

**POS 4931: Data and African Politics**  
**Fall Semester 2024**  
**T Period 2-3: 8:30-10:25**  
**R Period 3: 9:35-10:25**

Instructor: Nicholas Kerr, Ph.D.

Office: 319 Anderson

Virtual Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday: 2-4:30p

Email: [nicholaskerr@ufl.edu](mailto:nicholaskerr@ufl.edu)

Schedule Virtual Office Hours: <https://calendly.com/nicholaskerr/15min>

Zoom Link: <https://ufl.zoom.us/j/95412277667?pwd=ZGEvUi8zVGZ2YU5UdmQ0REpvVIMvUT09>

*Course Description:*

This course introduces students to a variety of quantitative methodological approaches and data analytical techniques that social scientists utilize when studying political phenomena in sub-Saharan Africa. The course seeks to challenge the dominant representations of the African continent as conflict prone, economically underdeveloped, and political unstable. Instead, the course presents Africa as a dynamic region comprised of 54 independent states with diverse political and socio-economic realities. Students will explore core themes including political regime processes and dynamics, political participation, the politics of conflict and cooperation, and the politics of development. During each theme, students will read contemporary academic research focused on Africa, access empirical sources of data (observational and experimental), and learn several data analysis techniques for making descriptive and causal inferences. This includes learning how to use R (a widely-utilized, open-source, statistical software package) to perform basic statistical analyses. The course is particularly geared towards students who plan to write a senior thesis in political science (or cognate discipline) or students who desire to increase their data science and research methods training as the course exposes students to several phases of the research process and gives students the opportunity to conduct quantitative research and present research findings on core themes in African politics.

*Student Learning Objectives*

At the end of the course, students should be able to

- evaluate the perspectives of leading scholars and policy experts on African affairs
- identify several phases of the research design process: research question formulation, theory development, conceptualization and measurement.
- identify the fundamentals of collecting empirical data using experimental and observational (qualitative and quantitative) techniques.
- use R to conduct basic statistical analyses for making descriptive and causal inferences.
- demonstrate higher-level critical thinking skills, such as analysis and synthesis
- conduct research on an important issue challenging Africa's political, economic or social development and present findings in both oral and written form

*Required Texts:*

- Llaudet, E. and Koskue Imai, 2023. *Data Analysis for Social Science*. Princeton University Press. (Available at bookstore)

- I have also assigned readings from journal articles and book chapters which will be available electronically through Canvas.

*Required Software:*

- Students will learn how to use R to carryout basic statistical analysis. R is an open source statistical package. Instructions on accessing R will be provided

*Instructional Requirements:*

- Students will be required to have access and use a personal computer with the access to the Internet.
- You may access Canvas from UF's e-Learning webpage: <https://elearning.ufl.edu/>. Please contact the UF Help Desk, <https://helpdesk.ufl.edu/>, if you have any technical difficulties with Canvas.

*Canvas Course Website:*

Canvas will serve as a repository for course materials, this includes:

- Updated copies of the syllabus;
- Assigned readings not contained in required texts;
- Additional reading list;
- Internet and electronic resources on research methods;
- Midterm and final exam study guides and research proposal guidelines.
- Log in at <https://elearning.ufl.edu/>

*Course Requirements and Assignments:*

- Attendance and Participation (10%)
  - Attendance for this course is mandatory and an attendance record will be taken for every class. Students are expected to come to class having done the reading and ready to contribute to class discussions.
  - If a student does not participate in at least one of the first two class meetings of the course and they have not contacted the department or the instructor to indicate their intent, the student can be dropped from the course. Students must not assume that they will be dropped, however. The department will notify students if they have been dropped from a course.
- Methods Lab Assignments (5% each: Total 30%)
  - **6 Methods Labs** will be held during the semester on Thursdays. Each lab session includes an assignment that should be started in the lab and completed the **Thursday of the following week**. Students are able to work with other students in completing the assignments, however, each student should submit their own assignment Canvas.
- Midterm Exams (20% each: Total 40%):
  - Midterm I:
    - Part I (10%): Will be held in-class during the course period on **Tuesday, October 1**. A review for the Midterm be held in-class during the course period on **Thursday, September 26**.

