POS 4734: Research Methods in Political Science
Department of Political Science
University of Florida
Spring 2025

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Office Hours: Tuesdays, 1:45pm -2:45 pm
Thursdays, 10:30 am – 12:30 pm
Office Hour appointments can be made at https://calendly.com/ajanusz
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Course Information

Lecture: Tuesdays, 11:45 AM - 1:40 pm (AND 0021)
Lecture: Thursdays, 12:50 PM - 1:40 pm (AND 0021)

Course Description

This course is designed to teach students the "science" within political science. Part of this task is conceptual: helping students to think systematically about research design. To this end, students will learn how theory can inform measurement, data collection, and data analysis. The second part of this task is practical: teaching students to critically evaluate scholarly research and conduct their own. Students will learn how to work with real-world data, analyze it using appropriate statistical techniques, and draw appropriate inferences. With the conceptual and practical knowledge, students will be able to pose social science questions, identify appropriate measurement strategies and develop research designs, and answer questions about social phenomena using statistical techniques. The goal of this course is to help you develop the skills necessary to conduct empirical research.

Course Objectives

This course is intended to prepare students to:

- Formulate research questions and research designs.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of alternative methodological approaches.
- Analyze statistical data, draw appropriate inferences, and communicate research findings.

Course Materials

There is one required textbook in this course. Students can purchase them in the UF Bookstore or online. All the other articles and book chapters can be found on the UF E-Learning (Canvas) at http://elearning.ufl.edu/.

Johnson, Janet Buttolph and H. T. Reynolds. Political Science Research Methods. (9th ed). Thousand Oak, CA: CQ Press, 2020.

In our lab session on Thursdays, we learn how to use the statistical software, R via R Studio. You can access R and R Studio through the following:

• Access to base R can be found here hosted by multiple institutions as mirrors (https://cran.rproject.org/mirrors.html) the closest mirror is at Duke University (https://archive.linux.duke.edu/cran/).

• Once you have downloaded and installed R, please install R Studio Desktop (https://posit.co/download/rstudio-desktop/)

• Step-by-step tutorials on installing R and R Studio for Mac, Windows, and Linux can be found here (https://rstudio-education.github.io/hopr/starting.html)

Graded Work

1. Class Participation (10%)
   You are expected to attend all class meetings prepared for an in-depth discussion of the assigned course material. Students will be awarded one point for each class session attended and one point for their participation during a class session. These cannot be made up but may be waived with a documented excused absence. The lowest two scores are dropped.

   Participation may include providing personal insight to the material, outside articles, current events, or responding to classmates. I understand some students may feel uncomfortable speaking in class, however, all students will benefit from hearing a wide range of perspectives. I encourage you to step outside your comfort zone to ask, answer, or comment on a question throughout the course. If you are someone who frequently contributes to class discussion, I urge you to be considerate of your fellow classmates and provide opportunities for others who wish to speak.

2. Complete Assignments (30%)
   You are required to complete assignments. The deadlines for the assignments can be found in the class schedule below. Most of these assignments are practice exercises in Stata to help you become comfortable using the software, apply the concepts and research methods discussed in class, and assist you in developing the final research proposal.

3. Midterm Exam (20%)
   There will be an in-class midterm exam on March 3, 2026. It is worth 20% of the final grade. It will cover all class material up to that date.

4. Presentations (5%)
   Students will do 10-minute research presentations in the last week of class. In the presentation, students are expected to motivate and introduce their research question,

explain their main hypothesis, discuss their methodological approach, and present any preliminary findings.

5. Final Research Proposal (35%)
   You will submit a 15-20 page research proposal in which you do the following:
   A. Introduce the topic and clearly state your research question;
   B. Detail the present state of knowledge in the field and explain why existing theories are inadequate to answer your question.
   C. Delineate hypotheses based on established theories and prior research;
   D. Describe how the key concepts will be measured;
   E. Explain the methodological approach you will use to test your hypotheses;
      a. Specify how data will be collected and why that approach is warranted.
   F. Outline how the data will be analyzed and why those operations are appropriate.

