

# POS3713: Political Science Research Methods

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Summer B

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**Class Hours:** M—F 12:30-1:45pm

**Class Room:** BEL 0004 (G)

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## Course Description

The aim of this course is to introduce you to the scientific method and how it applies to political science. Rather than simply present you with political facts, you will learn to ask rigorous questions and think about the political world in a more scientific manner. Science is not an end goal or a product; it is a process. The scientific process forces us to approach our own thoughts on how the world works with hesitancy and distrust, and to rigorously evaluate our suppositions. In this course, you will learn to: 1) discipline the way that you form questions and theory about politics, 2) assess the logical merits of arguments, and 3) how to analyze and understand the empirical evidence that we use to evaluate the theoretical claims we make.

This class will also introduce you to the program R. R is a programming environment that we will use to analyze the data that we observe and collect. It is open source freeware, and knowing how to use it will benefit you in this major. However, it also has a high probability of being useful for you later in life, as data analytics and R competency are skills in high demand.

I do not anticipate that this class will be easy. It will be one of the more challenging classes of your undergraduate career. However, this class is also (arguably) the most useful political science class that you will take, no matter the career path you eventually choose.

## Course Materials

### *Required Reading*

The following book is required reading and is found at the FSU bookstore and online:

**Paul M. Kellstedt and Guy D. Whitten. 2013. *The Fundamentals of Political Science Research*, 3rd Edition, Cambridge University Press.**

You will be responsible for obtaining this textbook before class starts. Also, be sure to get the 3rd edition. If you get the previous edition, you will be completely responsible for any differences in reading assignments, as the syllabus will include only the chapter readings from the 3rd edition.

In addition to the assigned textbook, this course includes other outside readings that will consist of academic articles relevant to course topics. These will be listed in the course schedule and

made available through Canvas. We will be using Canvas extensively in this course, where you will find and complete assignments, view grades, and receive announcements and emails from your instructor. It is your responsibility that you have access to **Canvas**.

### *Required Software*

R is a free software platform for statistical computation. We will use it exclusively in this class. There are multiple ways to use R, but we will use R through an interface package called RStudio. You will be expected to learn and use R, and the problem sets will require the use of R, including your output. To help you in this process, every Friday's class will act as a lab session where you will learn to use R.

To install, first go to <http://cran.revolutionanalytics.com/> and download the default R package (it should be R v3.2.0). Run the default installer package and install R on your computer. After you have done this, go to <http://www.rstudio.com/products/rstudio/download/> and download the latest RStudio package (it should be RStudio v0.98.1103). Again, doing the default install process, install RStudio on your computer.

## Assessments and Grading Policy

Please read this section carefully. Registration in this course implies that you agree with all elements of evaluation herein described. Though I reserve the right to modify this syllabus with advance notice to students, I will not do so with respect to the parameters of student evaluation or the final examination schedule. In order to accomplish the above stated course goals and ensure your success in the course, I strongly encourage you to do the following (at a minimum):

### Student Responsibilities

- Complete all reading in advance of the class period and come to class prepared to discuss the readings. **We will not necessarily cover all the reading in class, so it is imperative that you complete the assigned readings before the final exam;**
- Come to class, take good notes, ask informed and pertinent questions of your instructor;
- Engage with the material and participate in class discussions;
- Contact your instructor early and often if you have questions or concerns about course materials, course expectations or your grade;
- Refrain from negative participation, defined as classroom behavior that is disrespectful to other students or the instructor.

**Your grade will be determined by the following four components: (total of 100 points)**

- Participation (10 points)
- Problem sets (30 points)
- Midterm exam (25 points)
- Cumulative final exam (35 points)

## Attendance and Participation — 10 points

**This course has no mandatory attendance policy or requirement of time the student must remain in the classroom per session.** There are two caveats to this: this is a required class, and the material covered in this course is some of the more difficult you will come across as a political science major. It is unlikely that you will do well without attending class. I am here to help you learn the material, and I will work hard to do so; therefore, I highly recommend perfect attendance.

