POS 3703W Scope and Methods of Political Science

Fall 2014 Syllabus

Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. Aubrey Jewett

Office: Phillips Hall 302 E

Office Hours: Online by e-mail or in person T & R 8-10:15 am and 12-12:45pm.

Phone: Political Science Main Office 407-823-2608; Direct Office Line 407-823-6030

E-mail: aubrey.jewett@ucf.edu

Course Description

The primary purpose of this **Scope and Methods of Political Science** class is to introduce you to: the study of politics; the discipline of political science; and the skills needed for political analysis.

According to David Easton, **politics** can be thought of as the process by which a society formally and authoritatively allocates its values and resources. At its most basic then, Harold Lasswell says that **political science** is the study of who gets what, when and how in society. **Political analysis** is undertaken by scholars and lay people alike to describe, explain and predict political phenomena.

Often political scientists are interested in explanation, and use four criteria to establish a causal relationship between a dependent variable (the political phenomenon to be explained) and one or more independent variables (used to explain the change in the dependent variable). Political scientists try to establish causation by: suggesting a theory about the proposed relationship; demonstrating covariation between them; controlling for spuriousness; and showing that the independent variable changes before the dependent variable.

Students will learn about the foundations of empirical research, the design and structure of research, techniques for data collection, and methods for processing and analyzing data. In addition, students will receive substantial hands-on statistical analysis experience through a series of internet assignments and by using *Microcase*.

Scope and Methods Course Warning

Many students are apprehensive about taking Political Science Scope and Methods. Quite frankly that is probably a good thing because Scope and Methods for many students is the most difficult course they will take for their major. It is more difficult than other political science courses because it has many unfamiliar terms and concepts, requires competency in statistical analysis (especially the last third of the course), and is primarily about learning a set of skills used by political scientists for political research rather than learning about the content of a substantive area.

In addition, taking scope and methods online add a level of difficulty since you will not have face to face interaction with the professor and in-class lectures. In order to succeed in this class you will need to put in 10-12 hours a week, read and re-read the material as some of it is quite difficult, keep up with all deadlines without being reminded, do all assignments regularly without missing any, and give your best effort all semester especially on the tests and the original research project.

This is an important and serious course and so if you do not think you are up to doing all of these things then I would strongly suggest you drop this course and sign up for an in-person section. If you do not follow all of these suggestions than your apprehension about this course is warranted as you will most likely not do well in this class. Conversely if you follow these guidelines, then you will find that you have most likely done well by the end of the course and be justifiably proud of your efforts and achievement.

Goals

1. Students will demonstrate knowledge of the discipline of political science and political research methods.

2. Students will learn and apply basic research skills including statistical analysis with Microcase.

3. Students will think critically about political data and issues and research findings and methods.

4. Students will engage in their own original political science research using the techniques accepted by the discipline.

Required Text

1. Michael K. Le Roy, *Research Methods in Political Science: An Introduction Using MicroCase*, 8th ed., Boston: Wadsworth Cengage, 2013.

You should only buy a new version of the book. Each book comes with pages that tear out and with a one-time use code that allows access to the Microcase Statistical

Analysis Software. Used books will not give you access to the software and are often missing pages. You can purchase a traditional new hard copy of the book, rent a copy, or you can get a new e-version of the book if you prefer. Hard copies should be available at the on-campus bookstore and off-campus college bookstores. You can also buy the hard copy, rent a copy, or get the e-version directly from the publisher at the following website http://www.cengagebrain.com/shop/isbn/9781133309307.

Microcase software does not work on Apple Computers. You will need access to a Microsoft based computer to install and run the software. As an alternative to using your own computer, the political science computer lab on the 3rd floor of Howard Phillips Hall can also be used to do these assignments. Check the department website for lab hours each semester.

Evaluation

Overview: This course has 12 Modules – one per week. Each Module will require reading a chapter from Microcase, completing and submitting a Microcase computer assignment, reading the information I post in the module, doing an extension assignment and posting it into discussion, and providing feedback to your classmates in discussion. In addition there is a midterm exam and a final exam. And last there is an original research project (which is Microcase computer assignment 13).

Here is the percent of your total grade for each type of assignment:

*Twelve Microcase Computer Assignments – 30% of your total grade (I will drop the lowest grade before computing your percent – but you would be wise to do all of them since they give you the skills you need for the original research project). You will do the statistical analysis required by the workbook and upload your answers. For each module you may fill in the actual worksheets in the book, scan them and upload them as one PDF document or you may type up the answers in a MS Word document and upload that.