- Part II (10%): Will be distributed by email on **Friday, September 27** and due through Turnitin on Canvas by **11:59PM Friday, October 4.**
  - Midterm II
    - Part I (10%): Will be held in-class during the course period on **Tuesday, November 5.** A review for the Midterm be held in-class during the course period on **Thursday, October 31.**
    - Part II (10%): Will be distributed by email on **Friday, November 1** and due through Turnitin on Canvas by **11:59PM Friday, November 8.**
- Final Group Research Project (20%)
  - Students will be assigned to groups and each group will develop a research project based on one theme and data analyses techniques explored in the course.
    - Research Proposal (5%) is due on **Friday, November 15 at 11:59 P through Turnitin on Canvas.** Detailed information about the proposal requirements will be provided.
    - Research Poster Presentation (15%): Students will present the findings of their research with a poster presentation on Tuesday, December 3. Detailed information about the poster presentation requirements will be provided.

*Grading Scale:*

Each grade that you earn for assignments will be based on the weightings indicated above. Your final grade will be converted based on the following scale:

A: 93-100		
B+: 87-92	B: 83-86	B-: 80-82
C+: 77-79	C: 73-76	C-: 70-72
D+: 67-69	D: 63-66	D-: 60-62
F: 59 and below		

*Policies on Course Readings, Attendance, Cell Phones & Computers*

- This is course will be delivered using in-person instruction which means that students are expected to participate in the course during each class period Tuesday and Thursdays.
- Attendance for this course is mandatory and an attendance record will be taken every class. Students are expected to come to class having done the reading and ready to contribute to class discussions. If students are routinely absent—or attend without doing the proper preparation—they will not receive full credit for participation. Students who miss more than **three** classes without a formal excuse may receive additional reductions to their overall grade.
- All readings should be completed by the assigned class period. The reading load varies throughout the semester, but you should expect to read at least one source for each class. For some class sessions, I have assigned multiple readings. Please do not be alarmed. I will provide instructions on how to prepare for these class sessions. **Importantly, I reserve the right to change the course readings or course structure during the semester as I see fit. Any changes will be updated on the syllabus and uploaded to Canvas.**
- Cell phones should be placed on silent during class sessions and activities such as browsing and texting should be kept to an absolute minimum.

- Students are allowed to use computers for course-related purposes, including taking notes, reviewing assigned readings, and completing class assignments.

*Policies on Cheating and Plagiarism:*

- 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 Honor Code (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honorcode/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor.

*Policies on Late Assignments, Make-up Exams, & Contact:*

- Assignment extensions will only be offered under extenuating circumstances and University-accepted excuses. Late assignments submitted without a valid extension will be penalized as per my discretion.
- Make-up exams will only be arranged for *university-accepted excuses*.
- When contacting me by email please utilize standard grammar and punctuation. In most instances, I will respond to emails within 24 hours.

*Policies for Persons with Disabilities:*

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, [www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/)) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

*Course Evaluations:*

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>.

*Policies of Recorded Lectures:*

Our class sessions may be audio visually recorded for students in the class to refer back and for enrolled students who are unable to attend live. Students who participate with their camera engaged or utilize a profile image are agreeing to have their video or image recorded. If you are unwilling to consent to have your profile or video image recorded, be sure to keep your camera off and do not use a profile image. Likewise, students who un-mute during class and participate orally are agreeing to have their voices recorded. If you are not willing to consent to have your voice recorded during class, you will need to keep your mute button activated and communicate exclusively using the "chat" feature, which allows students to type questions and comments live.

