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: Spring 2026

Class Meeting Days: Tuesday & Thursday 10:30 am - 11:50 am

Class Meeting Location: HPH O310

Modality: In-Person

Credit Hours: 3.00

Instructor Information

Fahad Mirza

Office Location: HPH 215

Office Hours:

Monday 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 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, in-class 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

There is no required textbook for this course as your assignments and exams will be based on the lecture material.

Recommended

The following resources can be helpful if you are struggling to keep up with the lectures, but I know they can be expensive, so they are only recommended.

- Pollock, Phillip H. 2016. *The Essentials of Political Analysis, 5th Edition*. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press. Amazon link.
- Pollock, Phillip H. and Edwards, Barry C. 2023. *A Stata® Companion to Political Analysis, 5th Edition*. Amazon link. (STATA IS NOT INCLUDED WITH THIS!)

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 on UCF Web Apps**, but you may want to consider getting access to the full program for the semester. https://www.stata.com/order/

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. I will take attendance at the start of each class, and we will have in-class assignments throughout the semester. Both will go towards this part of your grade. Let's be respectful of each other's time and make the best use of each session!

2. **Take Home Assignment (15%)** - To reinforce your understanding of lecture topics, you will complete 4 take home assignments in the first few weeks of class. Your lowest score among these will be dropped. Assignments 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 STATA based lab assignments throughout the latter part 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. For the first four assignments you will receive full credit for simply submitting the assignment on time. They will not be graded for accuracy and are 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. The latter four assignments will be graded for accuracy. These assignments build on each other, so it is important to complete every assignment even if you do so too late to receive credit.

4. **Mid-Term Exam (15%)**- The mid-term exam will be a three part exam with part 1 being multiple choice questions, part 2 being true or false questions, and part 3 being short response questions. We will discuss the mid-term more as the date of the exam approaches.

5. **Final Exam (25%)-** The final exam will be a three part exam with part 1 being multiple choice, part 2 being short response questions, and part 3 being long response questions.

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. (Note, I do not count the weekend as part of these five days so for example an assignment due on a Tuesday at 9 am has until the following Tuesday at 9 am before it is a zero.)

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	Topic	Assignments
Week 1 January 13 No Class January 15	-Course requirements -The Scientific Method -Studying Politics Scientifically -A Brief History of the Scientific Study of Politics	First Week Assignment (Make sure to watch the video lecture in lieu of class on Thursday and complete the financial aid quiz)
Week 2 January 20 & 22	- The Research Process (Deduction, -Induction and Theory-Building)	Take Home Assignment 1

	-Concepts in Political Science -Measuring Validity and Reliability	
Week 3 January 27 & 29	-Levels of Measurement -Units of Analysis -Data Collection	Take Home Assignment 2
Week 4 February 3 & 5	-Types of Variables in Political Science Research -Causal Relationships -Intervening, Antecedent Variables, Spurious Relationships	Take Home Assignment 3
Week 5 February 10 & 12	-Testing Hypotheses in Political Science -Null Hypothesis, Alternative Hypothesis	Take Home Assignment 4
Week 6 February 17 & 19	-Review for Mid-Term -Mid-Term Exam	-No Assignment this week
Week 7 February 24 & 26	-Introduction to STATA -Using Data in STATA	Lab Assignment 1
Week 8 March 3 & 5	-Descriptive Statistics (Frequency Tables, Mode, Median) -Descriptive Statistics (Mean,	Lab Assignment 2

	Skewness, and Standard Deviation)	
Week 9 March 10 & 12	-Descriptive Statistics (Bar Charts and Histograms) -Z-scores and Normal Distributions	Lab Assignment 3
Week 10 March 17 &19 No Class Spring Break		
Week 11 March 24 & 26	-Bivariate Analysis/Statistical Significance -Multivariate Analysis	Lab Assignment 4
Week 12 March 31 & April 2	-Bivariate Regression Analysis -Multiple Regression Analysis	Lab Assignment 5
Week 13 April 7 & 9	-Scatterplots and Correlation Coefficients -Visual Data	Lab Assignment 6
Week 14 April 14 & 16	Examples of Political Science Research; (We may pivot this week to cover anything that gets pushed or was not able to be covered in enough detail)	Lab Assignment 7
Week 15 April 21 & 23	Review sessions for Final Exam	Lab Assignment 8
Week 16 April 28	No Class; Study Day University Wide; Normal Office Hours	No Assignment this week
Final Exam Tuesday May 5th 10:00 am-12:50 pm		