Scope and Methods of Political Science (POS3703.0003)

Credit: 3 Units

Professor Nikola Mirilovic
University of Central Florida
Spring 2014
MWF 1:30 – 2:20 pm
Howard Phillips Hall (HPH) 310

Office	Phillips Hall 302 J
Office hours	MW: 2:30 –5:00 pm, or by appointment
Voice	(407) 823-5082
Email	Via the course page in Canvas
Required books	Philip Pollock, *The Essentials of Political Analysis,* 4th Edition ISBN: 978-1-60871-686-9. Available at the Bookstore. Philip Pollock, *A Stata Companion to Political Analysis,* 2nd Edition ISBN: 978-1-60871-671-5. Available at the Bookstore.

Graduate Teaching Assistant: Matthew Benchimol, mdbench@knights.ucf.edu

Course Description: This course covers the foundations of political science analysis and of statistical testing. The topics and concepts it examines include variables, hypotheses, research design, controlled comparisons and statistical significance. The students will be introduced to and learn to use the data analysis software Stata.

Course Goals: Mastering the foundations of research design and of statistical analysis provides a number of benefits to students. These skills can be a foundation of future independent research. They can help students assess more thoroughly debates and materials covered in their other social science classes. Finally, these skills can help students become even more informed citizens –politicians often use statistics and empirical claims to try to persuade voters.

Course Design: This course combines an examination of fundamental concepts and techniques of political science research with hands-on practical work applying those concepts and techniques. It is therefore essential for students to regularly attend the class and to read and carefully consider the required materials before the class.

Requirements: The final grade will be based on attendance (10% of the grade) a midterm exam (25% of the grade), a final exam (35% of the grade), and lab assignments (30% of the grade). The final exam will be cumulative but with an emphasis on the second half of the course. Lab assignments will be given out

regularly throughout the course. When calculating the overall lab assignment grade, I will drop the lowest of your individual lab assignment grades.

Attendance Policy: Attendance is required. As stated above, regular attendance is crucial to being successful in this course. Please arrive to class on time: it will start promptly at its assigned time. Late arrivals or early departures count as absences.

Course Correspondence: All correspondence with the instructor will be via Canvas. I will usually respond to your message within 48 hours on business days.

Make-up Exam Policy: Make up exams will be granted only in the case of an emergency and/or a university documented absence. If exam dates conflict with a religious holiday, please notify the instructor about this at the beginning of the class. I will seek to accommodate you.

Lab Assignment Lateness Policy: the penalty for submitting a lab assignment late is 10 points (one letter grade) for each calendar day of lateness (i.e., an A lab assignment submitted a day late will receive a grade of B; if submitted two days late it will receive a grade of C, etc.). Assignments submitted after a graded assignment has been returned to the other students will not be accepted.

Stata and Computer Lab: Stata is available in the HPH 310 computer lab (our classroom). The information about the hours when the lab is available to students will be distributed in class and posted on Canvas. Students should either plan to regularly visit the computer lab, or rent and install Stata on their computer. You can rent Stata for six months at:

http://www.stata.com/order/new/edu/gradplans/gp-campus.html

Or by phone: 800-782-8272 (Monday through Friday 8:00 to 5:00 Central Time)

The recommended version of Stata is Stata/IC 13 for the price conscious, the students-only six-month license. The student price is $69. The link is located in the upper-right corner of the webpage listed above. Stata runs on Windows, Mac, and Linux/Unix. You need not specify your operating system when you order; Stata licenses are not platform specific. Delivery via electronic download is available.

UCF Disability Statement: The University of Central Florida is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities. This syllabus is available in alternate formats upon request. Students with disabilities who need accommodations in this course must contact the professor at the beginning of the semester to discuss needed accommodations. No accommodations will be provided until the student has met with the professor to request accommodations. Students who need accommodations must be registered with Student Disability Services, Student Resource Center, Room 132, phone (407) 823-2371, TTY/TDD only phone (407) 823-2116, before requesting accommodations from the professor.

UCF Rules of Conduct: As reflected in the UCF creed, integrity and scholarship are core values that should guide our conduct and decisions as members of the UCF community. Plagiarism and cheating are very serious academic offenses. Please refer to the University's Rules of Conduct (available at:

http://www.osc.sdes.ucf.edu) for more information on these issues. Failure to comply with university rules may subject violator(s) to appropriate action by university authorities and/or appropriate civil authorities. The penalty for students who plagiarize or cheat on an exam or an assignment will include a grade of F on that exam or assignment.

Grading Scale:

Letter Grade	Points
A	93 – 100 points
A-	90 – 92 points
B+	87 – 89 points
B	83 – 86 points
B-	80 – 82 points
C+	77 – 79 points
C	73 – 76 points
C-	70 – 72 points
D+	67 – 69 points
D	63 – 66 points
D-	60 – 62 points
F	59 and below

Course Schedule

January 6: Introductory Session (1 class)

No readings

1) January 8-15: Defining Concepts and Introducing Stata (3 classes)

Essentials: Introduction and Chapter 1

Stata Companion: Getting Started, Chapter 1

NOTE: Friday, January 10: no class - Professor attending a conference

2) January 17-31: Variables (6 classes)

Essentials: Chapter 2

Stata Companion: Chapter 2

Stata Companion: Chapter 3

NOTE: January 20: Martin Luther King Day: no class

3) February 3-12: Explanations, Hypotheses, and Comparisons (5 classes)

Essentials: Chapter 3

Stata Companion: Chapter 4

February 14: Midterm review

February 17: Midterm exam

5) February 19-24: Research Design (3 classes)

Essentials: Chapter 4

6) February 26-March 14: Controlled Comparisons (5 classes)

Essentials: Chapter 5

Stata Companion: Chapter 5

NOTE: March 3-7: Spring Break: no class

8) March 17-21: Foundations of Inference (3 classes)

Essentials: Chapter 6

9) March 24-April 2: Statistical Significance and Inferences about Sample Means (4 classes)

Essentials: Chapter 7

Stata Companion: Chapter 6

NOTE: March 28: TBA (Professor will be attending a conference)

12) April 4-16: Regression Analysis (6 classes)

Essentials: Chapter 8

Stata Companion: Chapter 8

13) April 18: Thinking Empirically and Future Research (1 class)

Essentials: Chapter 10

Stata Companion: Chapter 11

April 21: Final Review

Final Exam: Monday, April 28, 1:00 – 3:50 pm. Location: HPH 310 (our classroom)

Note: This syllabus is subject to change at the instructor's discretion if necessary. Changes to the syllabus, if any, will be announced in class and the updated syllabus will be posted on Canvas.