

POS 4734: Research Methods in Political Science

Department of Political Science

University of Florida

Fall 2023

Instructor: Cassidy Reller

Office: Anderson 206

Office Hours: Thursday 9 AM to 12:00 PM, (or) by appointment

Calendly Link for Office Hour Sign Up: <https://calendly.com/rellercassidy/officehours>

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Course Information

Lecture: Tuesdays 1:55 to 2:45 PM (MAT 0002).

Lecture/Lab Sessions: Thursdays 1:55 to 3:50 PM (MAT 0002).

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 evaluate scholarly research and conduct their own critically. Students will learn how to work with real-world data, analyze it using appropriate statistical techniques, and draw appropriate inferences. With conceptual and practical knowledge, students can 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 create 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 coherently 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.r-project.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>)

Evaluation of Grades

1. Class Participation (10%)
You are expected to attend all class meetings prepared for an in-depth discussion of the assigned course material. Please know that attendance is not equal to participation. Your grade will reflect not just whether you show up, but your engagement in class discussions. I will be actively keeping a record of student participation in class.
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 R 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 **October 19, 2023**. It is worth 20% of the final grade. It will cover all class material up to that date.
4. Presentations (5%)
Students will do 12-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%), and a rough draft of the entire paper (5%). The final research proposal is worth 15% 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 **December 12, 2023** at 11:59 PM 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
60.0-63.3	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.

Expected Workload: You should be aware that our course requires a *significant* deal of outside work including reading, writing, analysis, and preparing comments. As a Carnegie I, research-intensive

university, UF is required by federal law to assign at least 2 hours of work outside of class for every contact hour. Work done in these hours may include reading/viewing assigned material and doing explicitly assigned individual or group work, as well as reviewing notes from class, synthesizing information in advance of exams or papers, and other self-determined study tasks.

For our 3-credit class, this means you should expect to spend 6-9 hours per week outside of class. The amount of time spent on this course may vary by week. I strongly encourage you to speak to me during office hours if you encounter any struggles or difficulties.

Attendance: 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. Please let me know if you are not attending class because of illness. You will not be penalized for missing classes (within reason). If you are sick for more than a couple of days, please get an excused absence so we can discuss options. If you miss class, you are encouraged to ask your classmates for their notes or come to office hours to talk about the class you missed.

In-Class Recording: Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal, educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, *students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.*

A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student

Lecture Slides: I will post redacted 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 lectures. 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 we communicate via Canvas to avoid the potential of violations of student confidentiality protected by [FERPA](#). I encourage students to visit 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 two business days between the hours of 8am and 5pm. If you do not receive a reply from me after 48 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 the 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 the 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 and Appeals: You will be graded on your academic performance. This includes clarity of thought, knowledge of the material, composition, spelling, and grammar. Students can file an appeal when they believe that the assigned grade is inconsistent with student performance or incorrect due to computational error. Formal appeals will consist of a single typed page that identifies the grading error and explains why the assigned grade is incorrect.

Late Assignments: Make-up assignments are only offered under valid and documented circumstances. Typically, all make-up work must be submitted within 72 hours of the grade submission deadline. Any assignment submitted after the due date will be penalized a full letter grade (10%) each day it is late. For example, if you submitted an assignment two days late that receives a grade of 95% your grade would be deducted 20% (2 days late*10%), meaning your adjusted grade would be 75%.

Accessibility Services: If you have (or suspect you have) a learning or other disability that requires academic accommodations, you should contact the UF Disability Resource Center (DRC) as soon as possible (dso.ufl.edu/drc). Please be sure that necessary accommodations are properly documented by the UFDRC. To obtain a classroom accommodation, you must first pre-register with the DRC (352.392.8565) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to your instructors when requesting an accommodation. I am always happy to make whatever accommodations you may need to be successful in the course.

Technology Resources: The UF Computing Help Desk can assist you with any of your technical issues. You can access the Help Desk 24/7 at <https://helpdesk.ufl.edu/>, 352-392- HELP (4357), or helpdesk.@ufl.edu. If you use email, write from your gatorlink@ufl.edu email address, or include your UFID and/or GatorLink username (NOT your password!) in the body of the email. Provide complete information regarding the course and content to which you are referring.

