

POS 4734: RESEARCH METHODS IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

Department of Political Science
University of Florida
Fall 2016

INSTRUCTOR

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Office Hours: F 12:00pm-1:30pm

COURSE INFORMATION

Meeting Times:

- **M, W:** CSE E119 4th period (10:40am – 11:30am)
- **F:** CSE E231 4th period (10:40am – 11:30am)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Why do we call our discipline "political science"? What kinds of research do political scientists do, and how do they communicate that knowledge to one another? How do we know what we think we know? How do we measure political phenomena? How would we know if a new public policy "worked"? How do we analyze data, and what are good data to analyze? Are ethics as hard to define in "political science" as they are in "politics"?

This course aims in providing answers to the above questions, among others, by introducing students to the scientific way of thinking, analyzing, and evaluating political processes. Our discussions, the readings, and the various assignments will facilitate your becoming intelligent consumers of political science research, as well as help you become producers of your own research. The skills that you develop in the course will help you understand the literature that you read in substantive courses, help you distinguish between real research and meaningless rubbish, allow you to identify the benefits and drawbacks of empirical scholarship, enable you to better understand the assumptions behind each research design, introduce you to data management using a popular statistical package, help you find published research and data archives on topics that interest you, and familiarize you with some of the techniques used in individual and aggregate level analysis.

For many students, this will be an entirely different kind of course. Many undergraduate courses require you to become knowledgeable about a field, such as Comparative Politics, Political Behavior, Public Policy, American Politics, or International Relations. In this course, we are not focused on a particular field, but are mostly interested in understanding the methods that political scientists in all fields use to understand and build knowledge. Of course, new things can be both exciting and frightening. Any trepidation that you may have is best overcome by "feeling the fear, and doing it anyway." The excitement will come with the realization that this knowledge is empowering, in that it will enable you to find, read, and understand research on your own. You will also begin to produce this kind of research, which will give you a product of your own labors.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course is intended to provide students with the ability to:

- Critically evaluate the merits and shortcomings of Political Science research;
- Formulate research questions and appropriate research designs;
- Discuss the appropriateness of different research methods;
- Analyze political data.

COURSE ELEMENTS AND GRADE WEIGHTS

Class Participation	20%
Weekly Assignments (5)	10% (2% each)
Mini-Conference	20%
Final Exam	20%
Final Paper	30%

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

I) Class Participation

You are expected to attend all class meetings and be prepared for an in-depth discussion of the assigned course material. A portion of your final grade will be based on your participation. Note that your physical presence in the classroom (attendance) is not a substitute for active participation. Your grade will reflect both the quality of your contributions and your willingness to engage in the discussion. When participating you are expected not only to demonstrate a firm grasp of the assigned material, but also to challenge your peers and the instructor by emphasizing potential shortcomings in the readings and by asking critical questions. If you feel uncomfortable speaking in the class, make sure to compensate for that by discussing the readings with the instructor either during office hours or via email.

Attendance will be checked regularly. You are allowed to a maximum of two (2) unexcused absences for the duration of the course, so spend them wisely. Each additional unexcused absence will be penalized with 2% of your overall course grade. Absences due to illness are excused only when accompanied by a doctor's note. If you know you are going to miss a session for a reason that justifies your absence, inform the instructor via email beforehand.

II) Weekly Assignments

During the course of the semester you are required to complete 5 take-home weekly assignments. The deadlines for the assignments can be found in the class schedule below.

Most of these weekly assignments are simple and short exercises on the Stata software suite, meant to familiarize you further with its interface, syntax, and capabilities. For each assignment you will be presented with a prompt and a small data set to be used in the answer. Note that for some of the assignments there will be more than one path to an appropriate answer. Your assignment grade will factor in both your approach towards addressing the prompt and the amount of effort present in your submission.

Although these assignments are "take-home," I expect you to do your best on your own without seeking help from your peers, myself excluded. Plagiarism and collusion will not be tolerated and will be severely punished (see my policy regarding academic integrity below). If you require assistance or cannot complete an assignment you can always let me know *before* the submission deadline.

III) Mini-Conference

In lieu of a midterm exam you will have to participate in a mock mini-conference that will take place during Week 8 and Week 9. The goal of the mini-conference is to introduce you to the environment of professional discourse. For the mini-conference you are required to formulate and present a research question of your choice accompanied by a rudimentary research design. Both the question and the design need to be sent to the instructor and obtain approval by 10/7. You will then prepare a presentation of your proposed research that contains a succinct and concise research plan (.pdf or .ppt format, *10 slides max*).