If you elect to come to class, be prepared to answer questions based on the assigned reading material. **For those that prefer to remain quiet in the classroom,** I wish to emphasize that questions are not a punishment; they help evaluate retention and allow for valuable student contribution. If you do not understand, chances are someone else does not either; everyone is helped by your asking. Moreover, me asking you questions is one of the few non-graded tools that I have to see how well you understand the material and how well I am communicating it, and, like any instructor, I highly value that feedback.

Participation will be evaluated through involvement in class discussion and in-class learning activities. **Throughout the semester, we will do 10 in class activities based on the readings and lecture material.** These questions will be open-book and students will receive credit for their participation as long as they are present and answer the questions. These questions will be asked randomly throughout the semester, and may be asked either at the beginning or end of the class session. If a student misses class on the day of a reading question or activity—or leaves class early—they will lose one point from their participation grade.

A note on class discussion: I welcome and encourage class discussion. This subject material will be new to many of you, and may be difficult to get. I believe that there are no stupid questions, only stupid intentions. Any honest question, no matter how jumbled or disjointed, is fine. What is not acceptable are rude or disruptive comments or behavior. We will treat everyone with respect, and will not talk while someone else has the floor. Any discussion in class will relate to the material in a logical, rational, and polite manner. Violations will affect the class participation grade. If you feel uncomfortable with any class discussion, please do not hesitate to email me to discuss it.

## Problem Sets — 30 points

There will be five problems sets. These are homework assignments that give you practice applying concepts and doing some of the technical work in the course. The assignments will become available on the course page the Friday before they are due. These five problem sets will count for 30% of your overall course grade, with each worth 6 points. **Your problem set answers will include a word document with the substantive answer to the questions, and the R code used to obtain these answers.** All problem sets are to be emailed to me prior to class, and a copy is to be printed and handed in at the beginning of class.

I understand that sometimes working in a group is the best way figure out the coding necessary to accomplish the problem sets. Therefore, you may work in groups no larger than five in order to get answers to questions. While your code may be similar, for the substantive questions, all work must be your own. **Any copying of substantive answers (what is written in your word document) will result in a failure grade for all students that turn in homework with the same substantive answers as another student.** You are required to indicate those with whom you worked with on each homework. In addition, I understand that in a group setting, students may find that they have incentives to free ride on other members of the group. However you should remember that the exams will require individual knowledge of code and equations, and how to interpret them. Consequently, it is in your best interests to know the code and equations and what they mean and what they are

used for.

### Midterm Exam — 25 points

The midterm exam will count for 25 points, or 25% of your overall course grade. The midterm exam will have multiple choice and true/false questions, and you will mark your name and answers on a scantron (bubble) sheet. *You must bring a pencil to the exam.* The midterm exam will be given in class on Monday, June 3.

### Cumulative Final Exam — 35 points

Students will have one cumulative final exam. The final exam will count for 35 points, or 35 % of your overall course grade. **The date of the exam is during our last class session—June 21—at our regular class time.** The final exam is an open-book, open-note exam. However, it will be a short answer/fill-in-the-blank form. It will include 20% material from the first exam, and the rest will be taken from the second part of class. Programming code and equations will be included in that exam, to ensure that each student is familiar with all essential material. All work must be your own—communication with classmates or anyone else is forbidden.

Students are expected to be present for the exam at the beginning of the exam period. Students will be allotted the entire class period to complete the exam. A ten-minute grace period will apply for the beginning of all exam periods. After the initial ten minutes have expired, students will be penalized 10 points for arriving late for an exam. **There will be no early final:** you are responsible for making yourself available to take the exam on that date and during the scheduled time.

Absences or late arrivals for exams will only be excused for participation in formally sanctioned University events, or extraordinary events if they are accompanied by sufficient (i.e. Health Services Excuse Forms) documentation within two calendar days of the absence or late arrival. The instructor reserves the right to determine what constitutes an extraordinary circumstance as well as what shall be considered "sufficient documentation." If they have been excused for their absence, students will have five working days to make up a missed exam. If there are extraordinary circumstances, which would prevent the student from making up the exam in five working days, the instructor must be informed of this fact prior to the expiration of the five-day period. The instructor reserves the right to administer makeup exams of any format (multiple choice, short answer, essay), which may not necessarily correspond to the original exam's format. If a student misses an exam and does not have an excused absence, the student will receive a zero for the exam.