   To facilitate the development of this research proposal, students will submit a proposal memo (5%), a draft of their literature review and theory section (5%), submit a draft of their data and methods section (5%). The final research proposal is worth 20% of the course grade. Proposals should be typed, double-spaced, with size 12 font in a standard typeface. Students are *strongly encouraged* to visit during office hours to discuss their final proposals over the course of the semester.

   The final research proposal is due on April 27, 2026 at 10 AM via Canvas.

Grading Scale

Percent	Grade
93.4-100	A
90.0-93.3	A-
86.7-89.9	B+
83.4-86.6	B
80.0-83.3	B-
76.7-79.9	C+
73.4-76.6	C
70.0-73.3	C-
66.7-69.9	D+
63.4-66.6	D
60.0-3.3	D-
0-59.9	E

Course Policies

Academic Integrity: The University of Florida is an institution of learning, research, and scholarship that is strengthened by the existence of an environment of integrity. It is essential that all members of the University practice academic integrity and accept individual responsibility for their work and actions. Students are responsible for doing their own work, and

academic dishonesty of any kind will be subject to sanction and referral to the university's Academic Integrity Committee, which may impose additional sanctions.

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment."

The Conduct Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Click here to read the Conduct Code. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult me.

Participation: To successfully pass this course, your participation and engagement is necessary. Students must be prepared to discuss the readings and other materials listed for that day. However, if you are sick or have been in contact with someone who is sick please stay home and take care of yourself. If you miss class, you are encouraged to ask your classmates for their notes or come to office hours to talk about the material you missed.

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in the course are consistent with university policies. See UF Academic Regulations and Policies for more information regarding the University Attendance Policies.

Lecture Slides: I will post lecture slides on the course website at the conclusion of each class meeting. The slides are meant as a guide and are in no way a substitute for attending lecture. My hope is that by making the slides available students will not feel that they must spend the entire class furiously taking notes and instead pay close attention to the lecture, ask questions, and participate deeply in class discussion.

Communication: Students should use Canvas to contact me. Although you may email me at my UF email account, the university strongly encourages communication via Canvas to avoid the potential of violations of student confidentiality protected by FERPA. I encourage students to make an appointment and visit me during office hours to discuss any questions, comments, or concerns regarding the course.

Email/Messaging Hours: You may email or message me via Canvas at any time that is convenient to you. I will respond within one business day between the hours of 9am and 5pm. If you do not receive a reply from me after 24 hours, please resend your message. Although I may sometimes reply outside of these designated hours, responses cannot be guaranteed after 5pm on weekdays, weekends, or holidays. Please plan accordingly to have your questions answered in advance of assignment and exam deadlines.

Exams: There is only one exam. That exam will draw from all assigned readings up to that point. If you know you will miss the exam for a UF-sponsored commitment (e.g. traveling with debate team, softball team, orchestra, ROTC, etc.) ***or*** for some foreseeable personal commitment *that is not discretionary* (e.g. a scheduled medical procedure, like surgery) ***or*** because of an existential-

level family emergency (e.g. death, medical emergency you will be able to make-up the exam. If the miss is because of a scheduled event, you must let me know at least a week in advance (email is perfectly acceptable and preferred). I will work with you to make accommodations, but it is your responsibility to arrange with me to take a makeup exam.

Grades Adjustment: I do not round or adjust grades under any circumstances. This policy is not an attempt to be harsh but to hold all students in equal standing. I do not offer extra credit on an individual basis. All opportunities for extra credit, if any, will be announced on Canvas.

Late or Make-up Assignments: Work that is late due to a university-approved absence will be accepted without penalty. If an assignment is submitted late for reasons unrelated to a university-approved absence, it will be penalized 1 full letter grade the first day it is late and 3 percent each day thereafter. No late work will be accepted more than seven calendar days past due.