The chat will not be recorded or shared. As in all courses, unauthorized recording and unauthorized sharing of recorded materials is prohibited.

### Policies on In-Class Recordings

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

### Campus Resources

#### **Health and Wellness**

U Matter, We Care: If you or a friend is in distress, please contact [umatter@ufl.edu](mailto:umatter@ufl.edu) or 352 -392-1575 so that a team member can reach out to the student.

Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>, 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS): Student Health Care Center, 392-1161. University Police Department: 392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies). <http://www.police.ufl.edu/>

#### **Academic Resources**

E-learning technical support: 352-392-4357 (select option 2) or e-mail to [Learning-support@ufl.edu](mailto:Learning-support@ufl.edu). <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml>.

Career Resource Center: Reitz Union, 392-1601. Career assistance and counseling. <http://www.crc.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, 392-2010 or 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.  
<http://teachingcenter.ufl.edu/>

Writing Studio: 302 Tigert Hall, 846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.  
<http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>

Student Complaints Campus: [https://www.dso.ufl.edu/documents/UF\\_Complaints\\_policy.pdf](https://www.dso.ufl.edu/documents/UF_Complaints_policy.pdf)

## SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

### WEEK 1

#### Thursday, Aug 22: Course Logistics

- Make sure to purchase course text: Llaudet & Imai (2023)

### WEEK 2

#### Tuesday, Aug 27: Introduction to African Politics

- Thomson: Chapter 1 (Canvas)
- Pierre Englebert and Kevin Dunn, “Why Study African Politics?” Chapter 1 in *Inside African Politics* (2013), pp. 1-15 (Canvas)
- Nic Cheeseman, Carl Death and Lindsay Whitfield, “Notes on Researching Africa” *African Affairs* (2017): 1-5.

#### Thursday, Aug 29: Introduction to R

- Llaudet & Imai Ch. 1
- Lab #1 distributed (Due Sep 5, 11:59P through Canvas)

### WEEK 3

#### Tuesday, Sept 3: No Class - Attending American Political Science Association Conference

- Llaudet & Imai Ch. 1

#### Thursday, Sept 5: No Class - Attending American Political Science Association Conference

- Llaudet & Imai Ch. 1
- Lab #1 (Due 11:59P through Canvas)

## SECTION 2: POLITICAL REGIMES

### WEEK 4

#### Tuesday, Sept 10: Democratic Attitudes

- Llaudet & Imai Ch. 3
- African Insights 2024: Democracy at Risk – The People’s Perspective. (2024)  
Afrobarometer: [https://www.afrobarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Afrobarometer\\_FlagshipReport2024\\_English.pdf](https://www.afrobarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Afrobarometer_FlagshipReport2024_English.pdf)
- Data source: Afrobarometer (mass survey data)
  - <https://www.afrobarometer.org/data/>

Thursday, Sept 12: Lab #2 Democratic Attitudes

- Llaudet & Imai Ch. 3
- Lab #2 distributed (Due Sept. 19, 11:59P through Canvas)

**WEEK 5**

Tuesday, Sept 17: Democratization & Autocratization

- Llaudet & Imai Ch. 3
- Arriola, L. R., & Rakner, L. (2023). *Democratic Backsliding in Africa?: Autocratization, Resilience, and Contention*. Oxford University Press. (Chapter 1: Canvas)
- Data source: Varieties of Democracy Project (expert survey data)
  - <https://v-dem.net/>

Thursday, Sept 19: Lab #3: Democratization & Autocratization

- Llaudet & Imai Ch. 3
- Lab #2 due (11:59 P through Canvas)
- Lab #3 distributed (Due Sept. 26, 11:59P through Canvas)

**SECTION 3: POLITICAL BEHAVIOR**

**WEEK 6**

Tuesday, Sept 24: Voting Behavior

- Llaudet & Imai Ch. 3
- Brierley, S., & Ofosu, G. K. (2024). Chiefs' Endorsements and Voter Behavior. *Comparative Political Studies*, 57(10), 1703-1734. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00104140231194916>
- Data source: TBD (survey experiment)

