

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

POLITICAL SCIENCE RESEARCH METHODS  
**FINAL EXAMINATION**

Your final exam will have two parts: a Unit 3 test and a research design essay. This assignment sheet provides instructions for the research design essay.

**What resources will be used to write the essay?**

The research design essay will be written using materials from a public opinion survey fielded in October 2024 by Brightline Watch. This organization periodically surveys a representative sample of the American public and a large panel of political science experts, including your PSC 2019 instructor (<https://brightlinewatch.org/>).

*Ahead* of our final, you will need to review three items so that you can prepare an outline and some brief notes to consult during the test.

The first item is the organization's report summarizing results from its Wave 22 survey; the report discusses both the public survey and the results of its survey of experts:

<https://brightlinewatch.org/america-confronts-the-state-of-its-politics-in-2024/>

This document identifies many of the questions asked in the survey and the rationale behind them.

The other two items you will use to write the essay are the Wave 22 codebook and dataset, both of which are available on the course website (in the PPTs & Assignment folder; you want the "Final - BrightWatch survey materials").

Your essay will focus only on the public-at-large dataset. The only SPSS work required for this essay is that you will need to use the codebook, split file, and frequencies commands within SPSS's point-click-OK setup.

**What needs to go into the essay?**

- Start by identifying an interesting research question that could be answered using survey data from Brightline Watch's Wave 22 public opinion survey.

Your question should explore why some types of Americans do, think, or believe something that other Americans do not. You must describe the results of a frequency calculation for your dependent variable(s) to demonstrate that there is some disagreement for your key variable(s) of interest

- Develop a theoretical framework (one or more theories) that explains why we should expect different types of Americans to vary across your dependent variable.
- Specify the precise variables in the dataset that could operationalize your study's dependent and independent variables. Provide a brief explanation of how and why you would recode these variables.

- If your theory includes an expectation that the relationship between your independent variable(s) and dependent variable(s) varies for certain types of individuals (e.g, by gender or partisanship), you will need to specify and recode an intervening variable. However, you do *not* need to have a theory that includes an intervening factor, and most studies do not.
- Formulate multiple hypotheses to test your theory.
- Identify several control variables and explain why regression analyses would need to account for their effects. (You do *not* need to describe how to recode the control variables.)
- After splitting the dataset by your independent variables (one at a time) and running frequency calculations for your dependent variable, summarize what this initial analysis reveals about your hypotheses and theory.
- Conclude the essay by identifying the additional statistical methods, including regression analyses, that would be necessary to fully understand the relationship between your study's independent and dependent variables.

### **Guidelines for writing the essay during the testing period**

Plan on devoting 60-90 minutes to write this essay.

Your essay will be graded using the same criteria used to grade your in-class essay responses with the important caveat that the organization, degree to which you provide an answer to the whole question, and your quality of evidence should reflect the fact that you have been given the topic in advance. There will be no deductions for spelling and grammar issues.

As you write your essay, you MAY consult the relevant dataset and/or its questionnaire.

You also will be allowed to use an essay outline that you have prepared in advance provided that you adhere to the following rules:

- *Your essay's preparatory notes are in outline form and address only the essay question listed below. **You may NOT write the exam in advance.***
- *Your preparatory notes are limited to one side of a single three-by-five-inch notecard or piece of paper cut to this size.*
- *No other materials whatsoever are to be used during the exam, and you must submit your notecard when you turn in the essay.*

**Start your answer here:**

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