

# Applied Political Behavior

## Special Topics in Political Science

### Spring 2026 – POS 4931

**Professor:** Hannah M. Alarian (she/her)  
**Email:** [halarian@ufl.edu](mailto:halarian@ufl.edu)  
**Office Hours:** Tu 12:30pm-2:30pm  
**Office Location:** 004 Anderson  
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**Website:** [hannahalarian.com/apb](http://hannahalarian.com/apb)

**Class:** Tu 3:00 PM – 4:55 PM  
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**Class Location:** AND 00034

#### Syllabus Links

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## 1. General Information

### Course Description

This course will focus on the hands-on quantitative aspects of studying political behavior. Specifically, students will explore alternative study designs and their practical applicability in the field of political behavior.

### Course Pre-Requisites/ Co-Requisites

None.

### General Education Designation

None.

### Course Materials

There are no formal textbooks for this class. Plenty of optional texts registered at the bookstore are excellent resource guides throughout the class. You are responsible for completing all readings prior to the class for which they are assigned. If you would like supplemental reading on any topic, please see me.

### Availability

Materials are available through the following means:

1. UF Library ([link](#))
  - Off-campus access ([link](#))
2. Course Reserves ([link](#))
3. Google Scholar ([link](#))

### Materials Fee

None. Students must, however, download the phone iClicker app. Learn more about setting up iClicker at this [link](#). You can download the iClicker app from the Google Play or Apple app Store.

Students must also have a working laptop capable of running R and RStudio.

## 2. Course Goals

### Course Objectives

This course has two key objectives: 1) to introduce the process behind the study of political behavior and 2) to enrich our understanding of cutting-edge research on political behavior in a global context. At the conclusion of the course, students will have demonstrated hands-on experience in study design, data analysis, data visualization, oral and written communication, and speaking on political behavior in a global context.

## Student Learning Outcomes

A student who successfully completes this course will be able to:

- a. Design and evaluate empirical research on political behavior
- b. Analyze and communicate findings in political behavior
- c. Apply professional norms of scholarly discourse, including clear data visualization, evidence-based argumentation, and engagement with diverse perspectives on political behavior research

## 3. Graded Work

### Course Evaluation Criteria

Assignment	Percent of Final Grade	Due Date
Attendance	<b>5%</b>	Weekly
Exam 1	<b>7.5%</b>	February 26
Applied Activities	<b>10%</b>	Weekly
Labs	<b>15%</b>	Weekly
Research Paper	<b>35%</b>	—
<i>Proposal</i>	3%	February 28
<i>Draft</i>	8%	March 26
<i>Review</i>	4%	April 9
<i>Final</i>	20%	April 28
Presentation	<b>10%</b>	April 14-17
Exam 2	<b>12.5%</b>	May 1
Final Class Project	<b>5%</b>	April 21

### Course Evaluation Details

#### *Attendance – 5%*

Attendance accounts for 5% of your total grade. This includes showing up to class on time and staying in class throughout the entire scheduled course period (i.e., no late arrivals or early exits). Attendance will be assessed using the iClicker app. **Scores will be adjusted daily for partial credit for late arrivals and early class exits.** All students are permitted to miss two classes without penalty (see [Absence Policy](#)).

#### *Applied Activities – 10%*

Applied Activity Participation accounts for 10% of the evaluation. You should attend class prepared to discuss the assigned task in significant detail for that class meeting. There are a total of **eight** applied activities throughout the semester. **Each will require you to use your laptop in class.**

#### *Labs – 15%*

There are a total of six labs – five of which will count toward your final grade. These labs will involve group and independent lessons using R and **require the use of your laptop in class.** No prior experience with R or any other statistical software program is required for you to succeed in these labs.

Please note that we are not a statistics course and will not discuss the underlying mathematics. The goal of the labs is to provide you with the skills necessary to apply current and future statistical knowledge within the R universe. Keep in mind that we will walk through the lab mechanics in class and will be available to assist with any problems you may have during class hours.

