

POS 4734 Section 3981 - Fall 2015
 Tuesday 7 (1:55 -2:45 pm), Weil 408D
 Thursday 7-8 (1:55 - 3:50 pm), Mat 016

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Office Hours:
 208 Anderson Hall
 Tuesdays 3:00-4:30 pm; Wednesdays 10:30
 am - 12 noon

Research Methods in Political Science

Goal of the course

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"?

During the course of the semester, we will discuss these issues and others. Our discussions, the readings, various assignments, the midterm and final exams, and the research paper 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, 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 good 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 more 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.

Requirements

In order to meet these goals, participants in the seminar will be required to

- **Attend and participate (5%).** Every person should come to class prepared to comment on the assigned readings, and help others to understand the concepts presented in the readings and assignments. Research is not a spectator sport, so you should expect me to ask for your contributions on a regular basis. Some time in class will be devoted to lecture, but your participation in this course is expected to be that of an "active learner". Multiple absences seriously jeopardize the prospect for successful completion of the course. If it appears that the class is continually unprepared to discuss the assigned readings, I may use quizzes to assess (and encourage) preparedness. These quizzes will be incorporated into this portion of the grade.
- **Occasional assignments (30% cumulative).** Some assignments are short essays, and others are lab exercises using data. All completed assignments must represent each participant's own and sole work, unless otherwise directed. Some assignments will be submitted hardcopy in class, but most will be submitted online via Canvas.
- **Complete a Midterm Examination (20%).** tentatively, October 15
- **Complete a Final Examination (20%).** Thursday, December 17, 3:00 to 5:00 pm - The date and time for the final exam were assigned to this class by the UF Registrar in order to assure that all students have time to prepare for all of their exams and avoid (most) exam conflicts. Plan to be on campus at this time, and do not ask to take the exam early or late, unless you have an exam conflict that is recognized by the UF Registrar. Please advise parents, spouses, fairy godparents, and others who may be making travel plans for you of your final exam schedule. If you have unavoidable plans to be out of Gainesville on December 17, you should consider dropping the course.
- **Write a Research Paper (25%).** Each participant will be required to submit a research paper. Papers will be judged on readability, the appropriateness of the research question, the suitability of the design for that question, the interpretation of

the analysis, and (if appropriate) the feasibility of extending the analysis in an Honors Thesis. Guidelines for the paper are posted [here](#). **Due December 8.**

Grading Scale:

Lower boundaries for grades are:

		B+	85.0%	C+	75.0%	D+	65.0%
A	91.0%	B	81.0%	C	71.0%	D	61.0%
A-	88.0%	B-	78.0%	C-	68.0%	D-	58.0%

Note that 84.97% is less than 85.0%, and is therefore a "B".

Rhythm

We will usually begin discussion of the weekly reading assignments on Thursday, and wrap up that discussion (if necessary) on the following Tuesday.

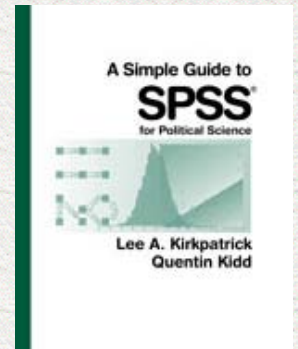
On Tuesday, we will usually meet in the computer lab in [Weil 408D](#), where we will explore applications in SPSS, the data analysis system that we will be using during the course of the semester.

Any written assignments following up on those discussions will be due on the following Thursday.

Readings and Resources



- Johnson, Janet Buttolph and H. T. Reynolds. 2012. *Political Science Research Methods*. Seventh Edition. CQ Press. [ISBN 978-1-60871-689-0](#)
- Kirkpatrick, Lee A. and Quentin Kidd. 2013. *A Simple Guide to SPSS® for Political Science*. Wadsworth Cengage. [ISBN 978-1-11135-379-7](#)
- You will also be required to access numerous journal articles, which are generally available electronically through access to Canvas. There will also be a coursepack available with the same readings available at Target Copy.
- You will also learn some basic data analysis using SPSS, which is available in the computer lab in Weil 408D.