### Extra Credit

**There will be one extra credit question per exam.** These two points can be applied to the final course grade. There will be no other extra credit offered.

### Late Work

All assignments are to be turned in on the announced due date for full credit. Late assignments that are **turned in within 24 hours** after class will receive **half credit** and any assignments **turned in later** than that will receive a **zero** (unless the student has a university-approved excuse). **Excused absences include** documented illness, deaths in the family and other documented crises, call to active military duty or jury duty, religious holy days, and official University activities. Consideration will

be given to students whose dependent children experience serious illness. The instructor retains the right to determine legitimate excuses. With a university-approved excuse, homework must be turned in within 48 hours of the due date to receive credit. **Note: There are no make-up homework assignments.** All exams must be taken on the assigned date. **No late exams will be given without a university-approved excuse.** With a university-approved excuse, make up exams will be given directly after the last day of class unless otherwise agreed upon.

## Grading Policy

I adhere to the following number-to-letter grade conversion chart for all exams, quizzes, and assignments. **FINAL course grades ending in 0.5 or higher are rounded up to the nearest whole percentage point** — not the individual assignments and exams.

Grading Breakdown				
Excellent	Above Average	Average	Below Average	Unacceptable
	$B+ = 87-89$	$C+ = 77-79$	$D+ = 67-69$	$F \leq 60$
$A* \geq 93$	$B = 83-86$	$C = 73-76$	$D = 63-66$	
$A- = 90 - 92$	$B- = 80-82$	$C- = 70-72$	$D- = 60-62$	

*\*An "A" is the highest grade you can earn in this class.*

## Incomplete Grades

No incomplete grades will be given unless there is an agreement between the instructor and the student PRIOR TO the end of the course. The instructor retains the right to determine legitimate reasons for an incomplete grade.

## Classroom Policies

### Email Policy

**Students should include their first and last name and course information in the subject line of their emails.** I will make every effort to respond **within 48 hours** of receiving a message. Though I may reply sooner than that, students should not expect an immediate response. I will contact students via their FSU designated email address listed on Canvas, so please see to it that these accounts are setup to receive these communications. **Please treat all email correspondences with the instructor as any other professional exchange.** Accordingly, I expect emails to be respectful and polite, to use correct grammar and complete sentences. I reserve the right to summarily delete rude, disrespectful, and/or poorly written emails without reply. Furthermore, emails asking questions that can be answered by checking the syllabus will also not receive a reply.

### Technology Policy

Cell phones and laptops are generally a distraction and detrimental to the classroom experience. **This course is designed to ensure success taking notes with a pen or a pencil.** However, if you must use your laptop please make sure to bring charging cables (not ask to borrow any and distract others) and stay on the course material at all times. Cell phones should be on silence or vibrate. **If you have a family or emergency situation going on, I will permit you to use your phone.** You

do not need to alert me of the situation — I will understand by seeing your phone on your desk. However, if it becomes clear to me that students are using their cellphones for non-emergency or family situations, this permission will be revoked from the entire class.

## Free Tutoring/Resources from FSU

**On-campus tutoring and writing assistance** is available for many courses at Florida State University. For more information, visit the Academic Center for Excellence (ACE) Tutoring Services' comprehensive list of on-campus tutoring options: <http://ace.fsu.edu/tutoring> or contact [tutor@fsu.edu](mailto:tutor@fsu.edu).

## Syllabus Change Policy

Except for changes that substantially affect parameters of evaluation, i.e. grading and the date of the final exam, **this syllabus is subject to change at discretion of the instructor**. I will provide you with advance notice in class and via your university registered email contact.

## Administrative Policies

### Academic Dishonesty

All course work by students is to be done on an individual basis unless the instructor clearly states that an alternative is acceptable. Any reference materials used in the preparation of any assignment must be explicitly and properly cited. Students are responsible for policing themselves with respect to plagiarism. Any student engaging in academic dishonesty (plagiarism, cheating, academic misrepresentation, etc.) will receive a zero for the relevant assignment and will be reported to the proper university officials for further action.

### Academic Honor Policy

The Florida State University Academic Honor Policy outlines the University's expectations for the integrity of students' academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process. Students are responsible for reading the Academic Honor Policy and for living up to their pledge to "... be honest and truthful and... [to] strive for personal and institutional integrity at Florida State University." (Florida State University Academic Honor Policy, found [here](#).)