Labs will be due by 5:00 pm the day after in-class Lab days. **Students must be in class on a Lab day to receive credit for their assignment.** As with all other assignments, no late labs will be accepted.

#### *Open-Note Exams – 20%*

There will be two open-book/note exams throughout the course. These tests offer an opportunity to demonstrate your application and analysis of key concepts in research design. Tests are staggered in point value to reflect growing confidence with the material and course structure. The first test accounts for 7.5% of your grade, and the second for 12.5%. No late or makeup tests will be accepted without a university-sanctioned excusal.

#### *Final Paper – 20%*

The final group paper is the main writing activity for the course. In this research paper (maximum 35 written pages), students in groups of three will 1) describe the research question; 2) include a detailed analysis and 3) develop a unique research design for a given political behavior. Students will have the choice of one of two topics: electoral turnout or voting behavior. Once a topic is chosen, each group will select a region of analysis and determine whether it will focus on your chosen topic as the dependent or the independent variable. You must include both academic articles from your own outside research as well as readings from the course in your analysis.

You are expected to begin working on this project early on in the course. We will have multiple opportunities to discuss this paper throughout the course, individually and as a group. Electronic copies of the final paper must be turned in by the final date and time. No late assignments will be accepted without prior approval.

Students will also include a response to their peer review comments attached to their final paper submission as a letter to the editor (to be discussed in class). **Submissions without these responses will be deducted 5% of their final paper grade.** Assignments without a peer evaluation form (see Canvas) will receive a 0.

#### *Final Research Paper Proposal, Draft and Review – 15%*

Students will write a brief proposal for their final paper. This proposal should be **three pages maximum.** At a minimum, this proposal should include a proposed title, question, theories, and cases you will consider in your final paper. Students will post their proposal to Canvas by 11:59 pm on the due date (3%).

Students will additionally move to write a brief draft of their final paper to assist them in the writing of their final paper. **The draft should be ten pages with a two-page reference list.** Drafts of these final papers will focus on defining the problem/puzzle examined, the argument proposed, and most importantly the proposed study design to test the hypotheses. Students will post their proposal to Canvas by 11:59 pm on the due date (8%).

After submission of the Final Paper draft, students will provide comments to **one** of their fellow classmates' drafts within Canvas within two weeks (by 11:59 pm on the due date). This response is worth 4% of your total grade. This response should be at least two pages and include: 1) a summary of the argument, 2) indicate strong components of the piece; 3) highlight elements that require additional discussion, and 4) suggestions for improvement.

### *Presentation – 10%*

This assignment will require students create a presentation similar to an academic conference presentation. The presentation should include 1) your question about political behavior and 2) the main findings. This presentation should be a coherent and collective analysis of your research and a presentation of your original research design. Presentations will take the form of conference presentations, with each day organized as a panel of three paper topics. The Professor will act as a discussant, moderating the audience (i.e., classroom) discussion. Presentations should be no longer than 12 minutes.

Presentations will be uploaded to Canvas one full day before your scheduled class day. For example, if your group is scheduled on Tuesday, you must post your presentation on Monday prior to 3:00 pm. All students will be evaluated on the clarity and content of their presentation as well as their ability to ask and answer questions to and from their fellow classmates.

### *Final Class Project Write-up – 5%*

The class as a whole will complete an independent research project, examining a question of their own design regarding the political behavior of UF students. Students will participate in this exercise throughout the semester. Students will submit write up of the research question, methods, and findings upon completion of the project, using RMarkdown.

## **Absences**

All students are awarded two unexcused absences without penalty to attendance and participation. You do not need to contact the professor or the grader to use these unexcused absences. Excused absences are those that meet university policy. No additional options for excused absences are available beyond those mandated by ([university policy](#)). Planned excused absences must be communicated before the start of class.

