UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

POS 3703-SCOPE AND METHODS OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

College.of.Sciences

School of Politics, Security, and Intl Affairs

Welcome to Scope and Methods of Political Science!

Course Information

Term: Fall 2025

Class Meeting Days: Tuesday & Thursday 3:00 pm- 4:15 pm

Class Meeting Location: HPH O310

Modality: In-Person

Credit Hours: 3.00

Instructor Information

Fahad Mirza

Office Location: HPH 215

Office Hours:

Wed 2-4 pm

Email: Fahad.Mirza@ucf.edu

Course Objectives and Goals

In this course you will gain a firm understanding of how political scientists conduct research, from data collection to research design to reporting analytical findings, as well as understand key methods of political science research. You will also learn how to use STATA, a statistical computing software used in political science. By the end of this course, you should feel comfortable saying you have on an intermediate experience with STATA and know the basics of political research design.

What Success Looks Like in This Course

My hope for all students taking this course is to come out feeling as though you have gained a new skill. Research is a valuable skill in all political science related fields. Whether you want to go into diplomacy, intelligence, law, NGO, or environmental work the skills you learn in this class will be an asset.

I want to emphasize that THIS IS NOT A STATSTICS COURSE! You do not need advanced knowledge of mathematics, statistics, or coding to get an A in this class. If you show up to every class, pay attention, and try your best you will likely leave this class with at least a passing grade.

AI Policy

With the rise in popularity of AI tools, I and other educators are still figuring out how best to approach these tools. I reserve the right to revisit this policy but the AI policy for this class is the following:

Absolutely no AI tools for any quizzes, writing assignments, and exams. (Word processors and grammar tools are okay within reason, as long as everything you write is your own work.)

Use of AI tools in troubleshooting issues with STATA is okay, within reason. They should be used to consult not as a substitute for your own work. These tools should be a last resort not a first stop. Try Googling any issues you may run into first and looking for web forums. Someone probably has run into the same issue, and you are better off learning from their experience.

This course is required for political science and international & global studies majors because actually learning this material is a major component of the degree you are paying to get. If you want to get your money's worth out of this course and this program, do your own work. Don't rely on ChatGPT or another AI to do your work for you. These can be

helpful tools in some contexts, but they ultimately can rob you of the knowledge you are paying to learn.

Enrollment Requirements

PR: POS 2041 or C.I.

Course Materials

Required

Pollock, Phillip H. 2016. The.Essentials.of.Political.Analysis?❶th.Edition¡ Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press. Amazon link.

Pollock, Phillip H. and Edwards, Barry C. 2023. A.Stata" .Companion.to.Political. Analysis?❶th.Edition. Amazon link. (STATA IS NOT INCLUDED WITH THIS!)

*I understand textbooks can be expensive so while I do recommend getting both books digitally for ease of reference, feel free to get them from wherever you can find them. 5th edition onwards for these books would be best.

Access to Stata will be required for this course. In our lab sessions and at home, we will be able to access the program through the virtual desktop, but you may want to consider getting access to the full program for the semester. https://www.stata.com/order/

Recommended

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.

You may want to use some of the reading here to help you throughout the semester.

https://socialsci.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Political_Science_and_Civics/Introduction_to_Political_Science_Research_Methods_(Franco_et_al.)

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

Course Requirements

Your final grade is based on following components:

1. Class Participation and Attendance (5%) – Attendance at class sessions is required so that you are available to help others and participate in their learning. Make sure to answer the attendance question each week before the end of class. Let's be respectful of each other's time and make the best use of each session!
2. Weekly Online Quizzes/Review Exercises (15%) - To reinforce your understanding of lecture topics, you will complete an online quiz and/or review exercise the first few weeks of class. Your lowest score among these will be dropped. Quizzes will open on Thursday after class and be open until the following Tuesday morning at 9 am.
3. Lab Assignments (40%) – There will be eight assignments over the course of the semester. Many of these are problem sets that require you to apply the course material and write Stata code. The assignments will be available online after the session preparing you for the assignment. The first four assignments will be ungraded and a way for you to acclimate to using Stata. As long as you submit an attempt, you will get full points for those four assignments. Additionally, your lowest assignment score will be dropped.
4. Mid-Term Exam (15%)- We will discuss the format more as we approach the day we take it.
5. Final Exam (25%)- We will discuss the format more as we approach the day we take it.

Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Percentage
A	90-100%
B	80-89%
C	70-79%
D	60-69%
F	0-59%

Makeup Work Policy

If you are unable to take an exam or quiz due to an emergency or a university-approved scheduling conflict, you must let me know as soon as possible and provide the relevant documentation. I will try to be as accommodating as possible for students with legitimate

conflicts, but as a general rule, I will only consider allowing make-up exams if you contact me ahead of time (email is fine). Make-up quizzes should be taken within one (1) week of the original quiz date, and will not be given before the quiz date.

Missed/Late Assignments

You may submit late work without a university excuse up to five (5) days after the due date, but with a 20% deduction per day from your grade on that assignment. I will not accept anything beyond five days past the deadline.

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) (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.