*Twelve Extension Assignments Including Discussion with Classmates – 15% of your total grade (I will drop the lowest grade before computing your percent but you would be wise to do all of them since they give you practice on skills you will need for the tests).

*Two Exams – 40% of your total grade (the midterm and the final exam are each worth 20%). The exams will be multiple choice and problem solving. The final exam is cumulative as the scope and methods class is a skills course that builds over the semester.

*Original Research Project (Microcase Chapter 13) -15% of total your grade

Policies

1. If you have questions about the course of a general nature do not e-mail me initially. Instead post your question in the Discussions section of the web site. Once in Discussions select the topic “Questions for Professor Jewett” and then click in the “Reply” box and type in your question and then hit “Post Reply.” You may have to wait up to 48 hours for a response but I am usually much quicker than that. You should review this section before asking your question as someone else may have already asked it. Of course if your problem is personal (grade related for instance) or involves not being able to get on the site (and hence unable to get to Discussions) feel free to e-mail me at my normal e-mail address.

2. If you would like to seek the help of fellow students go to Discussions and select the topic “Students Seeking Help from Students” and post your question as above. This can be a technical question about computer problems or a subject matter question. I will give extra credit to students who help others!

3. Online courses require students to be self-motivated and do work on a regular basis without being reminded of assignments and due dates. The average student can expect to put in at least 10-12 hours a week on this course if they want to do well. The expected hourly requirement is more than for my other courses because this is a more difficult class for most students. You will probably need to read and then reread many of the modules and Microcase chapters to really understand them.

4. Late assignments will not be accepted for Microcase Computer Assignments. Tests will not be reopened once they are closed. If you are late posting your Extension Assignment/Discussion you will receive only half-credit and once the module closes you will not be able to post it or discuss it and will lose all credit. Do not wait until the last minute to do assignments and tests. Computer problems and Internet connection problems will happen. They are not acceptable excuses for missing due dates and deadlines.

5. I will drop your lowest Microcase computer assignment score and lowest Extension/Discussion score when I compute your final grade - this may occur in the same week and module or it could be a computer assignment from one week and an Extension/Discussion from another. Since I am not accepting late assignments after a module closes this will provide you a measure of protection should something happen that prevents you from doing a module or part of a module (computer glitch, illness, vacation etc.). However remember that the course is cumulative and that you will need to master all material for the final exam and especially for the final research project so you are advised to do all 12 assignments.

6. I follow and enforce the UCF policies pertaining to academic honesty and integrity and expect professional student conduct. See the UCF policies established in the Golden Rule if you are unfamiliar.

7. Students registered with UCF Disability Services will be given accommodation as needed.

Grading Scale

This class is on a 10 point grading scale with no plus minus grades.

100-90 A (Outstanding or excellent work)

89-80 B (Good, above average work)

79-70 C (Average work)

69-60 D (Below average, poor work)

59-0 F (Unacceptable work or missed assignment)

Assignment Due Dates

Academic Engagement Assignment Required by the Federal Government:
Class Introduction Discussion Posting due by Wednesday 8/27 at 11pm.

As of fall 2014, all faculty members are required to document students' academic activity at the beginning of each course. In order to document that you began this course, please complete the following academic activity by the end of the first week of classes, or as soon as possible after adding the course, but no later than Wednesday August 27. Failure to do so will result in a delay in the disbursement of your financial aid.

Go to Discussions and then to the "Class Introduction" topic. Click in the "Reply" box and type in several sentences to introduce yourself to your classmates and to me. You might include information about your major, expected graduation date, job/career (current/future plans), and a few personal details if you wish to share (family, interests/hobbies, etc.). After typing in your information, hit "Post Reply."

Module 1 Political Science, the Scientific Approach and the Research Process:
Microcase Worksheet due by Sunday 8/31 at 11 pm; Initial discussion posting due by Monday 9/1 at 11 pm; additional postings due by, and module closes on, Wednesday 9/3 11:00 pm

PLEASE NOTE: JUST BECAUSE SOME DUE DATES FALLS OVER THE LABOR DAY HOLIDAY DOES NOT MEAN YOU HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL THEN TO DO THE ASSIGNMENT!