Acceptable reasons for work to be late include illness; Title IX-related situations; serious accidents or emergencies affecting the student, their roommates, or their family; special curricular requirements (e.g., judging trips, field trips, professional conferences); military obligation; severe weather conditions that prevent class participation; religious holidays; participation in official university activities (e.g., music performances, athletic competition, debate); and court-imposed legal obligations (e.g., jury duty or subpoena).

University Policies and Resources

This course complies with all UF academic policies. For information on those polices and for resources for students, please see this link." (The direct link is https://syllabus.ufl.edu/syllabus-policy/uf-syllabus-policy-links/.)

Course Schedule

Week 1: Introduction

1.13.26 Course Introduction

1.15.26 Research Questions

Assigned Reading: PSRM Chapter 1

Week 2: What is Political Science?

1.20.26 The Empirical Approach

Assigned Reading: PSRM Chapter 2 and Llaudet, Elena, and Kosuke Imai. *Data analysis for social science: A friendly and practical introduction*. Princeton University Press, 2023. Chapter 1

R Lab 1 → Downloading and installing R, setting working directory, getting started

1.22.26 Beginning the Research Process

Assigned Reading: PSRM Chapter 3 and
Reading_Political_Science_Research_Papers

Week 3: Research Process: Standing on the Shoulders of Giants

1.27.26 Research Foundations

R Lab 2 → Commands: read, view, vectors, arrays, matrices, data frame, and name columns

1.29.26 From Questions to Explanation

Assigned Reading: PSRM Chapter 4 (pages 73-88)

Week 4: Building Blocks of Social Science

2.3.26 From Questions to Explanations

Assigned Reading: PSRM Chapter 4 (88-96) and PSRM Chapter 11(211-226)

2.5.26 Descriptive Statistics

R Lab 3 → Commands: Summary stats (sum, mean, median max, and summary)

Proposal Memo Due

Week 5: Sampling and Research Design

2.10.26 Sampling

Assigned Reading: PSRM Chapter 5

2.12.26 Research Design

Assigned Reading: PSRM Chapter 6

Week 6: Research Design to Data

2.17.26 Analyzing Relationships

Assigned Reading: PSRM Chapters 9 & 13 (pages 267-277)

Exercise Set 1 Due

2.19.26 Data Cleaning

R Lab 4 → Replace data (if_else, rename columns) & tables

Week 7: Research Design Methods

2.24.26 Study Design

Assigned Reading: Chapters 7 & 10

Literature Review and Theory Due

2.26.26 Review and Individual Check-in

Week 8: Quantitative Research Methods

3.3.26 Midterm Exam

3.5.26 Review and Data Presentation

R Lab 5 → Basics Review & Introduction to Graphs (PSRM pages 226-237)

Week 9: Making Sense of Data

3.10.26 Testing Relationships

Assigned Reading: PSRM Chapter 12

3.12.26 Hypothesis Testing

R Lab 6 → Commands: t.test

Exercise Set 2 Due

Week 10: Testing Relationships

3.24.26 Multivariate Analysis

Assigned Reading: PSRM Chapter 13 (pages 287-305)

3.26.26 Hypothesis Testing

R Lab 7 → Commands: chisq.test

Week 11: Correlation and Regression

3.31.26 Correlation

Assigned Reading: PSRM Chapter 14 (pages 307-324)

4.2.26 R Lab 8 → Commands: cor, cor.test, lm (regression)

Week 12: Correlation and Regression

4.7.26 One-on-one Meetings

4.9.26 Data Visualization

R Lab 10 → Viewing Data Visual

Data and Methods Section Due

Week 13: Presenting Data and Project Presentations

4.14.26 Data Visualization cont.

R Lab 10 → Viewing Data Visual

4.16.26 Presentations

Week 14: Presentations

4.21.26 Presentations

Exercise Set 3 Due

Week 15: Finals

4.27.26 **Research Proposals Due**