POS 3703 - SCOPE & METHODS POL SCIENCE

Section: B061

College of Sciences

School of Politics, Security, and Intl Affairs

Course Information

Term: Summer 2026
Class Meeting Days: ASC
Class Meeting Location: Online
Modality: WW
Credit Hours: 3.00

Instructor Information

Alanna Reynolds
Office Location: Virtual

Office Hours:
Friday from 12-1:30
Email: al113703@ucf.edu

Office Hours

Office hours will be on Friday from 12-1:30 or by appointment.

Course Description

POS 3703 COS-POL SCI 3(3,0)Scope and Methods of Political Science: The

scope and methodology of political analysis. Extensive examination of the discipline, research design and methodology. Fall, Spr, Sum

Meet the Instructor

Hi, and welcome to Scope and Methods of Political Science!

My name is Alanna Reynolds and I am excited to be teaching this course.

I am currently a PhD Candidate in the Security Studies program here at UCF and I also work full-time as a senior intelligence analyst in the aerospace and defense industry. I have a MA in Political Science with a Graduate Certificate in Intelligence and National Security and a BA in English - Technical Communication and BA in Spanish, all from UCF.

When I was a student, math was never my favorite subject. I felt very intimidated when I was introduced to Scope and Methods of Political Science. However, much to my surprise, I loved the course material and realized that Scope and Methods was one of the most valuable courses I completed. In this course, you'll learn how to use critical thinking, data analysis and the scientific method to solve a wide range of problems - a skillset that will be highly valuable for law school, graduate school and a variety of careers in both the public and private sector. In my current job, I use my political science methodological training almost every day and I've found it to be an incredibly valuable skillset both in graduate school and in my career!

My research interests include national security, misinformation and disinformation, counterintelligence and cybersecurity. If you're interested in pursuing a career in national security or have any questions about careers in political science in general, I'd strongly encourage you to stop by my office hours and ask some questions during the semester!

Outside of work and school, I enjoy traveling, hiking, playing the viola and spending time with friends and family. I've lived in England and the US and traveled to Ireland, Scotland, Spain, Portugal, Germany, Canada and Norway.

Course Introduction

Welcome to the real world of political science research!

The majority of political scientists have adopted a method for studying political questions that differs from the approach taken by journalists, historians, and political commentators. They have adopted the **scientific method**, to systematically test explanations of political phenomena. Much of the research in political science uses empirical data to test hypotheses, and statistical tests to determine which explanations are best supported by the data.

Although you will be introduced to how political scientists use data and statistics in their research, this course is **not** a statistics course and you will not be expected to learn and memorize scary looking mathematical formulas!

This course will certainly help you understand the reading materials in many upper-level classes and equip you with the skills to research topics for term papers, to participate in the internship program or undertake your own independent research, for example an Honors Undergraduate Thesis.

By the time you complete this course you will have developed critical thinking and analytic skills that you can also apply in a variety of career settings, and which are prized by many employers in both the public and private sectors in addition to law school and graduate school.

This may seem like a completely different course comparted to other political science courses you've completed, but don't be intimidated! Instead of focusing on the content knowledge of subfield in political science, like you do in other courses, this course focuses on understanding the **approaches and methods** that most political scientists use to understand and build knowledge about questions and puzzles about politics that interest them. However, I hope you will find that learning how to "do" political science yourself, and how to become a **producer** --- not just a consumer -- of research is both empowering and fun!

Student Learning Outcomes

1. Understanding the Application of the Scientific Method in Political Science: Students will be able to explain how the scientific method is applied to the study of political phenomena, differentiating it from the approaches used by journalists, historians, and political commentators.

2. Designing Social Science Research: Students will develop the ability to design social science research, including formulating research questions, hypotheses, and selecting appropriate research methods.

3. Analyzing Empirical Data: Students will acquire skills in analyzing empirical data, using statistical tools to test hypotheses and draw conclusions about political phenomena.

4. Interpreting Research Findings: Students will learn to interpret and critically evaluate research findings, understanding how data presentations support or refute political explanations.

5. Developing Critical Thinking and Analytic Skills: Students will enhance their critical thinking and analytic skills, applying them to various career settings and preparing for advanced studies or research projects such as an Honors Undergraduate Thesis.

Required Course Materials and Resources

The Fundamentals of Political Science Research
ISBN: 9781108131704
Authors: Paul M. Kellstedt, Guy D. Whitten
Publisher: Cambridge University Press
Edition: 3rd Edition

An SPSS Companion for the Third Edition of The Fundamentals of Political Science Research
ISBN: 9781108447935
Authors: Paul M. Kellstedt, Guy D. Whitten
Publisher: Cambridge University Press

Course Assessment and Grading Procedure

You assessment of course learning outcomes will be based on the following assignments. (See Course Schedule below for a complete list of these assignments and deadlines).

Quizzes - 35%

Quizzes will be given on the material covered in the first part of the course (up to the midterm exam). They will be based on the material covered in the narrated lectures and consist a mixture of T/F and multiple choice questions.

These quizzes will usually contain 10 to 15 questions, and you will have 30 minutes to complete each quiz.

SPSS Data Analysis Exercises - 45%

These exercises will give you hand-on practice in analyzing and interpreting real data once we begin using SPSS and the second half of the semester.

These exercises will <u>not</u> be timed.

Final Exam - 20%

You will have 2 hours and 50 minutes to complete it.

The exam will focus on the course material after the midterm exam, and consist of questions where you analyze and interpret data, although you will <u>**not**</u> actually be using SPSS for the exam.