### Students with Disabilities

If you anticipate needing any type of an academic accommodation in this course or have questions about physical access, please discuss this with the instructor within the first week of class. Students with disabilities needing academic accommodations should:

1. Register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC).
2. Bring a letter to the instructor from the SDRC indicating you need academic accommodations. This should be done within the first week of class.

If a student's accommodations change during the semester, the student will present an updated official letter from the SDRC outlining the specific modifications. For more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities, contact the Student Disability Resource Center.

Week	Dates	Topic	Assignments / Notes
<b>Week 1</b>	<b>May 13—17</b>	<b>Introduction &amp; Theory Building</b>	<b>ch. 1–2</b>
Class 1	May 13	<b>First Day Administrative Tasks</b>	
Class 2	May 14	The Scientific Study of Politics	Chapter 1 pgs. 1-22
Class 3	May 15	Theory Building	Chapter 2 pgs. 25-38
Class 4	May 16	Theory & Literature	Chapter 2 pgs. 38-52
Class 5	May 17	<b>IR Lab: Introduction</b>	
<b>Week 2</b>	<b>May 20—24</b>	<b>Causality, Research Design, &amp; Measurement</b>	<b>ch. 3–5</b>
Class 6	May 20	Evaluating Causal Relationships	Chapter 3 pgs. 56-74
Class 7	May 21	Experimental Research Designs	Chapter 4 pgs. 77-92
Class 8	May 22	Observational Studies	Chapter 4 pgs. 92-102
Class 9	May 23	Measuring Concepts of Interest	Chapter 5 pgs. 104-123
Class 10	May 24	<b>IR Lab: Basic Functions</b>	<b>Problem set 1 due</b>
<b>Week 3</b>	<b>May 27—May 31</b>	<b>Getting to Know Your Data &amp; Review</b>	<b>ch. 6</b>
Class 11	May 27	<b>NO CLASS</b>	<b>(Memorial Day Holiday)</b>
Class 12	May 28	Getting to Know Your Data	Chapter 6 pgs. 125-133
Class 13	May 29	Getting to Know Your Data	Chapter 6 pgs. 133-141
Class 14	May 30	<b>IR Lab: Descriptive Statistics</b>	
Class 15	May 31	<b>MIDTERM REVIEW</b>	<b>Problem set 2 due</b>
<b>Week 4</b>	<b>June 3—7</b>	<b>Statistical Inference &amp; Hypothesis Testing</b>	<b>ch. 7–9</b>
Class 16	June 3	<b>MIDTERM EXAM</b>	
Class 17	June 4	Probability & Statistical Inference	Chapter 7 pgs. 143-160
Class 18	June 5	Bivariate Hypothesis Testing	Chapter 8 pgs. 161-173
Class 19	June 6	Bivariate Hypothesis Testing	Chapter 8 pgs. 173-185
Class 20	June 7	Two-Variable Regression Models	Chapter 9 pgs. 188-199
			<b>Problem set 3 due</b>
<b>Week 5</b>	<b>June 10—14</b>	<b>Multiple Regression</b>	<b>ch. 9–11</b>
Class 21	June 10	Two-Variable Regression Models	Chapter 9 pgs. 199-213
Class 22	June 11	Multiple Regression	Chapter 10 pgs. 215-226
Class 23	June 12	Multiple Regression	Chapter 10 pgs. 227-243
Class 24	June 13	Multiple Regression Model Specification	Chapter 11 pgs. 246-258
Class 25	June 14	Outliers & Influential Cases	Chapter 11 pgs. 258-271
			<b>Problem set 4 due</b>
<b>Week 6</b>	<b>June 17—21</b>	<b>Dependent Variables &amp; Time-Series Data</b>	<b>ch. 11–12</b>
Class 26	June 17	Limited Dependent Variables	Chapter 12 pgs. 273-282
Class 27	June 18	Time-Series Data	Chapter 12 pgs. 282-297
Class 28	June 19	Catch-up / Review	
Class 29	June 20	<b>FINAL EXAM REVIEW</b>	<b>Problem set 5 due</b>
Class 30	June 21	<b>FINAL EXAM</b>	Have a great summer!