## **Late or Make-up Assignments**

No late or make-up assignments will be accepted without prior approval. There is a one-hour grace period in which 10% will be deducted from your final grade. If an assignment is submitted late without prior approval **beyond one hour, it will receive a 0. There are no exceptions.** At least one week's notice is required for an assignment or exam extension request. Acceptable reasons for exam or assignment extension are in accordance with the university attendance policy. Assignment deadlines for other courses are not valid excuses for any assignment or exam extension request.

## **Grading Policy**

I do not under any circumstances round or adjust grades. This policy is not an attempt to be harsh, but to treat all students equally.

## **Grading Scale**

<b>Percent</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Grade Points</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Grade Points</b>
94.0–100	A	4.00	74–76.9	C	2.00
90–93.9	A-	3.67	70–73.9	C-	1.67
87–89.9	B+	3.33	67–69.9	D+	1.33
84–86.9	B	3.00	64–66.9	D	1.00
80–83.9	B-	2.67	60–63.9	D-	0.67
77–79.9	C+	2.33	0 – 59.9	E	0.00

## 4. Class Policies

### Syllabus

This syllabus is a living document. This means it is subject to change. All potential changes will be communicated to you in our class meetings and on Canvas.

### Expected Workload

You should be aware that our course requires a *significant* amount 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, completing explicitly assigned individual or group work, reviewing class notes, 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. This can of course vary by week, but plan accordingly. I strongly encourage you to speak to me during office hours if you encounter any struggles or difficulties.

### Lecture Slides

I will post redacted lecture slides on a password protected link on my website at the conclusion of each class meeting. The password will be provided on the second day of class. The slides are meant as a guide and are in no way a substitute for lecture. My hope is that by providing redacted slides – which will often have definitions – you will not have to spend the entire class furiously note taking and can pay close attention to the lecture, ask questions, and participate deeply in class discussion. If, however, class participation or attendance wanes, I retain the right to end sharing lecture slides.

### Technology Policy

Research shows students learn and retain information best taking notes by hand (see [Scientific American: A Learning Secret - Don't take Notes with a Laptop](#)). **You must, however, bring a laptop to class with you on lab days.** At times, we may use cell phones to conduct real time polling or quizzes during class. I expect your phone to be put away outside of these times. **There may be times when laptops will not be allowed during in-class exercises.**

**The use of ChatGPT or other AI assistance for the completion of any written assignment is strictly prohibited.** The Professor reserves the right to move the modality of assignments if the use of ChatGPT, etc., is suspected (e.g., oral exams).

The use of ChatGPT is permitted in Labs under specific conditions. If you use ChatGPT for a lab assignment, you must upload your corresponding chat ID link directly (see link [here](#) for instructions). These tools can be very helpful in generating code in R and other statistical software. However, the point of our labs is to build a foundation that will enable you to demonstrate your specific skills to future employers and to provide you with the tools to be a more effective user of ChatGPT and other AI-generated tools. **If AI usage is suspected without a corresponding log, students will receive a 0 on the lab.**

## Referencing the Professor

Often, students have questions about proper naming or titling etiquette for communicating with their professors. In an effort to remove this confusion and reduce email anxiety, you may use any of the following acceptable references in all communication with me throughout the course.

- Professor Alarian
- Dr. Alarian
- Prof. A.
- Dr. A.

## Contacting the Professor

Students should use professional communication norms when contacting me. This means including a professional salutation (e.g., “Dear Professor) and signature (e.g., Best wishes, NAME). Students should use Canvas to contact me. Although you may email me at my UF email account, the university strongly encourages that we communicate via Canvas to avoid the potential of violations of student confidentiality protected by **FERPA**. I strongly encourage students to visit my office hours virtually or in person, scheduled [here](#), to discuss any course questions, comments, or concerns. **Please keep in mind that I am a Title IX mandatory reporter.**

## Email/Messaging Hours

You may contact me at any time that is convenient to you. I will respond within one business day 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, on weekends, or holidays. Please plan accordingly to have your questions answered in advance of assignment and exam deadlines.