Academic Resources: There are many other campus, academic resources you should take advantage of throughout the semester. These include:

- E-learning technical support: Contact the UF Computing Help Desk at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu.
- Library Support: <http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask> Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.
- Teaching Center: Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352- 392- 6420. General study skills and tutoring. <https://teachingcenter.ufl.edu/>
- Writing Studio: 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers. <http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/> Now offering online consultation.
- On-Line Students Complaints: <https://distance.ufl.edu/getting-help/student-complaintprocess/>.
- Career Connections Center: <https://career.ufl.edu/> Career assistance and counseling.

Crisis Resources: If you or someone you know is struggling with any crisis including but not limited to gender, sexual, racial, or domestic violence, there are many community and University of Florida resources available. Some of these include:

- U Matter, We Care (umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, <https://umatter.ufl.edu>)
- RESPECT – UF Division of Student Affairs (<https://respect.ufsa.ufl.edu>)
- Counseling and Wellness Center – available 24/7 (352-392-1575, <https://counseling.ufl.edu>)
- Student Health Care Center (352-392-1161, <https://shcc.ufl.edu>)
- Multicultural & Diversity Affairs (352-392-1217, <https://multicultural.ufl.edu>)
- Hitchcock Field & Fork Pantry- Assisting members of our campus community who experience food insecurity - <https://pantry.fieldandfork.ufl.edu>
- UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center (352-733-0111)
- Gainesville Police Department (non-emergency #: 352-955-1818, <https://gainesvillepd.org>)

Course Schedule

Week 1: Introduction

8.24.23 Course Introduction

Week 2: What is Political Science?

8.29.23 Research Questions

8.31.23 The Empirical Approach

Assigned Reading: PSRM Chapter 2 and PSRM Chapter 3 (pages 49-53)

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

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

9.5.23 Assigned Reading: PSRM Chapter 3 (pages 54-71)

Reading_Political_Science_Research_Papers

9.7.23 Literature Reviews

R Lab 2 → Commands: read, view

Week 4: Building Blocks of Social Science

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

9.14.23 Assigned Reading: PSRM (pages 88-96 and 211-226)

Proposal Memo Due

Week 5: Sampling and learning about the sample

9.19.23 Assigned Reading: PSRM Chapter 5

9.21.23 Assigned Reading: None

R Lab 3 → Commands: vectors, arrays, matrices, data frame, and name columns

Week 6: Research Design

9.26.23 Assigned Reading: PSRM Chapter 6

9.28.23 Assigned Reading: PSRM Chapter 13 (pages 267-277)

R Lab 4 → Commands: Summary stats (sum, mean, median max, and summary)

Exercise Set 1 Due

Week 7: Quantitative Research Design Methods

10.3.23 Assigned Reading: PSRM Chapter 9

10.5.23 Assigned Reading: PSRM Chapter 10

R Lab 5 → Commands: Replace data (if_else, rename columns)

Week 8: Quantitative Research Design Methods Continued

10.10.23 No Assigned Reading

Literature Review and Theory Due

10.12.23 PSRM (pages 226-237)

R Lab 6 → Basics Review

Week 9: Making Sense of Data

10.17.23 Review and Individual Check-in

10.19.23 Midterm Exam

Week 10: Testing Relationships

10.24.23 Assigned Reading: PSRM Chapter 12

10.26.23 No Assigned Reading

R Lab 7 → Commands: t.test

Exercise Set 2 Due

Week 11: Multivariate Analysis

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

11.2.23 No Assigned Reading

R Lab 8 → Commands: chisq.test

Data and Methods Section Due

Week 12: Correlation and Regression

11.7.23 Correlation

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

R Lab 9 → Commands: cor, cor.test, lm (regression)

Week 13: Regression Continued

11.14.23 Regression

11.16.23 One-on-one Meetings

Week 14: Preliminary Draft

11.21.23 Work on Preliminary Draft

Preliminary Draft Due

Week 15: Plot and Presentations

11.28.23 R Lab 10 → Viewing Data Visually

11.30.23 Presentations

Exercise Set 3 Due

Week 16: Presentations

12.5.23 Presentations

12.12.23 Research Proposals Due

11:59 PM via Canvas