

POS 4734: Research Methods in Political Science

Department of Political Science

University of Florida

Fall 2020

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 1-4

Course Information

Lecture: Tuesdays 8:30 AM - 10:25 AM (MAT 0113)

Lab Sessions: Thursdays 8:30 to 9:20AM (MAT 0251)

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. 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 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, STATA. There are three ways you can access STATA:

- Academic Technology Labs (<https://labs.at.ufl.edu/>) around campus. Weil 408D is one of these labs.
- UF Apps (<http://info.apps.ufl.edu/>) is free and can be accessed anywhere from any operating system or device. To access data, you must save it to the “M drive.” The process of accessing data on personal computers varies by machine, so I will have you work on university computers during lab sessions.
- Purchasing a license from Stata (<https://www.stata.com/order/new/edu/gradplans/studentpricing/>).

In our lab sessions, I will also have you open .txt files. One way to open this is through Notepad, or notepad++. If you are accessing STATA via UF apps, you should use Notepad. If, however, you are using STATA via your own machine, I recommend using Notepad++ which can be downloaded for free online (<https://notepad-plus-plus.org/downloads/>).

Course Requirements

1. Class Participation (5%)
You are expected to attend all class meetings prepared for an in-depth discussion of the assigned course material. A portion of your final grade will be based on your participation. Please know that attendance is not equal to participation. Your grade will reflect not just whether you show up, but engagement in the discussion.
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 exercises in Stata designed to help you learn how to use the software, apply the concepts and research techniques discussed in class, and prepare you to complete the final research paper.
3. Midterm Exam (25%)
There will be an open-book in-class midterm exam on February 28, 2020, during our class. It is worth 25% of the final grade. Students should review all the class materials and apply them in answering the question(s).
4. Presentations (5%)
Students will do 10-minute presentations in the last weeks of class on their research papers. They will motivate and introduce their research question, discuss their data and empirical approach, explain their findings, and lastly, outline how they would transform the project into an honors Thesis.
5. Final research paper (35%)
Your assignment is to write a 15-20 page paper in which you pose a research question that contributes to the social science literature, derive hypotheses based on established theories and prior research, identify the appropriate methodology to test the proposed

relationship, and either conduct or propose a research design for evaluating that theory using empirical data.

To facilitate development of this research paper, students will develop a 3-page research proposal (5%). Students will then submit a preliminary draft (5%) as well as provide feedback on a classmate's preliminary draft (5%). The final research paper is worth (20%). Papers must be submitted to UF E-Learning (Canvas) on December 8th, 2020 at 8:30 AM. Papers should be typed, double-spaced, with size 12 font in a standard typeface. Students are encouraged to visit office hours to discuss their final papers over the course of the semester.

Grading Scale

I use the following grading scale: "A-" = [90-93.3), "A" = [93.4-96.6), "A+" = [96.7-100], with other letter grades following analogous intervals.

Course Policies

Privacy Protection: As in all courses, unauthorized recording and unauthorized sharing of recorded materials is strictly prohibited. As our class sessions will be live and students should both attend with their camera engaged and participate orally and in writing, lecture and class sessions will never be recorded by the professor nor any student. This policy is in place to ensure the privacy of our classmates and to ensure our material can be discussed openly and honestly.

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 lecture. My hope is that by the slides 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.

Absences: Absences are factored into participation and presentation grades. I understand that unforeseen events can arise and therefore missing a class will not harm your grade. However, a pattern of absences will result in a low participation score. If for some reason you must miss class outside of two meetings, you must contact me in advance (i.e., prior to class starting).

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 strongly encourage students to visit my virtual office hours, available by [appointment](#), 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, on weekends, or holidays. Please plan accordingly to have your questions answered in advance of assignment and exam deadlines.

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. 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 also specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions (sccr.dso.ufl.edu/process/student-conduct-code). Violations of the Honor Code is unacceptable and devalues the teaching and learning experience for the entire community. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. Should you have questions regarding academic integrity and honesty, I suggest reviewing the policies found on the University website and/or speaking with me during office hours.

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 UFDRRC. 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 entirety of our course will take place virtually, requiring the use of a working computer and access to audio-visual resources (e.g., webcam, microphones). If you are struggling to use Zoom or Canvas, please review these [UF Quick Start guides](#). This [link](#) also connects to UF resources regarding internet connectivity.

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.

Finally, keep in mind that in a pinch you can dial in to our virtual class using your cellphone to participate in class.