## Letters of Recommendation

If you anticipate requesting that I write a letter on your behalf, please note that I expect you to have attended multiple office hours and actively participated in class discussions throughout the course. It is unlikely I will be able to write a letter on your behalf without satisfying both of these conditions. **Attending class itself, in other words, is not sufficient for a letter of recommendation.** You can read more about my letter of recommendation policy on my [website](#).

## 5. University Policies and Resources

This course complies with all UF academic policies. For information on those policies and for resources for students, please see this [link](#).

## 6. Semester Schedule

### Week 1: Introduction to Political Behavior

*What are the goals of this course? What can I expect to learn from the course?*

#### January 13 – Introducing the Course

- Syllabus
- Set up your computer for success. Laptop you will use throughout class is required.

#### January 15 – *Class canceled*

### Week 2: Defining Political Behavior in Political Science

*How can we read political behavior research? What does it mean to study political behavior?*

#### January 20

- Green, Amelia. 2013. How to Read Political Science: A Guide in Four Steps.
- Dalton, Russell. 2014. “How we participate” in *Citizen Politics*.
- Dalton, Russell & Klingemann, Hans-Dieter (2007). Citizens and political behavior. In R. J. Dalton & H.-D. Klingemann (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Behavior* (pp. 3–26). Oxford University Press.

#### January 22

#### Lab 0: R as a Tool

### Week 3: Introduction to Behavioral Methods

*Why do we engage in (or avoid) certain political behaviors? How do we examine political behavior in research?*

#### January 27

- Kuklinski, James H. and Peyton, Buddy. (2007). Belief Systems and Political Decision Making. In R. J. Dalton & H.-D. Klingemann (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Behavior* (pp. 45–64). Oxford University Press
- Hirschman, Albert O. (1970). Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States. Harvard University Press, Chapters 1, 7, and 8.

#### Applied Research Activity 1: *Class Research Question Design*

#### January 29

- Brady, H. E. (2000). Contributions of survey research to political science. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 33(1), 47-58.
- McNabb, David E. (2015). Chapter 4. *Research methods for political science: Quantitative and qualitative methods*. (pp. 39-52). Routledge.

### Week 4: Research Ethics

*How do we study behavior on the ground? What ethical considerations should we have?*

#### February 3

#### Lab 1: Beginning with R

#### February 5

- Fuji, Lee Ann. 2012. "Research ethics 101: Dilemmas and responsibilities." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 45(4): 717-723.
- McNabb, David E. (2015). Chapter 5. *Research methods for political science: Quantitative and qualitative methods*. (pp. 54-72). Routledge.

## **Week 5: Observational Data**

*Can we estimate behavior using observation? How?*

### **February 10**

- Gillespie, Andra, and Melissa R. Michelson. "Participant observation and the political scientist: Possibilities, priorities, and practicalities." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 44.2 (2011): 261-265.
- Hainmueller, Jens, and Dominik Hangartner. "Who gets a Swiss passport? A natural experiment in immigrant discrimination." *American Political Science Review* 107.1 (2013): 159-187.

### **Applied Research Activity 2: Class Research Design**

### **February 12**

#### **In-class Proposal Workshop**

*Come prepared to discuss group paper proposals in detail*

## **Week 6: Survey Methods**

*How do we measure political attitudes and behavior? Why does this matter?*

### **February 17**

#### **Lab 2: Importing & Merging Datasets**

### **February 19**

- Rosenfeld, Imai, and Shapiro. 2015. An Empirical Validation Study of Popular Survey Methodologies for Sensitive Questions. *American Journal of Political Science*.
- Berinsky, A.J., 2017. Measuring Public Opinion with Surveys. *Annual Review of Political Science* 20, 309–329.
- Adcock, Robert and David Collier. 2001. "Measurement Validity: A Shared Standard for Qualitative and Quantitative Research." *American Political Science Review* 95:3 (September): 529-46

## **Week 7: Exam**

*Are we meeting our learning objectives?*

### **February 24**

- Kittilson, Miki C., 2007. Research resources in comparative political behavior. In R. J. Dalton & H.-D. Klingemann (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Behavior* (pp. 865–895). Oxford University Press.