Students should load this program onto a laptop or tablet (with wireless capability) that they can bring to class when announced. SPSS is available

- in the [UF Apps](#) package (free, and can be used on a Windows, Mac, or tablet, but can be slow)
- for lease (to November 30 plus 60 day grace period) from [UF Software Services](#) for use on your laptop or home computer (\$35 plus tax)
- for six-month lease from [Onthehub](#) for use on your laptop or home computer (\$38 + \$4.99 download fee)
- in the [Academic Technology labs](#) around campus (free, but you will also need a version on your laptop or tablet that you can bring to class).

- Canvas - I will also post some materials, assignments, assignment inboxes, and grades on the class E-Learning - Canvas site. Log in at <http://lss.at.ufl.edu>
- listserv - Registered students in the class are enrolled on the class listserv. Messages from the listserv are sent to students' Gatorlink email addresses (eg., youhoo@ufl.edu), and students should check that email regularly.

Miscellaneous stuff

Students requesting classroom accommodation for testing or completing assignments 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 me when requesting accommodation. Please do so by September 3.

Please do not phone me to discuss a grade over the phone. You are welcome to call to schedule an appointment, but please refrain from asking about your grade directly over the phone. This helps me protect your statutory rights to privacy, as we are generally unable to verify your identity over the phone.

As a reminder, students at the University of Florida have adopted and are bound by the [Honor Code and Honor Pledge](#), which states, in part,

"Plagiarism includes but is not limited to:

- 1. Quoting oral or written materials including but not limited to those found on the internet, whether published or unpublished, without proper attribution.
- 2. Submitting a document or assignment which in whole or in part is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment not authored by the student. ...

A student shall not use unauthorized materials or resources in an academic activity. Unauthorized materials or resources shall include:

- 1. Any paper or project authored by the student and presented by the student for the satisfaction of any academic requirement if the student previously submitted substantially the same paper or project to satisfy an academic requirement and did not receive express authorization to resubmit the paper or project. ..."

The following is a tentative calendar, and dates on assignments are especially subject to revision. Readings marked with an asterisk (*) are included in the Target Copy coursepack and on Canvas (under Files).

Calendar - Updates or revisions to the calendar will be announced in class and on Canvas.

August 25	Introduction to the course: What kinds of research do political scientists do? How do they present their work?
August 27	Anatomy of a Research Article Read: Johnson and Reynolds, Chapters 1 and 2 * Hall, Melinda Gann. 1992. "Electoral-Politics and Strategic Voting in State Supreme Courts." <i>Journal of Politics</i> 54 (2, May): 427-446. On Thursday, August 27, be prepared to discuss: (1) Describe Hall's article, outlining its component parts. What is Hall's main "theory"? Does she have a "theory", in the sense that term is used by Johnson and Reynolds (Chapter 2) ? (2) What are Hall's hypotheses? How does she test them?
September 1	Lab: An Introduction to SPSS Read and Do: Kirkpatrick and Kidd, Chapter 1 In Lab Assignment Due
	Researchers as Readers: Literature Review Meet in Library West 212. Bring your laptops with wireless connections. Read: Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 3 * Knopf, Jeffrey W. 2006. "Doing a Literature Review." <i>PS-Political Science & Politics</i> 39 (1, January): 127-132. Followup Assignment Due (Sep 10; 5%) - Write a short literature review that reviews one of the following

optional journal articles, at least one journal article which was cited by the selected article, and at least one journal article that cited the selected article. Your review should explain whether the ideas and methods represented in the three (or more) articles are cumulative, and if so, how the ideas (or methods) from later articles were developed from ideas in earlier articles. Your review should close with your thoughts on avenues for future research in the subfield. I expect good papers will be four to five pages.

September 3

Optional journal articles:

Boettcher, William A., III, and Michael D. Cobb. 2009. "'Don't Let Them Die in Vain' Casualty Frames and Public Tolerance for Escalating Commitment in Iraq." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 53 (5, October): 677-697.