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 assignments submitted after the due date will be penalized a full letter grade each day it is late.

Exams: There is only one exam: an in-class midterm on October 22nd. 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 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 appeal grades that they believe are incorrect. Grade appeals will consist of a single typed page that identifies the problem and presents a reasoned argument that the grade fits the appeal criteria.

Week 1: Introduction

- 9.1.20 Course Introduction
- 9.3.20 STATA LAB 1
Commands → summarize

Week 2: What is Political Science?

- 9.8.20 Assigned Reading: PSRM Chapter 2 and PSRM Chapter 3 (pages 49-53)
- 9.10.20 STATA LAB 2
Assigned Reading: PA pages 24-26
Commands → codebook, list, label, generate, replace, rename

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

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

Merolla, Jennifer, S. Karthick Ramakrishnan, and Chris Haynes. 2013. ["“Illegal,” “undocumented,” or “unauthorized”: Equivalency Frames, Issue Frames, and Public Opinion on Immigration.”](#) *Perspectives on Politics* 11(3): 789-807.

9.17.20 Lab 3 Measurement

Assigned Reading: PSRM Chapter 4 (pages 84-86 & 90-92)

Week 4: Building Blocks of Social Science

9.22.20 Assigned Reading: PSRM Chapter 4 (pages 92-96 & 73-84)

9.24.20 STATA Lab 4

Students will submit their completed Research Topic Madlib

Commands → describe, summarize, tab

Week 5: Sampling and learning about the sample

9.29.20 Assigned Reading: PSRM Chapter 5

10.1.20 Lab 5 Cross-Tabulations

PSRM Chapter 13 (pages 267-277)

Assignment 1 Due

Week 6: Research Design

10.6.20 Assigned Reading: PSRM Chapter 6

Campbell, Donald T., and H. Laurence Ross. 1968. ["The Connecticut Crackdown on Speeding: Time-Series Data in Quasi-Experimental Analysis."](#) *Law & Society Review* 3(1): 33-53. doi:10.2307/3052794.

○ Read pages 33-41

10.8.20 STATA Lab 6 Cross-Tabulations

Rennó, Lucio R. "The Bolsonaro Voter: Issue Positions and Vote Choice in the 2018 Brazilian Presidential Elections." *Latin American Politics and Society*: 1-23.

○ Skim pages 1-8

Stata commands: Tabulate, preserve, restore, “by row and by column”

Research Proposal Due

Week 7: Data Collection and Bias

10.13.20 Assigned Reading: PSRM Chapter 10 (pages 193 to 202)

10.15.20 STATA Lab 7: Survey Response Bias

Assignment 2 Due

Week 8: Making Sense of Data

10.20.20 EXAM

10.22.20 STATA Lab 8: Data Visualization

Assigned Reading: PSRM Chapter 11 (pages 228-236)

Wainer, Howard. 1984. "[How to Display Data Badly.](#)" *The American Statistician* 38(2): 137-147.

Week 9: Testing Relationships

10.27.20 Research paper discussion

Assigned Reading: PSRM Chapter 12

10.29.20 STATA Lab 9: t-tests

Week 10: Multivariate Analysis

11.3.20 Assigned Reading: PSRM Chapter 13 (pages 290-298)

11.5.20 STATA Lab 10: Chi-square

Assigned Reading: PSRM Chapter 13 (pages 287 to 289)

Week 11: Regression

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

11.12.20 STATA Lab 11: Regression

Assignment 3 Due

Week 12: Regression

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

11.19.20 STATA Lab 12: Regression Interactions

Assigned Reading: Brambor, Thomas, William Roberts Clark, and Matt Golder. "Understanding interaction models: Improving empirical analyses." *Political analysis* (2006): 63-82.

- Skim pages 1-6

Preliminary Draft Due

Week 13: Experiments

11.24.20 Assigned Reading: Trochim, William, James P. Donnelly, and Kanika Arora. 2015. *The Research Methods Database* (3rd ed.) Mason, OH: Atomic Dog Publishing. Chapter 7

Week 14:

12.1.20 One-on-One Feedback Meetings

Peer Review Due

12.3.20 Assigned Reading: Pollock III, Philip H., and Barry C. Edwards. *The Essentials of Political Analysis*. Cq Press, 2019. Chapter 9.

Week 15: Feedback

12.8.20 Presentations

Final Papers and Peer Review Memo Due