**POS3703.0001 Scope and Methods of Political Science (3 credits)**
School of Politics, Security, and International Affairs

**Summer A 2021**
5/17/21 – 6/26/21
W – Asynchronous Online

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Contact: Email or Webcourses@UCF Inbox Message
Response within 24-36 hours

## COURSE INFORMATION

### Course Description:

The purpose of this course is to help students gain a detailed overview of the processes and procedures involved in conducting political research. Specifically, students will learn how to formulate and communicate good research questions, how to develop and implement a research plan to evaluate such questions, how to execute specific methods like hypothesis testing within the research plan, and ultimately how to form conclusions in political research—all using traditional and computer-based analysis tools on real-world political science data. By the end of this course, students will have the skills necessary to both read and write original political analysis.

### Course Objectives:

At the end of this course, you will be able to:

1. Identify and explain the theoretical principles and tools needed to generate and understand political research.
2. Identify and explain appropriate strategies for evaluating diverse political research questions.
3. Clearly communicate research plans for broad audiences.
4. Apply basic statistical software commands to conceptualized research plans.
5. Form quantitative conclusions about topics of political interest.

**Textbooks (hard copy or digital):**

- (Required) Philip H. Pollock & Barry C. Edwards. *The Essentials of Political Analysis* (6th edition). Washington, DC: CQ Press (2019).
    - Note: Recommended readings will be identified in Webcourses as "Pollock/Edwards Text"

- (Strongly recommended) Philip H. Pollock & Barry C. Edwards, *A Stata Companion to Political Analysis* (4th edition). Washington, DC: CQ Press (2018).
    - Note: Recommended readings will be identified as "Pollock/Edwards Stata Text"

*A note on textbooks:* There are several different editions of the Pollock and Edwards text; the pages in this syllabus will be specific to the 6th edition, so if you choose to use a different edition you'll have to approximate the page numbers to match that version. You can use either digital copies (via VitalSource) or hard copies (via the bookstore, Amazon, etc), and can either rent or own. Among those various options and your preference, pricing will likely fall between $22-80. The recommended Stata Companion text is also available in those formats (for approximately $20-50, again depending on your format preference). Though the Stata companion text is not required, ***it is highly recommended***. Getting to know new statistical software can be challenging, and the recommended text offers step-by-step instructions and explanations for a number of Stata's functions. That said, Stata Corp. publishes many guides online that, while more technically complex, are free—so that is an option if you are saving money (I just recommend that you budget extra time to try and search for the right guidance online).

**Additional course materials**

Required non-textbook materials will all be linked via Webcourses@UCF in the appropriate modules. Students should pay close attention to the syllabus to know the course materials required for each module, and are expected to complete all required readings in their completion of a given module.

In addition to the required reading assignments, you will require access to Stata, the statistical software we will employ throughout the latter half of the course. There are two ways to use STATA: either via UCF Apps, or via a personal student license. More information on accessing STATA in either format will be provided during the course (though a cost note up front: UCF Apps' version of STATA is free but can occasionally be a little clunky to use, while the student license is downloaded to your personal computer and can be slightly smoother to use but at a projected cost of $48. Choose whichever method is appropriate for you—both will accomplish the course goals just fine).

***Optional Readings:***
You are only required to complete the assigned textbook and Webcourses readings for any given module. However, some learners might find optional basic resources helpful for the completion of the course. Some recommended titles are included below.

For additional basic statistics help:

Moore, D., McCabe, G., & Craig, B. (2021). *Introduction to the Practice of Statistics* (10th ed.). New York, NY: W.H. Freeman.

For additional policy research writing help:

Baglione, L. (2020). *Writing a Research Paper in Political Science: A Practical Guide to Inquiry, Structure, and Methods* (4th ed.), Washington, DC: CQ Press.

**Graded Assignments:**

Class Engagement (30%)
Homework (30%)
Midterm Exam (20%)
Research Proposal (20%)

***Class Engagement (300 points):***
Because this is an asynchronous 'W' format course, students are expected to independently manage their engagement with the course material. This will include viewing required lecture videos, engaging in discussion boards, completing required readings, and submitting assignments on time. Class engagement will be evaluated based on the degree to which you satisfy each of these components, in addition to your completion of a syllabus quiz to demonstrate academic engagement (for financial aid dispersal).

***Homework (300 points):***
Students will be assigned a series of four comprehensive homework assignments designed to practice their political research design and analysis skills. These assignments will be delivered via Webcourses@UCF, with specific instructions available under the Assignments tab.

***Midterm exam (200 points):***
Students will take a timed virtual midterm exam during the Week 4 Module covering topics from the first half of the course. The instructor will provide information on the specific format and topics surveyed prior to the Midterm.

