascher (2001)

CONTACT INFORMATION:

- Instructor: John L. Korey
- Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 4:45-5:45. Subject to change: see <http://www.csupomona.edu/~jlkorey/schedule.html> for current information.
- Office: 94-316
- Email: jlkorey@csupomona.edu. (So that I will recognize that your email is from you, and isn't spam, include the term "PLS 205" on the subject line of any messages you send me. Please use your Cal Poly email. In particular, do not send me any attachments using other than your Cal Poly account.)
- Phone: 909/869-3885

PREREQUISITE: Completion of GE Area B1 math requirement

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- To improve critical thinking skills.
- To show how inquiry is conducted in the social sciences.
- To teach that political science is, in part, a social science.
- To provide a basis for further coursework in research methods.

TEXT AND MATERIALS:

- Korey, John L., *Introduction to Research Methods in Political Science: the POWERMUTT Project*. Online at <http://www.csupomona.edu/~jlkorey/POWERMUTT/index.html>. Hardcopy at Bronco Copy 'N Mail in the Bronco Student Center (*not* at the Bronco Bookstore).
- A flash drive, which need not be high capacity, since the files we will be using are small.
- The course will require you to use SPSS, a software package. While some of this can be done in class (1-317), you will need to do work on your own. In addition to 1-317, SPSS is also available in the Computing Commons Lab (98-C5-13), in the Campus Center Lab (97-121), and in the Library Computer Lab (15). For information on the hours of operation of the Computer Commons and Campus Center labs, visit <http://www.csupomona.edu/~ehelp/computinglabs/index.shtml>. The Library Computer Lab is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Note: The network in the Social Science Lab (1-317) is set up specifically for computers in that room. Should anyone disconnect the network cable from the computer in order to plug it into his or her own laptop, the network port will be disabled. Please **DON'T DO IT!**

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- 4 Tests (**October 8, November 3, November 19, and December 10**) each worth a maximum of 100 points.
- 3 Research Essays (**October 29, November 17, and December 3**). The first essay is worth 30 points, the second and third 35 points each.

GRADES:

Posted after each test, grades are based on the following percentages:

80.00-100.00 A	70.00-72.99 B	60.00-62.99 C	50.00-52.99 D
77.00-79.99 A-	67.00-69.99 B-	57.00-59.99 C-	47.00-49.99 D-
73.00-76.99 B+	63.00-66.99 C+	53.00-56.99 D+	00.00-46.99 F

Check your grades on [Blackboard](#). After logging in using your Cal Poly e-mail user name and password, click on "Tools," then on "My Grades."

RESEARCH ESSAYS: For each essay, state and justify your hypotheses and present and interpret your findings. Essay 1 should be at least 500 words long, not counting tables. Essays 2 and 3 should be at least 750 words long, not counting tables and graphs. They will be graded not only on whether the work has been done in a mechanically correct manner, but on the quality of your explanation and the aesthetics of your presentation. Work submitted late will receive a 10% penalty unless an extension has been granted for a serious reason. Work submitted more than a week late will receive an additional 10% penalty.

1. **Due October 29.** Election '08. Using the American National Election Study 2008 (*not 2004*) subset, select any **three** "background" characteristics of respondents that you think might help explain why people voted the way that they did in the 2008 election ("presvote"). Explain why you think there might be such relationships. In carrying out your analysis:

- weight cases using the "weight" variable;
- use "select cases" to filter out those who voted for a candidate other than Obama or McCain;
- use "recode" as needed to combine categories of independent variables. You must recode at least one independent variable. Use "select cases" to filter out categories that either contain too few cases for reliable analysis or which are not relevant to your hypotheses;
- prepare contingency tables showing the relationship between each of the variables you have selected and the "presvote" variable; and
- include and interpret appropriate measures of statistical significance and association.

2. **Due November 17.** Feelings toward individuals and groups. Select one of the "feeling thermometers" from the American National Election Study 2008 (*not 2004*) subset. Choose any **three** "background" characteristics of respondents that you think might help explain feelings toward the individual or group you have selected. Explain why you think there might be such relationships. In carrying out your analysis:

- weight cases using the "weight" variable,
- use "recode" as needed to combine categories of independent variables. You must recode at least one independent variable. Use "select cases" to filter out categories that either contain too few cases for reliable analysis or which are not relevant to your hypotheses;
- for each independent variable, prepare box and whiskers plots, do comparison of means tests (*not* t-tests), and interpret the results.

3. **Due December 3.** A theory of democracy. Using the Countries data, create a measure of democracy by combining "polright" and "civilib." Note: because for these two variables, the *higher* the number the *lower* the levels of political rights and civil liberties, use the formula "democracy = 14 – polright – civilib," where "democracy" is the name of the new variable. This will create a measure ranging from 0 (least democratic) to 12

(most democratic). Choose any three interval or ratio variables that you think might help explain a country’s level of democracy. Explain why you think there might be such relationships. In carrying out your analysis:

- run a multiple regression analysis with “democracy” as the dependent variable, and
- interpret the results.

SCHEDULE:

Test Date	Week	Topics
	1	Introduction; Political Science as a Social Science
	2	Research Design ; Levels of Measurement
Test 1: Thursday, October 8		
	3	Displaying Categorical Data; Data Collection
	4	More About Measurement
	5	Contingency Table Analysis
Test 2: Tuesday, November 3		
	6	Control Variables; Descriptive Statistics
	7	Standard Scores and the Normal Distribution
	8	Comparing Means
Test 3: Thursday, November 19		
	9	Regression Analysis
	10	Longitudinal Analysis of Survey Data
Test 4: Thursday, December 10		

My furlough days: 9/30, 10/5, 10/19, 11/2, 11/20, 12/11. Though none of these are days when we meet, please note that, by agreement between the California State University and the California Faculty Association, I am forbidden to engage in any work on these days. Among other things, this includes sending or responding to emails. I’m not sure what will happen if I’m caught working, but I’m afraid to find out and, in any case, I had to promise in writing that I wouldn’t. (I’m not making this up.)

Please turn off all electronic devices before the start of class. Exception: recording of lectures is OK.