Academic Integrity

Students should familiarize themselves with UCF's Code of Conduct at Student Conduct and Integrity Office. According to Section 1, "Academic Misconduct," students are prohibited from engaging in:

a. Academic misconduct is defined as any submitted work or behavior that obstructs the instructor of record's ability to accurately assess the student's understanding or completion of the course materials or degree requirements (e.g., assignment, quiz, and/or exam). Examples of academic misconduct include but are not limited to: plagiarism, unauthorized assistance to complete an academic exercise; unauthorized communication with others during an examination, course

assignment, or project; falsifying or misrepresenting academic work; providing misleading information to create a personal advantage to complete course/degree requirements; or multiple submission(s) of academic work without permission of the instructor of record.

b. Any student who knowingly helps another violate academic behavior standards is also in violation of the standards.

c. Commercial Use of Academic Material. Selling of course material to another person and/or uploading course material to a third-party vendor without authorization or without the express written permission of the University and the instructor of record. Course materials include but are not limited to class notes, the instructor of record's slide deck, tests, quizzes, labs, instruction sheets, homework, study guides, and handouts.

d. Soliciting assistance with academic coursework and/or degree requirements. The solicitation of assistance with an assignment, lab, quiz, test, paper, etc., without authorization of the instructor of record or designee is prohibited. This includes but is not limited to asking for answers to a quiz, trading answers, or offering to pay another to complete an assignment. It is considered Academic Misconduct to solicit assistance with academic coursework and/or degree requirements, even if the solicitation did not yield actual assistance (for example, if there was no response to the solicitation).

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. 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 and Academic

Integrity, 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: take the zero, not a shortcut.

Title IX

Title IX prohibits sex discrimination, including sexual misconduct, sexual violence, sexual harassment, and retaliation. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find resources available to support the victim, including confidential resources and information concerning reporting options at Let's Be Clear and UCF Cares.

For more information on access and community engagement, Title IX, accessibility, or UCF’s complaint processes contact:

Title IX – OIE – Office of Institutional Equity & askanadvocate@ucf.edu

Disability Accommodation – Student Accessibility Services – Student Accessibility Services & sas@ucf.edu

Access and Community Engagement (including the Ginsberg Center for Inclusion and Community Engagement, Military and Veteran Student Success, and HSI Initiatives)

UCF Compliance and Ethics Office – Compliance, Ethics, and Risk Office & complianceandethics@ucf.edu

The Ombuds Office is a safe place to discuss concerns.

Reporting an Incident or Issue

If you believe you have experienced abusive or discriminatory behavior by any faculty or staff member, contact the Office of Institutional Equity online or at 407-823-1336. UCF cares about you and takes every report seriously. For more information see the Reporting an Incident or Issue Webpage.

Deployed Active-Duty Military Students

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.

Campus Safety

At UCF Public Safety and Police, safety is the top priority. Emergencies on campus are rare, but if one should arise, it's important to be familiar with some basic safety and security concepts.

In an emergency, always dial 911.

Every UCF classroom has an Emergency Procedure Guide posted on a wall near the door, which will show you how to respond to a variety of situations. This guide can also be found online here.

In the event of an active threat, remember AVOID, DENY, DEFEND. Choose the best course of action and act immediately. Watch the video here to learn more.

AVOID. Pay attention to your surroundings and have an exit plan. Get as much distance and as many barriers between you and the threat as quickly as possible.

DENY. When avoiding is difficult or impossible, deny the threat access to you and your space. Lockdown by creating barriers, turning the lights off and remaining quiet and out of sight. Make sure your cell phone is silenced, but do not turn it off.

DEFEND. When you are unable to put distance between yourself and the threat, be prepared to protect yourself. Commit to your actions, be aggressive

and do not fight fairly. Do whatever it takes to survive.

For emergencies on campus, UCF will utilize the UCF Alert system. All UCF students, faculty and staff are automatically enrolled to receive these email and text alerts, however, it's a good idea to frequently ensure your contact information is up to date.

Financial Aid Accountability

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 this activity by the end of the first week of classes or as soon as possible after adding the course. Failure to do so may result in a delay in the disbursement of your financial aid.

Course Schedule:

Date/Week	Topic	Assignments
August 19 & 21	-Course requirements -Brief Introduction to Stata -The Scientific Method -Studying Politics Scientifically -A Brief History of the Scientific Study of Politics	Syllabus Quiz
August 26 & 28	- The Research Process (Deduction, -Induction and Theory-Building) -Concepts in Political Science -Measuring Validity and Reliability	Weekly Assignment 1
September 2 & 4	-Levels of Measurement -Units of Analysis -Data Collection	Weekly Assignment 2

September 9 and 11	-Types of Variables in Political Science Research -Causal Relationships -Intervening, Antecedent Variables, Spurious Relationships	Weekly Assignment 3
September 16 and 18	-Testing Hypotheses in Political Science -Null Hypothesis, Alternative Hypothesis	Weekly Assignment 4
September 23 and 25	-Review for Mid-Term -Mid-Term Exam	-No Assignment this week
September 30 and October 2	-Introduction to STATA -Using Data in STATA	Lab Assignment 1
October 7 and October 9	-Descriptive Statistics (Frequency Tables, Mode, Media) -Descriptive Statistics (Mean, Skewness, and Standard Deviation)	Lab Assignment 2
October 14 and 16	-Descriptive Statistics (Bar Charts and Report Cases) -Z-scores and Normal Distributions	Lab Assignment 3
October 21 and 23	-Bivariate Analysis	Lab Assignment 4

	-Statistical Significance	
October 28 and 30	-Control Variables	Lab Assignment 5
November 4 and 6	-Bivariate Regression Analysis -Multiple Regression Analysis	Lab Assignment 6
No Class November 11 Veteran's Day; Back in class November 13	-Scatterplots and Correlation Coefficients	Lab Assignment 7
November 18 and November 20	-Examples of Quantitative Methods in Political Science (We may pivot this week to other topics that got missed if there happens to be any hurricane days this semester)	Lab Assignment 8
November 25; No class November 27 Thanksgiving	Optional attendance day; Review for Final	No Assignment this week
December 1	Final Exam	No Assignment for this week