POLS 3703: Scope and Methods of Political Science

Department of Political Science

College of Sciences, University of Central Florida

Instructor:	Barry C. Edwards, J.D., Ph.D.	Term:	Fall 2014
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COURSE SYLLABUS

I. Course Description

In this course you will learn the elements of social scientific thinking—how to describe variables and measure complex concepts, how to create explanations, how to construct and test hypotheses, how to think analytically, and how to control for rival explanations of political phenomena. You also will learn how to use R, a free, state-of-the-art data analysis software (available at cran.r-project.org). University Course Catalog Description: the scope and methodology of political analysis. Extensive examination of the discipline, research design and methodology.

II. Course Prerequisites

POS 2041 (American National Government) or consent of the instructor.

III. Course Objectives

By the end of the course, you should have a firm understanding of how political scientists conduct research. You should also understand and be able to apply key methods of political science research. You should leave the class with a library of functional R scripts that you can use to analyze data in the future.

IV. Required Texts and Materials

Pollock, Phillip H. 2011. *The Essentials of Political Analysis, 4th Edition.* Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press (hereafter "*Essentials*").

Pollock, Phillip H. 2014. *A R Companion to Political Analysis.* Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press (hereafter "*Companion*").

There are a number of web sites that offer useful information about statistics and computing. Students may wish to use these web sites as necessary to supplemental class material. For example, we may only briefly review some mathematical concepts. If a concept is not familiar to you or you want to study it in more detail, I would encourage you to take advantage of supplemental resources.

Additional readings will be announced and/or distributed in class.

V. Basis for Final Grade

1. Class Participation and Attendance (15%) – Students should be prepared to discuss all assigned readings at the appropriate time. Students should share thoughtful comments and questions during class discussion and be respectful to one another. You can participate by listening and taking notes. Text messaging or surfing the web during class is not appropriate. Class presentations are an important component of class participation. There may also be opportunities to participate in online discussions through our webcourses@UCF page.

2. Midterm Examination (15%) – The Midterm Examination will focus on material covered from the beginning of class to the date of the midterm. Students can expect a mix of multiple choice, true/false, and short answer questions.

3. Lab Assignments (50%) – There will be ten assignments over the course of the semester. These assignment will be in the nature of problem sets and lab reports that require you to apply the course material and write R code. I will distribute assignments on Thursdays and we will use the majority of these Thursday sessions to work on assignments. You must turn in your written assignment (including R code script) before class on the following Tuesday (hard copy preferred but .pdf file by email acceptable). Additional time is provided for Assignments #4, #9, and #10. See Schedule, below, for details.

4. Final Examination (20%) – The Final Examination is cumulative and will require students to apply their understanding of the subject matter in a constructive manner.

Students can expect a mix of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. At least one essay question will require students to apply course material to a data set.

Grading Scale.

>=93	90-92	87-89	83-86	80-82	77-79	73-76	70-72	67-69	63-66	60-62	<=59
A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F

VI. Grade Dissemination

Graded tests and materials in this course will be returned individually only by request. You can access your scores at any time using "myUCF Grades" in the portal. Please note that scores returned mid-semester are unofficial grades. If you need help accessing myUCF Grades, see the online tutorial: https://myucfgrades.ucf.edu/help/.

VII. Schedule (Subject to Revision)

Date	Before Class:	During Class Time:
Tues. 8/19	No Assignment	Lecture: Studying Politics Scientifically
Thurs. 8/21	Read *Essentials*, Introduction Read *Companion*, Chapter 1: Getting Started	Lab Session: Introduction to R
Tues. 8/26	Read *Essentials*, Chapter 1: The Definition and Measurement of Concepts	Lecture: Concepts and Measurement
Thurs. 8/28	Read *Companion*, Chapter 2: Descriptive Statistics	Lab Session: Start Assignment #1 (Applying Concepts and Using R)
Tues. 9/2	Read *Essentials*, Chapter 2: Measuring and Describing Variables Finish Assignment #1	Lecture: Measuring and Describing Variables
Thurs. 9/4	Read *Companion*, Chapter 3: Transforming Variables	Lab Session: Start Assignment #2 (Describing and Transforming Variables)