The format will have as follows: you will be assigned to a 3-member panel according to your research interests. Panelists will have 5 minutes each to make their presentations to the rest of the class. You are expected to take extensive notes of your co-panelists presentations, which will then be shared with them and the instructor. This feedback should be positive and constructive. Your mini-conference grade will depend on both the quality of your presentation and the quality of your feedback.

III) Final Exam

The final exam will be administered on **December 7, 2016**. Students will be presented with five prompts, of which they will have to choose and write about two. The exam is cumulative, meaning that you are expected to apply everything you have learned throughout the course of the semester in answering the questions. There is no length limit or requirement in regards to your answers; you should provide as big or small an answer you wish, as long as it adequately addresses the question at hand. You are required, however, to bring a blank bluebook. Please note that in case you miss the exam, you will be allowed to take a make-up if and only if there is a significant reason for your absence, accompanied by appropriate documentation. Also, please take into consideration [this paper](#) describing the dangers of final exams.

IV) Final Paper

One final paper is required for this class (10-15 pages, double-spaced). The paper may take one of the following forms, all of which need to be pre-approved by the instructor:

- A thorough review of a recently published article;
- A comprehensive research plan for a specific empirical question;
- An empirical analysis of a phenomenon of your choice.

The final paper is due on **December 4, 2016**. More details about the final paper are provided at the end of this syllabus.

COURSE POLICIES

I) Late Assignments

A weekly assignment is late if it has not been submitted (via email to the instructor) by midnight on its due date. A final paper is late if it has been submitted on Canvas after December 4, 2016. In both cases, a late assignment will be downgraded a letter grade even if it is only a minute late. An additional letter grade will be deducted for each additional day the assignment is late up to a maximum of three days, after which it will receive a 0. You are strongly encouraged to email/upload your assignment early so that you will avoid last minute complications. Excuses for late assignments will not be accepted.

Please note that passing the course requires you to complete all assignments. I generally do not assign “incompletes,” unless presented with extraordinary circumstances, given proper documentation.

II) Professional Conduct

Always be courteous and polite towards your peers and the instructor, addressing them with respect and in a professional manner. Although you are entitled to your own views and opinions, the use of offensive/derogatory language will not be tolerated.

The use of laptops/tablets is allowed during our meetings only if they are used to take notes or review readings. If I detect that you are using your device in any other capacity (i.e. emails, facebook, twitter etc.) you will be asked to leave the classroom and no attendance points will be awarded to you for that meeting. Repeat offenders will experience a significant reduction of their overall course grade

The use of cellphones (talking/texting) is absolutely prohibited during our meetings. Professional etiquette dictates that your cellphone is silent and out of reach when in class. If it rings and I hear it, you will be asked to set it on silent. If it rings

again you will be asked to leave the classroom.

III) Academic Integrity

As a University of Florida student you are expected to abide by the [UF Student Conduct & Honor Code](#). This means that you have pledged to avoid giving or receiving unauthorized aid when performing an academic task. Possible violations of the Honor Code include – but are not limited to – plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, and misrepresentation.

I employ a zero tolerance policy in regards to academic dishonesty. If you cheat you will get an F for the course, while I reserve the right to initiate further disciplinary action against you depending on the severity of your offense. If you are unsure whether a specific action constitutes a violation of the Honor Code make sure to ask the instructor or review the Academic Honesty guidelines at: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/index.php/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code>.

IV) Disabilities

Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation.

V) Counseling

Resources are available on campus for students having personal problems or lacking career and academic goals, which interfere with their academic performance. These resources include:

- University Counseling Center, 301 Peabody Hall, 392-1575, personal and career counseling;
- Student Mental Health, Student Health Care Center, 392-1171, personal counseling.

COURSE MATERIALS

There are two required texts for this course, available for purchase in the UF Bookstore or from your favorite online retailer. (Note that both textbooks are available to rent from amazon.com in significantly discounted prices, the downside being that you will have to return them by the end of the semester.) We will supplement these texts with scholarly articles (available online) and/or with scanned chapters from other sources (available in e-reserves).

- Johnson, Janet Buttolph, H. T. Reynolds, and Jason D. Mycoff. 2015. Political Science Research Methods (8th Edition). CQ Press. (Abbr. PSRM)
- Acock, Alan C. 2014. A Gentle Introduction to Stata (4th Edition). Stata Press. **Important Note:** Do not purchase the 5th edition (newest) as it is much more expensive and not available for rent, while almost identical to the 4th edition. (Abbr. GIS)

CLASS MEETING FORMAT

Lecture/discussion sessions will take place on Mondays and Wednesdays. On Fridays we will hold our lab meetings where we will practice on the Stata software suite. Make sure you carry your UFID to obtain access to the CSE E231 computer lab. As per lab policies, food and open container drinks are prohibited.

