**PSC-4099  
Thesis Assignment #2:**

**Refined Research Topic with Operationalization of Variables**

**This assignment is due in electronic form Sunday, September 15 by 10:00pm. This date is so your instructor can look at it before our next class meeting. You** **need to bring a hard copy of this assignment to class on Tuesday.** To summit the assignment electronically, e-mail the work as *an attachment* (i.e. a pdf, doc, docx, or rtf formatted file) to [msetzler@highpoint.edu](mailto:msetzler@highpoint.edu). To be accepted as on-time work, *the subject line of the email must be:* ***psc4099 assignment 2.***

Please do your best work. You will receive one grade for the two assignments related to topic choice. Your work will be evaluated on the basis of effort and professionalism. A = Excellent in all respects; B = Good work with evident room for improvement; C = Minimally satisfactory work that obviously could be much stronger; D = Poor work. Late work on either topic assignment will result in a 10% per-day deduction for the combined grade.

The assignment requires you to elaborate on your research question and to provide more specifics about the dataset you will be using to answer the question. This assignment is meant to provide direction to your research project and to make sure that you have all of the basic ingredients to write a thesis. If you do this project well, you will have a good draft of the opening pages of your thesis.

Your work should build on the discussions we have had about your topic proposal (Professional Development Assignment #1). You are encouraged to use AI to improve your writing (Grammarly and AI proofing) and content (Google Scholar and perhaps Consensus) on this assignment. See the syllabus and Assignment #1 for guidelines.

**The assignment:** In a short essay, please answer the following questions:

1. What is the research question you will be attempting to answer? Why should it interesting to other social scientists and how will answering your question generate information that we don’t already know. The opening paragraphs of your thesis should answers these questions and show that you are engaging the previous literature (i.e., what you are finding with your work on Google Scholar and perhaps Consensus.app).
2. What *individual*-level political behavior or attitude do you want to explain? Recall, your topic must analyze individuals even if you are interested in making arguments about groups.
3. What are you expecting to find with your research, and why do you think that? If you plan on looking at individual attributes that may cause an attitude or behavior, which attributes do you think will be most important and why? If you are comparing how individual attributes predict attitudes or behaviors across groups (say gender, or race, or religious groups, or citizens from different countries), why do you think the “mediating” variable is important? (A mediating—aka, intervening variable—is when you think that the effect X has on Y, depends on whether a person has characteristic Z or not).
4. What are the broader implications of your research question? If you are a political science major, how does your research question related to politics, government, or policy? Or, if you are an INR major, how is this question related to your major?
5. What specific dataset(s) are you using, how many respondents that belong to the group in which you are interested are in the dataset?
6. Specifically, what question/s will you look at as your dependent variable(s) in the analysis? What percentage and number of the respondents are likely to have the behavior or attitude in which you are interested? (This is important to know because it tells us whether you have enough observations to use statistics to examine your research question; remember, if you are looking at a subgroup—e.g., the study is only about Republicans—you need to know how many people in that subgroup have the outcome in which you are interested.
7. What will be your independent variables(s)? How many people have each of the characteristics that you think will be important to predicting the outcome you are using as your dependent variable?
8. What variables will you need to control for? (Remember that you need to control for any obvious factors that are likely correlated to both your independent and dependent variables. For example, if you want to look at the correlation between gender and having a pro-choice/life position on abortion, you need to control for partisanship because gender is correlated with partisanship and partisanship is correlated with being pro-choice/life). Again, for the groups you will be looking at (in most cases, this will be everyone in the dataset), how many observations do you have for each of the control variables?