Date	Before Class:	During Class Time:
Tues. 9/9	Read *Essentials*, Chapter 3: Proposing Explanations, Framing Hypotheses, and Making Comparisons Finish Assignment #2	Lecture: Explanations, Hypotheses, Comparisons
Thurs. 9/11	Read *Companion*, Chapter 4: Making Comparisons	Lab Session: Start Assignment #3 (Making Comparisons)
Tues. 9/16	Read *Essentials*, Chapter 4: Research Design and the Logic of Control Finish Assignment #3	Lecture: Research Design I
Thurs. 9/18	Reading Assignment TBD (Public Opinion Surveys)	Lab Session: Start Assignment #4 (Research Hypotheses: Student Opinion Research)
Tues. 9/23	Reading Assignment TBD (Sample Research Design)	Lecture: Research Design II
Thurs. 9/25	Finish Assignment #4	Student Presentations: Assignment #4, Research Hypotheses
Tues. 9/30	Prepare Questions for Midterm Review Session	Midterm Review Session
Thurs. 10/2	Prepare for Midterm Examination	Midterm Examination
Tues. 10/7	Read *Essentials*, Chapter 5: Making Controlled Comparisons	Lecture: Making Controlled Comparisons
Thurs. 10/9	Read *Companion*, Chapter 5: Making Controlled Comparisons	Lab Session: Start Assignment #5 (Making Controlled Comparisons)
Tues. 10/14	Read *Essentials*, Chapter 6: Foundations of Statistical Inference, pp. 122-135 Finish Assignment #5	Lecture: Foundations of Inference I

Date	Before Class:	During Class Time:
Thurs. 10/16	Reading Assignment TBD (Samples and Sampling Distributions)	Lab Session: Start Assignment #6 (Samples and Sampling Distributions)
Tues. 10/21	Read *Essentials*, Chapter 6: Foundations of Statistical Inference, pp. 135-154 Finish Assignment #6	Lecture: Foundations of Inference II
Thurs. 10/23	Read *Companion*, Chapter 6: Making Inferences about Sample Means	Lab Session: Start Assignment #7 (Making Inferences about Sample Means and Sample Proportions)
Tues. 10/28	Read *Essentials*, Chapter 7: Tests of Significance and Measures of Association Finish Assignment #7	Lecture: Tests of Significance and Measures of Association
Thurs. 10/30	Read *Companion*, Chapter 7: Chi-Square and Measures of Association	Lab Session: Start Assignment #8 (Tests of Significance, Chi-Square, and Measures of Association)
Tues. 11/4	Read *Essentials*, Chapter 8: Correlation and Linear Regression, pp. 182-199 Finish Assignment #8	Lecture: Correlation and Linear Regression I
Thurs. 11/6	Read *Companion*, Chapter 8: Correlation and Linear Regression	Lab Session: Start Assignment #9 (Correlation and Linear Regression)
Tues. 11/11	No UCF classes on Veterans' Day, Tuesday, Nov. 11th.	
Thurs. 11/13	Read *Companion*, Chapter 9: Dummy Variables and Interaction Effects Finish Assignment #9	Lab Session: Work on Assignment #10 (Testing a Hypothesis Using Linear Regression Analysis)
Tues. 11/18	Read *Essentials*, Chapter 8: Correlation and Linear Regression, pp. 199-206.	Lecture: Correlation and Linear Regression II

Date	Before Class:	During Class Time:
Thurs. 11/20	Read *Companion*, Chapter 11: Doing Your Own Political Analysis	Lecture: Studying Politics Scientifically, A Reprise (not a lab day)
Tues. 11/25	Finish Assignment #10	Student Presentations: Assignment #10: (Testing a Hypothesis Using Linear Regression Analysis)
Thurs. 11/27	No UCF classes on Thurs, Nov. 27th. Happy Thanksgiving!	
Week of 12/1	UCF classes end on Mon., Dec. 1st Prepare for Final Examination	Final Examination on Thursday, Dec. 4th at 7 – 9:50 am.