Koch, Jeffrey W. 2000. "Do Citizens Apply Gender Stereotypes to Infer Candidates' Ideological Orientations?" *Journal of Politics* 62 (2, 2000): 414-429.

Mitchell, Sara McLaughlin. 2002. "A Kantian System? Democracy and Third-Party Conflict Resolution." *American Journal of Political Science* 46 (4, October): 749-759.

Alternative assignment:

If you are writing a thesis and none of the optional articles are related to your thesis, another option is available to you. You can tell me your thesis topic, and I will add one article to the optional list that is related to your thesis topic (my choice), and you may use that article as the "selected article" your literature review.

If you elect this option, email me your thesis topic no later than 10:40 am, September 5.

September 8

Lab: SPSS Options (Selecting the data that you want)

Read and Do: Kirkpatrick and Kidd, Chapter 2
In Lab Assignment Due

Researchers as Theorists: Hypotheses, Concepts, and Variables

September 10

Read: Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 4

Be prepared to discuss: What are the characteristics of good hypotheses? What is Hall's (1993) unit of analysis?

Lab: Datasets (ICPSR, Quality of Government, and Dataverses)

September 15

Followup Assignment Due (Sept 22; 4%): Find an existing dataset somewhere

- in the ICPSR archive (www.icpsr.umich.edu)
- American National Election Study (www.electionstudies.org)
- Quality of Government Institute data (<http://www.qog.pol.gu.se/>)
- or a publicly available dataset you have found in the readings

Propose two hypotheses that you could test with that dataset. For each hypothesis, tell me

1. The dataset that you are proposing to use
2. The unit of analysis
3. The independent variable(s)
4. The dependent variable(s)

Researchers as Counters: Measurement

September 17

Read: Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 5

* Karp, Jeffrey A., and David Brockington. 2005. "Social Desirability and Response Validity: A Comparative Analysis of Overreporting Voter Turnout in Five Countries." *Journal of Politics* 67: 825-40.

Be prepared to discuss: What are the principal desirable characteristics of social science measures? What are the differences between those characteristics? What measurement issues are important in developing good measures of voter turnout? Do Hall's measures have desirable characteristics? How do you know, or how could you know?

Lab: One Variable at a Time (Univariate Statistics: Frequencies, Measures of Central Tendency, Measures of Dispersion)

September 22	<p>Read and Do: Kirkpatrick and Kidd, Chapter 4.</p> <p>Followup Assignment Due (Sep 29; 3%): For each of the following variables in the designated datasets, (1) identify the unit of analysis and (2) present appropriate univariate statistics (either frequencies or descriptives) to describe the univariate distribution.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The feeling thermometer for Sarah Palin in the 2008 American National Election Study. • The Freedom House Political Rights measure (fh_pr) in the Quality of Government basic dataset (http://www.qog.pol.gu.se/data/datadownloads/qogbasicdata/) • The percent of state legislatures that are women (WOMENLEG) in the State Politics and Policy Quarterly dataset (http://academic.udayton.edu/sppq-TPR/tpr_data_sets.html)
September 24	<p style="text-align: center;">Researchers as manipulators: Experiments</p> <p>Read: Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 6 (pp. 165 - 193)</p> <p>* Majeski, Stephen J. and Shane Fricks. 1995. "Conflict and Cooperation in International Relations." <i>Journal of Conflict Resolution</i> 39 (4, December): 622-645.</p> <p>* King, David C. and Richard E. Matland. 2003. "Sex and the Grand Old Party - an Experimental Investigation of the Effect of Candidate Sex on Support for a Republican Candidate." <i>American Politics Research</i> 31 (6, November): 595-612.</p> <p>Optional</p> <p>Kinder, Donald R., and Thomas R. Palfrey. 1993. "On Behalf of an Experimental Political Science." In <i>Experimental Foundations of Political Science</i>. Eds. Donald R. Kinder, and Thomas R. Palfrey. Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press. pp. 1-39.</p> <p>Be prepared to discuss: What are the essential characteristics of an experiment, and what are the basic strengths and weaknesses of an experimental research design as compared to non-experimental designs? Evaluate those strengths and weaknesses with respect to the assigned articles. How is the independent variable manipulated, and how is the dependent variable measured? Is Hall (1992) an experiment? Why or why not?</p>
September 29	<p style="text-align: center;">Lab: Bivariate Relationships (Crosstabs) and How to Read a Table</p> <p>Read and Do: Kirkpatrick and Kidd, Chapter 5. In Lab Exercise</p>
October 1	No class (ICPSR Biennial Meetings)
October 6	<p style="text-align: center;">Lab: Replication, Replication</p> <p>In Lab Exercise: Replicate the King and Matland findings using crosstabulations and controlled comparisons in their dataset.</p>
October 8	<p style="text-align: center;">Researchers drawing inferences: Observational Designs</p> <p>Read: Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 6 (pp. 194 - 221)</p> <p>* Fuhrmann, Matthew, and Michael C Horowitz. 2015. "When Leaders Matter: Rebel Experience and Nuclear Proliferation." <i>Journal of Politics</i> 77: 72-87.</p> <p>* Stratmann, Thomas and Martin Baur. 2002. "Plurality Rule, Proportional Representation, and the German Bundestag: How Incentives to Pork-Barrel Differ across Electoral Systems." <i>American Journal of Political Science</i> 46 (3, July): 506-514.</p> <p>Be prepared to discuss: What are the basic strengths and weaknesses of a quasi-experimental research design and a case-study design as compared to an experimental design? Are Stratmann and Baur (2002) and Fuhrmann and Horowitz (2005) high in internal validity, external validity, neither, or both?</p>
October 13	Catch up before Midterm
October 15	Midterm Exam