For assignments and papers you are able to access Stata from your personal computer using [UF apps](#). If you encounter any technical issues please contact the [UF Computing Helpdesk directly](#), not the instructor.

CLASS SCHEDULE

PART I. INTRODUCTION TO THE SCIENTIFIC STUDY OF POLITICAL PROCESSES

Week 1 (August 22-26): Overview

- M. Overview of the course. No readings.
- W. Questions and Answers.
 - a. PSMR Chapter 1.
- F. Lab Session: Welcome to Stata.
 - a. GIS Chapter 1.

Week 2 (August 29 - September 2): The Science in Political “Science”

- M. Thinking empirically.
 - a. PSMR Chapter 2.
 - b. “Introduction,” in Most, Benjamin A. and Harvey Starr. 1989. *Inquiry, Logic, and International Politics*. University of South Carolina Press (pp. 1-22). Canvas.
- W. Anatomy of a research article.
 - a. Carter, David B. and Paul Poast. (*Forthcoming*). Why Do States Build Walls? Political Economy, Security, and Border Stability. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. Canvas.
- F. **No class meeting – APSA Annual Conference.**

PART II. CONDUCTING RESEARCH

Week 3 (September 5-9): The Research Structure

- M. **No class meeting- Labor Day.**
- W. Developing explanations.
 - a. PSMR Chapter 3 and Chapter 4.
- F. Lab Session: Entering Data.
 - a. GIS Chapter 2.

Week 4 (September 12-16): Operationalization and Measurement

M. The importance of definitions and measures.

- a. PSMR Chapter 5.

W. Examples.

- a. Pp. 166-177 in Daniel M. Jones, Stuart A. Bremer and J. David Singer. 1996. " Militarized Interstate Disputes, 1816-1992: Rationale, Coding Rules, and Empirical Patterns." *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 15(2). Canvas.
- b. "Appendix to Chapter 4," in Most, Benjamin A. and Harvey Starr. 1989. *Inquiry, Logic, and International Politics*. University of South Carolina Press (pp. 92-96). Canvas.
- c. Page 9 in "Codebook: Inclusion Criteria and Variables (2016)." Global Terrorism Database. Canvas.
- d. Pp. 963-965 in McDonald, Michael P. and Samuel L. Popkin. 2001. "The Myth of the Vanishing Voter." *American Political Science Review* 95(4). Canvas.
- e. Pp. 1-18 in Bernhard, Michael, Ömer Faruk Örsün, and Reşat Bayer. *Unpublished Manuscript*. "Democratization in Conflict Studies: How Conceptualization affects Operationalization and Testing Outcomes." Canvas.

F. Lab Session: Preparing Data.

- a. GIS Chapter 3.

Week 5 (September 19-23): Research Design

M. Experiments.

- a. PSMR Chapter 6.

W. Sampling.

- a. PSMR Chapter 7.

F. Lab Session: Output.

- a. GIS Chapter 4.

Week 6 (September 26-30): Data Collection I

M. Primary data.

- a. PSMR Chapter 8.

W. Secondary data.

- a. PSMR Chapter 9.

F. Lab Session: Graphs and descriptive statistics.

- a. GIS Chapter 5.

Week 7 (October 3-7): Data Collection II

- M. Survey research.
 - a. PSMR Chapter 10.
- W. The complete picture.
 - a. PSMR Chapter 15.
- F. **No class meeting - Homecoming.**

Week 8 (October 10-14): Mini-Conference I

- M. Panels 1-2.
- W. Panels 3-4.
- F. Lab Session: Bivariate tests and graphs.
 - a. GIS Chapter 6.

Week 9 (October 17-21): Mini-Conference II

- M. Panels 5-6.
- W. Panels 7-8.
- F. **No class meeting - PSS Annual Conference.**

PART III. FROM THEORY TO (GOOD?) PRACTICE

Week 10 (October 24-28): Ethics in Political Science Research

- M. Using humans as subjects.
 - a. Hatemi, Peter K., and Rose McDermott. 2011. "The Normative Implications of Biological Research." *PS-Political Science & Politics* 44 (2):325-329. Canvas.
 - b. Humphreys, Macartan. 2014. "[How to make field experiments more ethical.](#)" The Washington Post Monkey Cage (2 November 2014).
 - c. King, Gary, and Melissa Sands. Working Paper. "[How Human Subjects Research Rules Mislead You and Your University, and What to Do About It](#)".
- W. Fabrication and Misrepresentation.
 - a. LaCour, Michael J. and Donald P. Green. *Retracted*. "When Contact Changes Minds: An Experiment for Transmission of Support for Gay Equality." *Science* 348. Canvas.