**Thursday, Sept 26: Midterm I Review**

- Take-Home Midterm I Distributed (Due Oct 4, 11:59P)

**WEEK 7**

**Tuesday, Oct 1: In-Class Midterm I (during scheduled course time: 8:30-10:25)**

Thursday, Oct 3: Lab #4: Voting Behavior

- Llaudet & Imai Ch. 3
- Lab #4 distributed (Due Oct 10, 11:59P through Canvas)



## WEEK 8

Tuesday, Oct 8: Protest Behavior

- Llaudet & Imai Ch. 4
- Harris, A. S., & Hern, E. (2019). Taking to the Streets: Protest as an Expression of Political Preference in Africa. *Comparative Political Studies*, 52(8), 1169-1199. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414018806540>
- Data Source: Social Conflict in Africa Database
  - <https://www.strausscenter.org/ccaps-research-areas/social-conflict/database/>

Thursday, Oct 10: Lab #5: Protest Behavior

- Llaudet & Imai Ch. 4
- Lab #4 due (11:59 through Canvas)
- Lab #5 distributed (Due Oct 17, 11:59P through Canvas)

## WEEK 9

### SECTION 4: POLITICAL CONFLICT

Tuesday, Oct 15: Election Violence

- Llaudet & Imai Ch. 4
- von Borzyskowski I, Wahman M. (2021) Systematic Measurement Error in Election Violence Data: Causes and Consequences. *British Journal of Political Science*.;51(1):230-252. doi:10.1017/S0007123418000509
- Data Source: TBD

Thursday, Oct 17: Lab #6: Election Violence

- Llaudet & Imai Ch. 4
- Lab #5 due (11:59 through Canvas)
- Lab #6 distributed (Due Oct 29, 11:59P through Canvas)

## WEEK 10

### SECTION 6: POLITICS OF DEVELOPMENT

Tuesday, Oct 22: Climate Disaster Response

- Llaudet & Imai Ch. 5

- Elum, Zelda A., David M. Modise, and Ana Marr. (2017). “Farmer’s Perception of Climate Change and Responsive Strategies in Three Selected Provinces of South Africa.” *Climate Risk Management* 16 (January):246–57. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.crm.2016.11.001>.
- Data Source: TBD

Thursday, Oct 24: Lab #6 TBD

- Llaudet & Imai Ch. 5
- No Lab Assignment

## WEEK 11

### SECTION 7: FOUNDATIONS OF POLITICAL INQUIRY

Tuesday, Oct 29: Final Research Project Tutorial I

- Research Group Assignments
- Lab #6 due (11:59 through Canvas)

Thursday, Oct 31: Midterm II Review

- Take-Home Midterm II Distributed (Due Oct 8, 11:59P)

## WEEK 12

**Tuesday, Nov 5: In-Class Midterm II (during scheduled course time: 8:30-10:25)**

Thursday, Nov 7: Final Research Project Tutorial II

- TBD

## WEEK 13

Tuesday, Nov 12: Invited Talk- No Class

- Group Meeting #1

Thursday, Nov 14: Invited Talk- No Class

- Group Meeting #2
- **Research proposal due Friday, Nov 15 @ 11:59 PM through Turnitin on Canvas**

## WEEK 14

Tuesday, Nov 19: Final Research Project Tutorial III

- TBD

Thursday, Nov 21: Final Research Project Tutorial IV

- TBD

**WEEK 15**

**Tuesday, Nov 26- 28: Thanksgiving- No Class**

**WEEKS 16-17**

**Tuesday, Dec 3: Group Presentations**

Thursday, Dec 5: Reading Days

**GOOD LUCK ON YOUR EXAMS, FINAL PAPERS AND ENJOY THE HOLIDAYS!!!**