	Go over Midterm Exam; Discuss Research Paper requirements
October 20	Followup Assignment Due (October 27; 4%) - Submit a research proposal for your final paper. Your proposal should have an introductory paragraph (or two) stating the research problem that your paper will address, propose at least two hypotheses that will be empirically tested in the paper, identify a dataset that will be used, and identify measures for the independent, dependent, and control variables to be used in the test.
	Researchers as Misers: Sampling
October 22	<p>Read: Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 7</p> <p>* Dolan, Kathleen and Lynn E. Ford. 1997. "Change and Continuity among Women State Legislators: Evidence from Three Decades." <i>Political Research Quarterly</i> 50: 137-51.</p> <p>Be prepared to discuss: When should researchers avoid sampling? Why do researchers have to sample? Did Dolan and Ford use a sample of legislators, or did they use a population? Why? Was their choice appropriate?</p>
October 27	Lab: Sampling errors
	In lab exercise: What affects sampling error?
	Researchers as lurkers and intruders: Observation
October 29	<p>Read: Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 8</p> <p>* Fenno, Richard F., Jr. 1978. <i>Homestyle: House Members in Their Districts</i>. Boston: Little Brown. Introduction (xi to xvi) and Appendix (pp. 249-295)</p> <p>Be prepared to discuss: Are there any advantages or disadvantages to participant observation techniques to gather data? Do these strategies pose any threats to the internal validity of the research design?</p> <p>Followup Assignment Due (Nov 5; 5%)- Observe a public meeting. This can be any meeting of a legislature, legislative committee, commission, local board, or any other public agency that you have the right to attend by virtue of your citizenship. Examples of acceptable meetings are the Florida House of Representatives, the U.S. House Committee on Energy and Commerce, the Boynton Beach City Commission, or the Alachua County Recreation and Open Space Advisory Committee. You may, but are not required to, observe a public meeting in your hometown. The Sunday <i>Gainesville Sun</i> usually lists upcoming public meetings in the City of Gainesville and Alachua County. Examples of unacceptable meetings are Student Government, its committees, other student or UF groups, or neighborhood property owners association meetings.</p> <p>This website lists public meetings in the City of Gainesville: http://www.cityofgainesville.org/GOVERNMENT/ClerkOfTheCommission/NoticeofMeetings/tabid/372/Default.aspx</p> <p>This website lists public meetings in Alachua County: http://meetingdocs.alachuacounty.us/meetings/</p> <p>Write a short essay which (a) describes the setting of the meeting, (b) describes your observation role (using a role as defined by one of the readings), and (c) discusses whether the behavior of the meeting's participants varies by some independent variable or variables (eg.: gender, issue type, time). Does your observation of this case tend to confirm a pre-existing theoretical expectation, infirm a pre-existing theoretical expectation, and/or help build theory by induction?</p>
November 3	Lab: How significant are significance tests?
	<p>Read and Do: Kirkpatrick and Kidd, Chapter 6.</p> <p>In Lab Exercise</p>
	Researchers as diggers: Content Analysis and Aggregate Data
November 5	<p>Read: Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 9</p> <p>* Hayes, Danny, and Jennifer L. Lawless. 2015. "As Local News Goes, So Goes Citizen Engagement: Media, Knowledge, and Participation in US House Elections." <i>Journal of Politics</i> 77: 447-62.</p> <p>Be prepared to discuss: What kinds of research designs are employed in this week's readings? Where did the researchers dig up their data, and are the data and measures appropriate for the questions posed in the article? Is this</p>