- b. Aschwanden, Christie and Maggie Koerth-Baker. 2016. "[How Two Grad Students Uncovered An Apparent Fraud — And A Way To Change Opinions On Transgender Rights.](#)" FiveThirtyEight.
 - c. Carey, Benedict. 2015. "[Study Using Gay Canvassers Erred in Methods, Not Results, Author Says.](#)" New York Times.
 - d. Leu, Chelsea. 2015. "[Giving Credence: Why is So Much Reported Science Wrong, and What Can Fix That?](#)" California Magazine.
 - e. Van Noorden, Richard. 2015. "[Political science's problem with research ethics.](#)" Nature.
- F. Lab Session: Tests of means.
- a. GIS Chapter 7.

Week 11 (October 31 – November 4): Evaluating Contemporary Scholarship I

- M. 2000-2005.
- a. Rosato, Sebastian. 2003. "The Flawed Logic of Democratic Peace Theory." *American Political Science Review* 97(4): 585-402. Canvas.
 - b. Goren, Paul. 2005. "Party Identification and Core Political Values." *American Journal of Political Science* 49(4): 881-896. Canvas.
 - c. Hensel, Paul R. and Sara McLaughlin-Mitchell. 2005. "Issue Indivisibility and Territorial Claims." *GeoJournal* 64(4): 275-285. Canvas.
- W. 2006-2010.
- a. Gibler, Douglas M. 2008. "The Costs of Reneging: Reputation and Alliance Formation." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 52(3): 426-454. Canvas.
 - b. Nichter, Simeon. 2008. "Vote Buying or Turnout Buying? Machine Politics and the Secret Ballot." *American Political Science Review* 102(1): 19-31. Canvas.
 - c. Fish, Steven S. and Omar Choudry. 2007. "Democratization and Economic Liberalization in the Postcommunist World." *Comparative Political Studies* 40(3): 254-282. Canvas.
- F. Lab Session: Bivariate regression.
- a. GIS Chapter 8.

Week 12 (November 7-11): Evaluating Contemporary Scholarship II

- M. 2011-2015.
- a. Gerber, Alan S. et al. 2011. "How Large and Long-lasting Are the Persuasive Effects of Televised Campaign Ads? Results from a Randomized Field Experiment." *American Political Science Review* 105(1): 136-150. Canvas.
 - b. Mousseau, Michael. 2012. "A Market-Capitalist or a Democratic Peace?" in *What Do We Know About War* (ed. J. A. Vasquez), Rowman & Littlefield. Canvas.

- c. Gonzales-Ocantos, Ezequiel et al. 2012. "Vote Buying and Social Desirability Bias: Experimental Evidence from Nicaragua." *American Journal of Political Science* 56(1): 202-217. Canvas.

W. 2016.

- d. Tezcur, Gunes Murat. 2016. "Ordinary People, Extraordinary Risks: Participation in an Ethnic Rebellion." *American Political Science Review* 110(2): 247-264. Canvas.
- e. Rogowski, Jon. 2016. "Presidential Influence in an Era of Congressional Dominance." *American Political Science Review* 110(2): 325-341. Canvas.
- f. Lemke, Douglas and Jeff Carter. 2016. "Birth Legacies, State Making, and War." *Journal of Politics* 78(2): 497-511. Canvas.

F. No class meeting - Veteran's Day.

PART IV. ALTERNATIVES AND REFLECTIONS

Week 13 (November 14-18): Pluralism

M. Case studies.

- a. George, Alexander L. and Andrew Bennett. 2005. "Case Studies and Theory Development" in *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. MIT Press.

W. Combining methods.

- a. Mahoney, James and Gary Goertz. 2006. "A Tale of Two Cultures: Contrasting Quantitative and Qualitative Research." *Political Analysis* 14: 227-249. Canvas.
- b. Flyvbjerg, Bent. 2006. "Five Misunderstanding About Case-Study Research." *Qualitative Inquiry* 12: 219-245. Canvas.

F. Lab Session: Multiple regression.

- a. GIS Chapter 10.

