**POSC 4392 Research Methods for Political Science**  
**Summer II 2015 Independent Study**

Dr. Jon R. Taylor  
Meeting Time: Arranged  
Office: Political Science House, Room 203 Phone: (713) 525-3856  
Office Hours: 7:00am – 10:00am and 12:30pm – 5:00pm M – TH  
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**Required Text:**

None – You will provide me with a flash drive. In return, I will provide you with readings, lecture notes, and supplementary materials.

**Course Description:**

Research is an important component of political science; it enables us to uncover evidence, develop theories, and better understand how the political world operates. This independent study course will introduce you to some of the basic research tools in the political scientist’s “toolkit,” and discuss why and how certain tools are used to explore certain phenomena.

The course will also teach you to develop and evaluate sensible and systematic scientific research designs by addressing the ways in which data and theory intersect and examining how political scientists quantify, measure, and operationalize the concepts and variables that are key to understanding the political world.

By the end of this course, you will better understand the qualitative and quantitative techniques that are used within the field and will be able to explain why political scientists choose to use them. In this regard, you will have the opportunity to use data and statistical analysis to gain an appreciation for the methodological choices that researchers in the field make as they conduct research.

**Student Learning Objectives:**

- To provide students with the analytic tools that will help them understand and evaluate empirical Political Science research, especially that which relies on statistical methods.
- To help students think critically about scholarly and popular explanations for political issues by evaluating the evidence used to support these explanations.
- To improve students’ ability to pose and answer their own research questions.
**Exams and Grading:**

There will be two components to determine your grade in this independent study course: a series of exercises that will cover the approaches and ideas covered in class and a final exam. The following is the grading breakdown for the course:

- Exercises: 40%
- Final exam: 60%

I will discuss key points during our class meetings, but I expect active discussion and participation. Please read the assigned material in advance of our meetings. Be able to demonstrate familiarity with assigned readings and critical thinking ability.

During the Summer II Term, you will take part in several exercises. Each exercise requires that you demonstrate your familiarity with a section of the readings — and apply it to a small project. They will be given to you on Monday and due the following Monday.

**Class Rules:**

- Reading course assignments is expected
- Plagiarism and other forms of cheating will result in a failing grade.

**Academic Integrity:**

"It would have been better if he had never been born" – Mark 14:21.

All of the work you do in this course is expected to be your own. Absolutely no cheating or plagiarism (using someone else’s words or ideas without proper attribution) will be tolerated. Any cases of cheating or plagiarism will be handled according to university policy and reported to the University’s Academic Misconduct Committee.

As stated in the Academic Misconduct Code for the University of St. Thomas, academic misconduct includes: (a) cheating (using an authorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise), plagiarism, falsification of records, unauthorized possession of examinations, intimidation, and any and all other actions that may improperly affect the evaluation of a student’s academic performance or achievement; (b) assisting others in any such act; or (c) attempting to engage in such acts.

Plagiarism is using the work or another person and claiming it as your own. The most common types of plagiarism include:

- Using a paper or portion of a paper prepared by someone else;
• Quoting someone else’s language or words without proper quotation or citation; and
• Paraphrasing someone else’s ideas, framework, or insights without giving credit to the original author in a citation.

Academic misconduct in any form is unacceptable and suspected violations will be pursued aggressively.

Students with Disabilities:

Any student with a disability requiring accommodations in this course is encouraged to contact me after class or during office hours. Additionally, students will need to contact Counseling and Disability Services in Crooker Center. This office can be reached at (713) 525-2169 or 6953. If you have a documented disability that will impact your work in this class, please contact me to discuss your needs. Additionally, you will need to register with the Counseling and Disability Services Office in Crooker Center. This office can be reached at (713) 525-2169 or 6953.

Schedule (Subject to Change):

**Week 1:**
Welcome and introduction.
The scientific method in the social sciences
Ethics in social science research
   The Stanford Prison Experiment and research ethics
   http://www.lucifereffect.com

**Week 2:**
Issues of measurement: Validity
   *Exercise 1. Assessing the validity of an index*
Issues of measurement: “Operationalization”
   *Exercise 2. Conceptualizing and operationalizing variables*
Issues of measurement: Testing

**Week 3:**
Assessing causation
   *Exercise 3. The McDonald’s peace theory: cause or effect?*
Research design
   *Exercise 4. Developing a research design*
Sampling
Questionnaires
   *Exercise 5. Drafting a survey questionnaire*

**Week 4:**
Interviews
Field Research & Observation
Social capital and “Bowling Alone” http://www.bowlingalone.com/

**Week 5:**
Descriptive and Inferential Statistics: An Introduction to concepts covered in POSC 3301 Statistics for Political Science

*Final Examination*