VIII. Course Policies

Late Work Policy: Make-ups for in-class writing, quizzes, the midterm, or the final exam will only be allowed for official University activities or personal emergencies. Written documentation is required. Make-up assessments may be different. Assignments turned in late will be assessed a penalty of one point for each day late.

Extra Credit Policy: There is no extra credit available.

Grades of "Incomplete": Incomplete grades are given only in situations where unexpected emergencies prevent a student from completing the course and the remaining work can be completed the next semester. Your instructor is the final authority on whether you qualify for an incomplete. Incomplete work must be finished by the end of the subsequent semester or the "I" will automatically be recorded as an "F" on your transcript.

Group Work Policy: There are no group projects in this class. You are welcome to discuss course material with other students, but you are responsible for your own work.

Email: I may occasionally email students supplementary material or reminders about the class. I check my email regularly during weekdays and occasionally during the weekend. Students may expect an email reply by the next business day and encouraged to follow-up with me if I do not reply by the next business day.

Laptop Usage: This class meets in a computer lab so you have ready access to a computer as necessary. On lecture days, I recommend that you take hand written notes

on my lecture outlines. Educational research strongly suggests that taking notes by hand is more effective than taking notes on a laptop (see e.g. http://www.vox.com/2014/6/4/5776804/note-taking-by-hand-versus-laptop). During lab sessions, you may work on your own laptop or you can work on one of the computers in the lab.

Classroom Devices: You are welcome to use calculators, tape recorders, other audio & technology devices for your course so long as they are not disruptive to any student in the class (including you).

Disability Access: 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 who need accommodations must be registered with Student Disability Services, Ferrell Commons Room 185, phone (407) 823-2371, TTY/TDD only phone (407) 823-2116, before requesting accommodations from the professor.

Attendance Policy: Class participation and attendance is 15% of your grade in this class.

Professionalism Policy: Per university policy and classroom etiquette; mobile phones, iPods, *etc*. **must be silenced** during all classroom and lab lectures. Those not heeding this rule will be asked to leave the classroom/lab immediately so as to not disrupt the learning environment. Please arrive on time for all class meetings. Students who habitually disturb the class by talking, arriving late, *etc*., and have been warned may suffer a reduction in their final class grade.

Academic Conduct Policy: Academic dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated. If you are uncertain as to what constitutes academic dishonesty, please consult The Golden Rule, the University of Central Florida's Student Handbook (http://www.goldenrule.sdes.ucf.edu/) for further details. As in all University courses, The Golden Rule Rules of Conduct will be applied. Violations of these rules will result in a record of the infraction being placed in your file and receiving a zero on the work in question AT A MINIMUM. At the instructor's discretion, you may also receive a failing grade for the course. Confirmation of such incidents can also result in expulsion from the University

University Writing Center: The University Writing Center (UWC) is a free resource for UCF undergraduates and graduates. At the UWC, a trained writing consultant will work individually with you on anything you're writing (in or out of class), at any point in the writing process from brainstorming to editing. Appointments are recommended, but not required. For more information or to make an appointment, visit the UWC website at http://www.uwc.ucf.edu, stop by MOD 608, or call 407.823.2197.

Religious Observances: Students are expected to notify their instructor in advance if they intend to miss class to observe a holy day of their religious faith (not already reflected in the normal class schedule). For a current schedule of major religious

holidays, see the Faculty Center's main web page under "Calendars," and for additional information, contact the Office of Diversity Initiatives at 407-823-6479.