Week 14 (November 21-25): Challenges

M. Reliability of existing data and methodological literacy.

- a. Morgan, T. Clifton. 2013. "Presidential Address: The secret ingredient on Iron Chef—road kill!" *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 30(1): 3-10. Canvas.
- b. Saideman, Steve. 2012. "[When Political Scientists Do Not Understand Political Science.](#)" Duck of Minerva.

W. No class meeting - Thanksgiving.

F. No class meeting - Thanksgiving.

Week 15 (November 28 - December 2): Wrap-up and Exam Preparation I

- M. The importance of the research question, empirical puzzle, and theoretical framework.
- W. The appropriateness of a research design.
- F. Lab Session: Logistic regression
 - a. GIS Chapter 11.

Week 16 (December 5-7): Wrap-up and Exam Preparation II

- M. Reevaluating methods in Political Science.
- W. Final Exam - Bring a Bluebook.**

WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS DUE DATES

- 10/3: Assignment #1 due.
- 10/17: Assignment #2 due.
- 10/31: Assignment #3 due.
- 11/7: Assignment #4 due.
- 11/21: Assignment #5 due.

GRADING SCALE

- A =93.00+
- A- =90.00-92.99
- B+ =87.00-89.99
- B =83.00-86.99
- B- =80.00-82.99
- C+ =77.00-79.99
- C =73.00-76.99
- C- =70.00-72.99
- D+ =67.00-69.99
- D =63.00-66.99
- D- =60.00-62.99
- E =59.99 and below

For information of UF grading policy see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

FINAL PAPER

The final paper gives you the opportunity to apply the knowledge you have acquired on evaluating contemporary scholarship, preparing a first draft of your senior thesis, or take a closer look at a research topic of your choice. To this end, you are presented with three format options, each of which accompanied by specific requirements and expectations. These options are:

- A thorough review of a recently published article;
- A comprehensive research plan for a specific empirical question;
- An empirical analysis of a phenomenon of your choice.

Details

1) Article Review

You are to choose an article on your favorite topic and write a comprehensive review/critique of the research plan and methodology presented. The review should be divided to two major sections. The first should be concerned with the research question, puzzle, and theoretical framework (arguments, logical mechanisms, hypotheses). The second is expected to be a discussion and assessment of the research design. You should examine the appropriateness of the methodological tools and data utilized and offer your comments on data sources, concepts, operationalizations, measurements, and the presentation of the results.

Your mindset during this exercise should be that of a journal reviewer. As such you are also expected to identify potential logical or methodological shortcomings in the published work you chose to review and offer you own constructive criticism and advice. Keep in mind that I do not expect you to uncover a major statistical flaw in a published article. You should rather focus on perceived weaknesses in regards to the research design and execution.

When choosing your preferred paper you are strongly encouraged to use articles published in highly regarded academic journals or books published by respectable presses (such as the ones in this syllabus). If you are unsure about the reliability or appropriateness of a source, consult the instructor. Articles should not be more than 10 years old.

2) Research Plan

You are to develop and write a research proposal that addresses a clearly formulated research question of your choice. The first part of the proposal should include the research question, a justification of the importance of the question to the discipline, a very limited literature review that is relevant to the subject, a brief theory section, and no less than three theoretically derived hypotheses. The second and most important part should contain a comprehensive research design.

A great research design should be comprised of a review of the data and methods you believe are necessary to answer your question. I expect you to delve deep into the issues of concepts, measures, and data reliability in addition to discussing potential challenges that may hinder the completion of your project. Your paper should end with a detailed description of your methodological approach. In short, the only element you are to exclude from your paper is the actual analysis.

3) Empirical Analysis

This paper is geared towards students who have already begun working on a project – as part of the requirements for another course or your senior thesis – but did not have the chance to perform the actual analysis. At first, you are expected to formally present your data and produce descriptive statistics. Then you are to run at least three multivariate regression models of your choice and present your results both in professionally formatted tables and verbally. Finally, you should proceed to interpret your results and discuss whether they support or reject your theoretical expectations.

For this final paper format you are expected to be in frequent contact with me so that I will be able to guide, advise, and assist you in every step of your empirical analysis.

Technical Notes

The final paper is expected to be between 10 and 15 pages long (typed, double-spaced, 12 pt. font, 1 inch margin on all sides), excluding supplementary materials such as a cover page, bibliography, or appendices. The page requirement is not suggestive or amenable; papers shorter than the minimum/longer than the maximum number of pages will be penalized. You can either use the Harvard or the Chicago style of citation. **The paper must be submitted on e-learning by 11:59pm on December 4, 2016** (see my policy on late assignments).