

**POLITICAL SCIENCE 631:
RESEARCH METHODS**

ASSIGNMENT 1

DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE CLASS PERIOD ON FEBRUARY 8, 2021

Please attach this file to the assignment link on Blackboard with your answers typed directly into the document. Save as a Microsoft Word or PDF file only—Blackboard can only read these formats.

Questions 1-2 refer to chapter one of the *R Companion* book and require you to undertake some analysis using *R Studio*, which you should have downloaded to your desktop by class time.

1. The states dataset contains `abrtlaw10`, the number of restrictions that each state puts on access to an abortion. Values range from 0 (no restrictions) to 10 (ten restrictions). Use the **`freq`** command to obtain a frequency distribution and bar chart. (Hint: The states dataset does not require weighting, so you do not need to include a weight variable in the **`freq`** expression.)
 - a. Either copy and paste or take a screenshot of the graph and insert it here:
 - b. Following Chapter One's **`printC`** example, create a nicely formatted table of the `abrtlaw` frequency distribution in a word-processing file, such as Word. When you edit the table in your word processor, give it this title: "Number of Abortion Restrictions." Place the formatted table here (or, alternatively, if you're having issues or using a different word processing program you can take a screenshot and insert it here).
2. Each time you start an R session using the R package that bundles the functions and dataset used in this book, what expression must you type and run? Briefly explain why (see Andy Field's video if you need help with this explanation).
3. Research by the political scientist, Robert Putnam, has stimulated almost two decades of renewed interest in the role played by voluntary associations in American democracy. Putnam's work suggests that when people get involved in groups and help make collective decisions for the group, they develop a sense of political efficacy, the belief that they can affect collective decision-making outcomes. Heightened political efficacy, in turn, causes people to participate more in politics—voting at higher rates than people who are not involved in any groups. This explanation says that the causal relationship between the independent variable, group membership, and the dependent variable, turnout, is mediated by a causal mechanism (also referred to as an *intervening variable*, which also can be considered a "rival explanation" in some situations). What is the causal mechanism?
4. Go to the "all-class-cafe" on the POLS 631 Research Commons workspace and read the early posts by your instructor about the correlation between population density and party affiliation/voting. What is a causal mechanism (you only need to address one) suggested by the article? Explain this causal mechanism briefly.
5. What are the implications for Silver's arguments for the public's ability to understand quantitative information about the COVID-19 pandemic? Imagine that you are a public health administrator—how would you adjust your communications with the public given Silver's thesis? (You should provide a minimum of two paragraphs for this answer.)
6. Select one *empirical research* article published since 2000 in a journal in social science in your area of specialization (e.g., public administration, political science, public administration, communication studies, etc.) and do the following and *please do not be sloppy*—the purpose of this is to make sure you are crediting sources in the appropriate scholarly and professional way.

Provide the *complete* citation for the article (use Chicago Author-Date or for Communication Studies' students you may use your discipline's standard format). At the end of your citation, be sure to include a stable URL (e.g., DOI, PURL . . .) if available. If a stable URL is *not* available, attach a PDF file of the article (in Blackboard

Learn) along with this assignment. Beware that on some databases (such as Academic Search), there is a citation button in which you can "copy" a citation from a source you've found--but the Chicago Author-Date selection is really **NOT** Chicago Author-Date and will need some minor editing.

For a helpful guide to Chicago Author-Date citation style, go to the following:

<http://libguides.csuchico.edu/citingsources-chicago-author-date-style>.

For a helpful guide on determining whether an article is "empirical," go to the following:

<http://libguides.csuchico.edu/empirical>.

Use the article to answer the questions 7-10 below:

7. What is the research question? (You may pick the broad research question here)
8. What is the research hypothesis? (If there are several in the article, pick *one*. Please be as specific as possible—if you are not, it is probably not yet a hypothesis.)
9. What is an independent variable used to "test" this research hypothesis? (HINT: Make sure that the variable corresponds to your hypothesis that you described above in question 6.)
10. What is a dependent variable used to "test" this research hypothesis? (HINT: Again, make sure that the variable corresponds to your hypothesis that you described above in question 6).

NOTE: When you are asked to explain your answer for a question in the assignment above, this is a prompt to be sure to *thoroughly* answer the questions in ESSAY format and imagine you are explaining it to a non-expert, member of the public.