***Research Proposal (200 points):***
Students will craft a 6-8 page research proposal that makes use of their quantitative analysis and writing skills. The final project is due Saturday June 26th via the Webcourses@UCF course site. Information and guidance on the project guidelines will be provided by the instructor prior to the final project due date.

***Grading Scale***

| Letter Grade | Percentage | Total points |
|---|---|---|
| A | 93%-100% | 925- 1000 |
| A- | 90-93% | 895 - 924 |
| B+ | 87-89% | 865 - 894 |
| B | 84-86% | 835 - 864 |
| B- | 80-83% | 795 - 834 |
| C+ | 77-79% | 765 - 794 |
| C | 74-76% | 735 - 764 |
| C- | 70-73% | 695 - 734 |
| D+ | 67-69% | 665 - 694 |
| D | 64-66% | 635 - 664 |
| D- | 60-63% | 595 - 634 |
| F | 0-59% | 0-594 |

**Course Format**

This course will be delivered asynchronously online, via weekly Modules that are released each Monday and conclude the subsequent Sunday. It will last for 6 total weeks, meaning that weekly workloads and expectations will be roughly double what they might be in a typical semester week; students should plan to spend anywhere between 6-18 hours of work on this course per week (as guided by UCF's Credit Hour Policy, available at https://catalog.ucf.edu/content.php?catoid=18&navoid=1600).

Because every political science research skill builds on the skill that came before it, it's essential that learners manage their time and plan to progress through the course material ev*ery single week*. It is nearly impossible to skip one week in the term-- the equivalent of skipping 2 weeks in a regular semester—and catch up in time to successfully complete the course. If you think your schedule might make completing this course hard, or if you thought you'd try statistics in an online format and then discovered it's not for you, that's okay—this is a hard one to get through in an online format! Just be sure and note the Drop/Swap deadline (May 21) and the Withdrawal deadline (June 11) and make whatever choice is most strategically beneficial for you.

**Instructor Contact Information**

As indicated above, Office Hours are available by appointment—at any point that students have questions or concerns, all they need to do is send a Webcourses@UCF message to the instructor and they will set up a time to connect via Zoom. Note that for all communications, the instructor will reply within 24-36 hours (unless otherwise indicated in advance).

## UNIVERSITY POLICIES: COVID-19 and 'W' courses

### *COVID-19 and Illness Notification*

Students who believe they may have a COVID-19 diagnosis should contact the instructor as soon as possible if they anticipate being delayed in engaging with course material, in order to discuss reasonable adjustments that might need to be made.

### *In Case of Faculty Illness*

If the instructor falls ill during the semester, there may be changes to this course, including having a backup instructor take over the course. Please look for announcements or mail in Webcourses@UCF or Knights email for any alterations to this course.

## UNIVERSITY POLICIES: GENERAL

### Academic Integrity

Students should familiarize themselves with UCF's Rules of Conduct at <https://scai.sdes.ucf.edu/student-rules-of-conduct/>. According to Section 1, "Academic Misconduct," students are prohibited from engaging in:

1. Unauthorized assistance: Using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information or study aids in any academic exercise unless specifically authorized by the instructor of record. The unauthorized possession of examination or course-related material also constitutes cheating.
2. Communication to another through written, visual, electronic, or oral means: The presentation of material which has not been studied or learned, but rather was obtained through someone else's efforts and used as part of an examination, course assignment, or project.
3. Commercial Use of Academic Material: Selling of course material to another person, student, and/or uploading course material to a third-party vendor without authorization or without the express written permission of the university and the instructor. Course materials include but are not limited to class notes, Instructor's PowerPoints, course syllabi, tests, quizzes, labs, instruction sheets, homework, study guides, handouts, etc.
4. Falsifying or misrepresenting the student's own academic work.
5. Plagiarism: Using or appropriating another's work without any indication of the source, thereby attempting to convey the impression that such work is the student's own.
6. Multiple Submissions: Submitting the same academic work for credit more than once without the express written permission of the instructor.
7. Helping another violate academic behavior standards.
8. Soliciting assistance with academic coursework and/or degree requirements.

***Responses to Academic Dishonesty, Plagiarism, or Cheating***
Students should also familiarize themselves with the procedures for academic misconduct in UCF's student handbook, *The Golden Rule*<https://goldenrule.sdes.ucf.edu/>. UCF faculty members have a responsibility for students' education and the value of a UCF degree, and so seek to prevent unethical behavior and respond to academic misconduct when necessary. Penalties for violating rules, policies, and instructions within this course can range from a zero on the exercise to an "F" letter grade in the course. In addition, an Academic Misconduct report could be filed with the Office of Student Conduct, which could lead to disciplinary warning, disciplinary probation, or deferred suspension or separation from the University through suspension, dismissal, or expulsion with the addition of a "Z" designation on one's transcript.