### **Applied Research Activity 3: Class Survey Questionnaire Design**

### **February 26**

#### **Exam I**

**\*FINAL PAPER PROPOSALS due February 28, 11:59 pm\***

## **Week 8: Using Survey Data**

*How can we use our skills to understand our political world? What does it look like to construct a sample in R?*

### **March 3**

#### **Lab 3: Sampling**

### March 5

- Curtice, John, 2007. Comparative opinion surveys. In R. J. Dalton & H.-D. Klingemann (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Behavior* (pp. 896–909). Oxford University Press.
- McNabb, David E. (2015). Chapter 7. *Research methods for political science: Quantitative and qualitative methods.* (pp. 86-94). Routledge.
- Yeager, David S., Jon A. Krosnick, LinChiat Chang, Harold S. Javitz, Matthew S. Levendusky, Alberto Simpser, and Rui Wang. 2011. "Comparing the accuracy of RDD telephone surveys and internet surveys conducted with probability and non-probability samples." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 75. 4: 709-747.

### Applied Research Activity 4: *Class Survey Sampling Plan*

### Week 9: Experiments

*What is an experiment and what can it tell us?*

### March 10

- Log in to UF Qualtrics

### Applied Research Activity 5: *Class Survey Questionnaire Program*

### March 12

- Fahey, James J. "The big lie: Expressive responding and misperceptions in the United States." *Journal of Experimental Political Science* 10.2 (2023): 267-278.
- Gerber, A. S., Green, D. P., Kaplan, E. H., Shapiro, I., Smith, R. M., & Massoud, T. (2014). The illusion of learning from observational research. *Field experiments and their critics: Essays on the uses and abuses of experimentation in the social sciences*, 9-32.
- Green, Donald P., and Alan S. Gerber. "The underprovision of experiments in political science." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 589.1 (2003): 94-112.
- Gaines, Brian J., James H. Kuklinski, and Paul J. Quirk. 2007. "The logic of the survey experiment reexamined." *Political Analysis*: 1-20.
- Weitz-Shapiro, Rebecca and Winters, Matthew S. (2017). Can Citizens Discern? Information Credibility, Political Sophistication, and the Punishment of Corruption in Brazil. *The Journal of Politics*, 79(1), 60–74

### Week 10: Experimental Surveys

*What—and how---can we use surveys to study political behavior?*

### March 24:

### Lab 4: Descriptive Statistics

### March 26

### Applied Research Activity 6: *Design your own Experiment*

**\*FINAL PAPER DRAFT DUE 11:59pm\***

### Week 11: Mixed Methodologies in Political Behavior Research

*What other methods for understanding behavior beyond quantitative research? Collecting our own data to answer class survey question.*

### March 31

### Applied Research Activity 7: *Survey Data Collection*

**April 3**

- Lieberman, Evan S. "Nested analysis as a mixed-method strategy for comparative research." *American Political Science Review* 99.3 (2005): 435-452.
- Cyr, Jennifer. "The unique utility of focus groups for mixed-methods research." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 50.4 (2017): 1038-1042.

**Week 12: Descriptive Data Analysis**

**April 7**

**Lab 5:** Graphing

**April 9**

**Applied Research Activity 8: Analyze Class Data**

**\*PEER REVIEW COMMENTS DUE 11:59pm\***

**Week 13: Conference Presentations**

**April 14**

**Presentations** - Electoral turnout, Voting Group 1

**April 17**

**Presentations** – Voting Groups 2-3

**Week 14: Lab and Review**

**April 21**

**Lab 6:** Mapping

**\*Final Class Research Write-up due 11:59pm\***

**Final Exam**

**May 1, 12:30-2:30pm**

**EXAM II**

**\*Final Papers due April 28<sup>th</sup> (11:59pm)\***