More information can be found on the Final Exam study guide, which I will make available to you a few weeks before the exam along with sample questions from prior exams.

Grading Scale

Grading Scale	
Letter Grade	**Percentage**
A	93-100%
A-	90-92%
B	87-89%
B	84-86%
B-	80-83%
C+	77-79%
C	74-76%
C-	70-73%
D+	67-69%
D	64-66%
D-	61-63%
F	0-60%

Communication Expectations

The best way to contact me is through Webcourses. I typically reply to emails Monday-Friday between 9 am and 5 pm. Emails received on the weekend will be answered on Monday, so please plan accordingly.

Policies for Course Grade

Makeup Work Policy

A make-up exam may be given for the following reasons:

- Students representing the university in an authorized event or activity (for example, student-athletes)
- Attending a professional conference
- Attending a job interview
- Personal illness or emergency (you can inform me of this using discreet language without going into specifics)
- Unforeseen childcare or transportation issues
- Serious illness or death within the *immediate* family

Generally, notification should be given to me at least 24 hours before the exam, or as soon as possible if it is not possible to communicate that to me. Usually, original and verifiable documentation will be requested and required to be eligible to make-up an exam.

Vacations and other non-emergency reasons for being out of town for missing an exam are **not** eligible reasons for a make-up exam being granted.

Please note that you will have some flexibility when you take exams as they will usually be open across a 3 day window. Exams cannot be taken prior to this 3 day window.

Missed/Late Assignments

Quizzes and assignments are due by dates outlined in the syllabus and may not be made-up unless they are missed for 1) a verifiable medical or funeral excuse, 2) a reason that is sufficiently verifiable, significant, and unexpected, or 3) an officially UCF excused absence, such as an excused religious holiday or a military deployment. Students who are deployed active-duty military and/or National Guard personnel and require accommodation should contact the instructor as soon as possible after the semester begins and/or after they receive notification of deployment to make related arrangements.

Attendance

While this class if fully online, students are expected to engaged with the course materials and lectures.

Make-up Assignments for Authorized University Event or Co-curricular Activities

Students who represent the university an 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 if the student gives advance notice and communicates with the instructor

following UCF policy. In the case of an authorized university activity, it is your responsibility to show the instructor a signed copy of the Program Verification Form for which you will be absent, prior to the class in which the absence occurs or due date you need extended. For more information, see UCF Policy 4-401.

Make-up Assignments for Religious Observances

A student who desires to observe a religious holy day of his or her religious faith must notify their instructor as soon as practicable prior to the observance. Students who are absent because of religious observances will be permitted a reasonable amount of time to complete any missed work. For more information, see UCF Regulation 5-020.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use Policy

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) is prohibited. Use of GenAI tools via website, app, or any other access, is not permitted in this class. All components of assignments in this course must be independently and originally completed by the student. Representing work created by GenAI as your own work will be treated as plagiarism.

Disability Access & Accommodations

The University of Central Florida is committed to providing equal access to all students with disabilities (ADHD, learning disabilities, Autism, chronic medical conditions, physical disabilities, etc.). To receive consideration for reasonable disability-related course accommodations, disabled students must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) and complete the steps required for SAS to review accommodation requests. More information can be found on the UCF Student Accessibility Services website under the Start Here tab or by contacting SAS directly (Ferrell Commons 185; sas@ucf.edu; Phone - 407-823-2371).

Approved accommodations are shared with course instructors via the SAS

Course Accessibility Letter. Implementing certain accommodations may require discussion and specific considerations of the course design, course learning objectives, and the individual academic and course challenges experienced by the student. While students with disabilities or chronic health needs are also encouraged to discuss any course concerns with professors in addition to contacting SAS, professors are not required to facilitate disability-related adjustments to the course unless the professor has received a Course Accessibility Letter from SAS that outlines approved accommodations.

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.

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 – ONAC – Office of Nondiscrimination & Accommodations Compliance & 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. You can also choose to report using the UCF Integrity Line and can report anonymously or as yourself at 1-855-877-6049 or using the online form. 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.

Class Schedule

Module	Topic	Assignment Date (Adjusted 2026)	Assignment
Module 1	The Scientific Method & the Study of Politics	June 24	Why is Political Science a Science?
		June 28	A Brief History of Political Science / Characteristics of the Scientific Method
Module 2	Conceptualizing and Measuring Political Phenomena	July 3	Conceptualization, Operationalization & Measurement
Module 3	Approaches to Data Collection and Types of Data	July 5	Levels of Measurement
		July 7	Units of Analysis and Approaches to Data Collection
Module 4	Types of Variables & Causality	July 10	Variables, Variation & Explanation
Module 5	Hypotheses in Political Science Research	July 13	Hypotheses & Hypothesis Testing
Module 6	Introduction to SPSS	July 15	Introduction to SPSS
Module 7	Descriptive Statistics	July 20	SPSS Assignment - Descriptive Statistics
Module 8	Bivariate Analysis	July 24	SPSS Assignment - Bivariate Analysis
Module 9	Statistical Significance & Measures of Association	July 27	SPSS Assignment - Statistical Significance & Measures of Association
Module 10	Controlling for a Third Variable	July 31	SPSS Assignment - Controlling for a Third Variable
Module 11	Scatterplots, Correlation & Regression	August 3	SPSS Assignment - Scatterplots, Correlation & Regression Analysis
Final Exam	—	August 7	Final Exam Due

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.