For Module 1 please read: Microcase Chapter 1 A Brief Overview of Research Methods

Module 2 Conceptual Foundations: The Measurement of Political Concepts: Microcase Worksheet due by Sunday 9/7 at 11 pm; Initial discussion posting due by Monday 9/8 at 11 pm; additional postings due by, and module closes on, Wednesday 9/10 11:00 pm

For Module 2 please read: Microcase Chapter 2 Measurement 1 Basic Ideas

Module 3 Measurement and Types of Data in Political Science: Microcase Worksheet due by Sunday 9/14 at 11 pm; Initial discussion posting due by Monday 9/15 at 11 pm; additional postings due by, and module closes on, Wednesday 9/17 11:00 pm

For Module 3 please read: Microcase Chapter 3 Measurement 2 Types of Data

Module 4 Basic Elements of Research: Variables, Covariation, and Hypotheses: Microcase Worksheet due by Sunday 9/21 at 11 pm; Initial discussion posting due by Monday 9/22 at 11 pm; additional postings due by, and module closes on, Wednesday 9/24 11:00 pm

For Module 4 please read: Microcase Chapter 4 Variables Variation Explanation

Module 5 Survey Research and Questions (and a follow-up on Hypotheses): Microcase Worksheet due by Sunday 9/28 at 11 pm; Initial discussion posting due by Monday 9/29 at 11 pm; additional postings due by, and module closes on, Wednesday 10/1 11:00 pm

For Module 5 please read: Microcase Chapter 5 Hypotheses

Module 6 Sampling: Microcase Worksheet due by Sunday 10/5 at 11 pm; Initial discussion posting due by Monday 10/6 at 11 pm; additional postings due by, and module closes on, Wednesday 10/8 11:00 pm

For Module 6 please read: Microcase Chapter 6 Sampling

Module 7 Research Design, Data Preparation, and Entry: Microcase Worksheet due by Sunday 10/12 at 11 pm; Initial discussion posting due by Monday 10/13 at 11 pm; additional postings due by, and module closes on, Wednesday 10/15 11:00 pm

For Module 7 please read: Microcase Chapter 7 Data Preparation and Entry

Midterm Exam Due by Monday 10/20 at 11pm

Withdrawal Deadline Monday 10/27

Module 8 The Univariate Distribution: Describing Political Phenomenon with Statistics: Microcase Worksheet due by Sunday 10/26 at 11 pm; Initial discussion posting due by Monday 10/27 at 11 pm; additional postings due by, and module closes on, Wednesday 10/29 11:00 pm

For Module 8 please read: Microcase Chapter 8 Descriptive Statistics

Module 9 Bivariate Analysis: Testing Hypotheses with Crosstabulations (Crosstabs): Microcase Worksheet due by Sunday 11/2 at 11 pm; Initial discussion posting due by

Monday 11/3 at 11 pm; additional postings due by, and module closes on, Wednesday 11/5 11:00 pm

For Module 9 please read: Microcase Chapter 9 Cross Tabs

Module 10 Significance Testing and Measures of Association: Microcase Worksheet due by Sunday 11/9 at 11 pm; Initial discussion posting due by Monday 11/10 at 11 pm; additional postings due by, and module closes on, Wednesday 11/12 11:00 pm

PLEASE NOTE: JUST BECAUSE SOME DUE DATE FALLS OVER THE VETERANS' DAY HOLIDAY DOES NOT MEAN YOU HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL THEN TO DO THE ASSIGNMENT!

For Module 10 please read: Microcase Chapter 10 Statistical Significance and Measures of Association

Module 11 Control, Elaboration, and Multivariate Analysis: Crosstabs with a Control Variable): Microcase Worksheet due by Sunday 11/16 at 11 pm; Initial discussion posting due by Monday 11/17 at 11 pm; additional postings due by, and module closes on, Wednesday 11/19 11:00 pm

For Module 11 please read: Microcase Chapter 11 Controlling for a 3rd Variable

Module 12 Correlation and Regression Analysis: Microcase Worksheet due by Sunday 11/23 at 11 pm; Initial discussion posting due by Monday 11/24 at 11 pm; additional postings due by, and module closes on, Wednesday 11/26 11:00 pm

For Module 12 please read: Microcase Chapter 12 Correlation and Regression

Final Exam Due by Monday 12/1 at 11pm

Microcase Chapter 13 Worksheet (Original Research Project) Due by Monday Dec 8 at 11pm

Getting Started

To begin the course, go back to the home page and click on Discussions and then select the "Class Introduction" topic and make a post as described above. After that, to begin the academic part of the course, click on Learning Modules and then read and follow the instructions for Module 1.