Being found in violation of academic conduct standards could result in a student having to disclose such behavior on a graduate school application, being removed from a leadership position within a student organization, the recipient of scholarships, participation in University activities such as study abroad, internships, etc.

Let's avoid all of this by demonstrating values of honesty, trust, and integrity. No grade is worth compromising your integrity and moving your moral compass. Stay true to doing the right thing: talk to your instructor, make a plan, take a compromise rather than a shortcut.

Please note: In asynchronous courses like this one, students are not allowed to use GroupMe, WhatsApp, or any other form of technology to exchange course material associated with a graded assignment, quiz, test, et cetera. The completion of graded work in an online synchronous course should be considered a formal process: Just because you are not in a formal classroom setting being proctored while taking a quiz or test does not mean that the completion of graded work in an online course should not be treated with integrity.

The following is not all inclusive of what is considered academic misconduct. These examples show how the use of technology can be considered academic misconduct and could result in the same penalties as cheating in a face-to-face class:

- **Taking a screen shot of an online quiz or test question, posting it to GroupMe or WhatsApp, and asking for assistance is considered academic misconduct.**
- **Answering an online quiz or test question posted to GroupMe or WhatsApp is considered academic misconduct. Giving advice, assistance, or suggestions on how to complete a question associated with an online assignment, quiz, or test is considered academic misconduct.**
- **The use of outside assistance from another student or by searching the internet, Googling for answers, use of websites such as Quizlet, Course Hero, Chegg Study, etc. is considered academic misconduct.**
- **Gathering to take an online quiz or test with others and sharing answers in the process is considered academic misconduct.**

If a student or group of students are found to be exchanging material associated with a graded assignment, quiz, or test through any form of technology (GroupMe, WhatsApp, etc.), or use outside assistance (Googling answers, use of websites such as Quizlet, Course Hero, Chegg Study, etc.), they could receive anywhere from a zero grade on the exercise to an "F" in the course depending on the act.

**Course Accessibility:**

The University of Central Florida is committed to providing access and inclusion for all persons with disabilities. Students with disabilities who need access to course content due to course design limitations should contact the professor as soon as possible. Students should also connect with Student Accessibility Services (SAS) <http://sas.sdes.ucf.edu/> (Ferrell Commons 185, sas@ucf.edu, phone 407-823-2371). For students connected with SAS, a Course Accessibility Letter may be created and sent to professors, which informs faculty of potential course access and accommodations that might be necessary and reasonable. Determining reasonable access and accommodations requires consideration of the course design, course learning objectives and the individual academic and course barriers experienced by the student. Further conversation with SAS, faculty and the student may be warranted to ensure an accessible course experience.

**Campus Safety:**

Though most emergency situations are primarily relevant to courses that meet in person, such incidents can also impact online students, either when they are on or near campus to participate in other courses or activities or when their course work is affected by off-campus emergencies. The following policies apply to courses in online modalities.

- To stay informed about emergency situations, students can sign up to receive UCF text alerts by going to <https://my.ucf.edu> and logging in. Click on "Student Self Service" located on the left side of the screen in the toolbar, scroll down to the blue "Personal Information" heading on the Student Center screen, click on "UCF Alert", fill out the information, including e-mail address, cell phone number, and cell phone provider, click "Apply" to save the changes, and then click "OK."
- Students with special needs related to emergency situations should speak with their instructors outside of class.

**Deployed Active Duty Military:**

Students who are deployed active duty military and/or National Guard personnel and require accommodation should contact their instructors as soon as possible after the semester begins and/or after they receive notification of deployment to make related arrangements.

**Authorized University Events/Co-curricular Activities:**
Students who represent the university in an authorized event or activity (for example, student-athletes) and who are unable to meet a course deadline due to a conflict with that event must provide the instructor with documentation in advance to arrange a make-up. No penalty will be applied. For more information, see the UCF policy at <https://policies.ucf.edu/documents/4-401.pdf>

**Religious Observances:**
Students must notify their instructor in advance if they intend to miss class for a religious observance. For more information, see the UCF policy at <http://regulations.ucf.edu/chapter5/documents/5.020ReligiousObservancesFINALJan19.pdf>.

**Copyright:**
This course may contain copyright protected materials such as audio or video clips, images, text materials, etc. These items are being used with regard to the Fair Use doctrine in order to enhance the learning environment. Please do not copy, duplicate, download or distribute these items. The use of these materials is strictly reserved for this online classroom environment and your use only. All copyright materials are credited to the copyright holder. Outside of the notetaking and recording services offered by Student Accessibility Services, the creation of an audio or video recording of all or part of a class for personal use is allowed *only* with the advance and explicit written consent of the instructor. Such recordings are only acceptable in the context of personal, private studying and notetaking and are not authorized to be shared with *anyone* without the separate written approval of the instructor.