	research stronger in internal validity or external validity, and why?
	Lab: Correlations (and why that might or might not be causation)
November 10	Read and Do: Kirkpatrick and Kidd, Chapter 9 In Lab Exercise
	Researchers as interrogators: Survey Analysis
November 12	<p>Read: Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 10</p> <p>* Javeline, Debra. 1999. "Response Effects in Polite Cultures: A Test of Acquiescence in Kazakhstan." <i>Public Opinion Quarterly</i> 63: 1-28.</p> <p>Be prepared to discuss: What are the challenges in constructing survey instruments posed by Javeline? What strategies does she propose to address those challenges? Do these strategies aim to improve validity, reliability, sampling, or what?</p> <p>Assignment Due (November 19; paper submission; 1%)- Print the survey. (You'll need the Acrobat Reader, if you don't already have it.)</p> <p>Pick a person to interview by phone (this can be a sample of convenience), and interview the person using this questionnaire. Record the forced choice responses by circling the number of the response. Record the open-ended responses by filling in the blank, or by verbatim transcript of the respondent's answers. Be sure to record the start time, the end time, and the respondent's first name in the appropriate places on the questionnaire.</p>
	Lab: Regression
November 17	Read and Do: Kirkpatrick and Kidd, Chapter 10 In Lab Exercise
	Researchers Putting Things Together
November 19	Read: Johnson and Reynolds, Chapters 15
	Lab: Multiple Regression (and controls)
November 24	Read and Do: Kirkpatrick and Kidd, Chapter 11 In Lab Exercise
November 26	Researchers being Thankful (Thanksgiving Holiday)
	Researchers as Demons?: Ethics in Social Scientific Research
December 3	<p>Read:</p> <p>Humphreys, Macartan. 2014. How to make field experiments more ethical. The Washington Post Monkey Cage (2 November 2014)</p> <p>King, Gary, and Melissa Sands. Working Paper. "How Human Subjects Research Rules Mislead You and Your University, and What to Do About It".</p> <p>Optional:</p> <p>Belmont Report (http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/belmont.html) .</p> <p>Milgram, Stanley. 1965. "Some Conditions of Obedience and Disobedience to Authority." <i>Human Relations</i> 18 (1, February): 57-76.</p> <p>Greenberg, David and Mark Shroder. 2004. <i>The Digest of Social Experiments</i>. Washington: The Urban Institute Press. "Introduction - Are Experiments Ethical?" (p. 8)</p> <p>Hatemi, Peter K., and Rose McDermott. 2011. "The Normative Implications of Biological Research." <i>PS-Political Science & Politics</i> 44 (2, April):325-329.</p> <p>Be prepared to discuss: What standards of ethics should apply to political scientists who study the political</p>

	behavior of individuals, organizations, or states? Are field experiments inherently unethical? If so, why? If not, are there boundaries?
December 8	Epilogue: Does Political Science Matter?
	Research Papers Due
December 17, 3:00 to 5:00 pm 408D Weil	Final Exam