**Technology Requirements:**
You will be expected to have daily access to the internet and email, given that all course content and announcements will be delivered in online asynchronous formats. All students at UCF are required to obtain a Knight's Email account and check it regularly for official university communications. Students are also required to use the Webcourses@UCF communication tools or their Knight's email account to communicate with the instructor; please note that if you use a personal email account, it may be designated as spam.

**Academic Engagement Requirement:**

All instructors/faculty 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 Webcourses@UCF quiz in the course site by the end of the first week of classes or as soon as possible after adding the course. Doing so will count toward your course engagement grade, and failure to do so may result in a delay in the disbursement of your financial aid.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

***The following course schedule is subject to amendment by the instructor with advance notice.***

*Note: Any reading not in the textbooks will be posted on Webcourses@UCF.*

| Start Date | Module and Topic | Readings | Tasks to Complete |
|---|---|---|---|
| **17 May** | **Week 1:** the Scientific Study of Politics, and Building Good Research Questions | - Pollock/Edwards text, pp. 1-12, pp. 34-39, pp. 72-83<br>- Bridgeland, J. and Orszag, P. (2013). Can Government Play Moneyball? *The Atlantic Monthly*.<br>- Kettl, D. F. (2016). Making Data Speak: Lessons for Using Numbers for Solving Public Policy Puzzles. Governance, 29(4), 573-579.<br>- *Pick One*:<br>  - Thompson-DeVeaux, A. and Munguia, H. (2015). "Understanding Different Measures of Abortion" *FiveThirtyEight Blog.*<br>  - Ahler, D. and Broockman, D. (2015) "Donald Trump Is a Textbook Example of Ideological Moderation." *The Washington Post*. | - Academic Engagement 'Quiz' due by Friday 5/21<br>- Problem Set #1 due Sunday 5/23<br>- MOD1 Discussion Board post due Sunday 5/23 |
| **24 May** | **Week 2:** Literature Reviews & Research Designs | - Pollock/Edwards text, pp. 319-321; pp. 105-113<br>- Baglione (2012) "Making Sense of the Scholarly Answers to your Research Question: Writing the Literature Review," in *Writing a Research Paper in Political Science: A Practical Guide to Inquiry, Structure, and Methods*, pp. 57-72.<br>- *Pick One:*<br>  - Willis, D. (2014) "Professors' Research Project Stirs Political Outrage in Montana." *The New York Times.*<br>  - Kelly, A. (2015). "She's Not A Candidate, So Why Do So Many People Have an Opinion of Her?" *NPR Politics*. | - Problem Set #2 due Sunday 5/30<br>- MOD2 Discussion Board post due Sunday 5/30 |

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| **31 May** | **Week 3:** Sampling and the Basics of Statistics | - Pollock/Edwards text, pp 114-122; pp. 39-55<br>- (recommended) Pollock/Edwards STATA text pp. 1-12, pp.17-33<br>- Phillips, M. (2014). "Painfully, American Families are Learning the Difference Between Median and Mean." *Quartz.* | - Problem Set #3 due Sunday 6/7<br>- MOD3 Discussion Board post due Sunday 6/7 |
| **7 June** | **Week 4:** Statistical Inference & Hypothesis Testing | - Pollock/Edwards Text, pp. 167-176, pp.199-221<br>- (recommended) Pollock/Edwards STATA text pp. 116-121, pp. 136-147<br>- Aschwanden, C. (2015). "Not Even Scientists Can Easily Explain P-values." *FiveThirtyEight Blog* | - Midterm exam due by Sunday 6/13<br>- MOD4 Discussion Board post due Sunday 6/13 |
| **14 June** | **Week 5:** Bivariate and Multivariate Regression | - Pollock/Edwards text, pp. 239-262<br>- (recommended) Pollock/Edwards STATA text pp. 155-164 | - Problem Set #4 due Sunday 6/20<br>- MOD5 Discussion Board post due Sunday 6/20 |
| **21 June** | **Week 6:** Writing Political Research | - Pollock/Edwards text, pp. 313-331<br>- King, G. (1986). How Not to Lie with Statistics: Avoiding Common Mistakes in Quantitative Political Science. *American Journal of Political Science*, *30*, 666-87. | - Research Design due Saturday 6/26<br>- MOD6 Discussion Board post due Saturday 6/26 |
| **26 June** | **FINAL PROJECT DUE VIA WEBCOURSES@UCF AT 11:59 PM EST** | | |