

Political Science Research

POS 3713.2

Tu/Th 3:35-4:50 in HWC 3100

Instructor: Matthew Pietryka

Email: mpietryka@fsu.edu

Office: BEL 561

Office Hours: W 9-10AM, F 2-3PM, and by appointment

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1 COURSE INFORMATION

Required Textbook

The Fundamentals of Political Science Research, Second Edition, by Paul M. Kellstedt and Guy D. Whitten, Cambridge University Press (ISBN 9781107621664)

Course Objectives

“New Quinnipiac poll puts Crist and Scott neck and neck.”
Sarasota Herald-Tribune. July 23, 2014

“U.S. Policies Favor The Wealthy, Interest Groups, Study Shows.”
The Huffington Post. April 15, 2014.

“Man-made climate change blamed for ‘significant’ rise in ocean temperature.”
The Independent. May 20, 2010.

Political discourse is filled with references to data and statistics. This course will help students understand how those data are produced and how to evaluate their validity. Specifically, students will learn to develop research questions, generate hypotheses, construct experiments and observational studies, measure variables, and perform statistical tests. In so doing, students will see how political scientists develop and test theories to explain political phenomena.

With these newly acquired skills, students will be better able to evaluate research they encounter in their day-to-day lives. Students are not expected to walk out as master statisticians able to produce graduate-level research. Instead, the goal is to prepare students for the in-depth research and critical thinking of upper division courses.

2 GRADES

Students grades are comprised of the following components (% of total grade in parentheses):

Three Midterm Exams (75%): Midterm Exams 1, 2, and 3 will be held during class on Thur., 10/6, Tue., 11/8, and Tue., 12/6. A student’s highest scoring midterm will be worth 30% of their final grade. Their second highest scoring exam will be worth 25% of their final grade and their lowest scoring exam will be worth 20%. Exams will cover lecture material as well as material from the readings. The exams will have multiple choice and true/false questions, and students will mark their answers on a scantron (bubble) sheet. You must bring a pencil and a calculator to the exams. Graphing calculators are not allowed.

The Final Exam (25%): The comprehensive final exam will be held in the normal classroom on Thur., 12/15 7:30-9:30AM. The final exam will be open book and open notes, but students may not use any electronic devices other than a calculator—therefore, the notes students bring to the exam must be on paper. Students may not use a computer or the calculator on their phones. The exam will have multiple choice and true/false questions, and students will mark their answers on a scantron (bubble) sheet. You must bring a pencil and calculator to the exam. Graphing calculators are not allowed.

Four Problem Sets (0%): There will also be optional problem sets that will help you understand some of the concepts that you will be tested on during the exams.

Students can calculate their numeric grade using the following formula, expressing their exam scores in percentage points:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Numeric Grade} = & .30 \times \text{Highest Midterm Exam Score} + \\ & .25 \times \text{Second Highest Midterm Exam Score} + \\ & .20 \times \text{Lowest Midterm Exam Score} + \\ & .25 \times \text{Final Exam Score} \end{aligned}$$

The Numeric Grade will map to the final letter grade according to the standard table:

93-100: A	87-89 : B+	80-82 : B-	73-76 : C	67-69 : D+	60-62 : D-
90-92 : A-	83-86 : B	77-79 : C+	70-72 : C-	63-66 : D	00-59 : F

3 EXPECTATIONS

Participation & Attendance

To succeed in the class, students should show up to class having done the assigned readings for the day. Students do not need to have mastered the material, but rather they must have begun to think about the concepts in order to keep up with lecture. There is no formal grade for participation or attendance.

Email Policy

The instructor encourages email questions and comments. The instructor will respond to emails within 24 hours, excepting weekends and holidays. To receive a response, the email must be sent from your FSU email address and the subject line of all emails must include the course number (POS 3713.2), followed by a descriptive subject title (e.g., “POS 3713.2: Question about [topic]”). The instructor *will not* respond via email to the following:

1. Emails that fail to include the course number and a descriptive title in the subject line.
2. Questions that students can answer themselves by reading the syllabus.
3. Questions that require more than a short paragraph to address fully. For more detailed responses, students are encouraged to see the instructor during office hours.

Classroom Etiquette

Students must be courteous to the instructor and fellow students. Students should arrive to class on time. Those who must leave early should sit near the exit to avoid distracting others, but do not need to inform the instructor in advance. Students who miss class should talk to other students to find out what material they missed. Cell phones must be silent and *out of sight*. Laptops are allowed in class if they are used solely for note taking and other course-relevant purposes. Students must ensure that they are not distracting others with the content of their screen.

University Attendance Policy

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. These absences will be accommodated in a way that does not arbitrarily penalize students who have a valid excuse. Consideration will also be given to students whose dependent children experience serious illness.

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 at <http://fda.fsu.edu/Academics/Academic-Honor-Policy> .)

Americans With Disabilities Act

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should (1) register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center; and (2) bring a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done during the first week of class.

This syllabus and other class materials are available in alternative format upon request. For more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities, contact the Student Disability Resource Center, 874 Traditions Way, 108 Student Services Building, Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL 32306-4167, 850-644-9566 (voice), 850-644-8504 (TDD), hsdrc@admin.fsu.edu, <http://www.disabilitycenter.fsu.edu>

Free Tutoring 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 - see <http://ace.fsu.edu/tutoring> or contact tutor@fsu.edu. High-quality tutoring is available by appointment and on a walk-in basis. These services are offered by tutors trained to encourage the highest level of individual academic success while upholding personal academic integrity.

Syllabus Change Policy

Except for changes that substantially affect implementation of the evaluation (grading) statement, this syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advance notice.

4 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- (Q) Is the final exam comprehensive?**
(A) Yes.
- (Q) You assigned [insert reading] on the syllabus, but didn't talk much about it in class. Will it be on the exam?**
(A) Yes, it might be. The readings and lecture are both essential for your understanding of the material.
- (Q) When should I do the readings?**
(A) Once before lecture, then again (and again) as necessary until you understand the material.
- (Q) I need a [insert specific letter grade] in this class. [Blank stare].**
(A) Well, that's not really a question. I assume everyone wants the best grade possible. If you need a good grade, put in the work. I'm always happy to clarify difficult material in lecture and office hours, but I will not change grading policies for individual students—no matter how badly they want a [insert specific letter grade].
- (Q) I just need [X] points to receive a [insert specific letter grade] in this class. Is there anything I can do to improve my grade?**
(A) There are no additional ways to earn credit for the course beyond those specified in the syllabus.
- (Q) Will there be study guides for the exams?**
(A) Yes.
- (Q) When will the study guide be ready?**
(A) Usually 3-5 days before the exam.
- (Q) When will the exam grades be posted?**
(A) As soon as possible. It often takes a day or two to scan and another day or two to look the scores over and upload them to Blackboard.
- (Q) I need to miss an exam because [insert reason]. Can I take it at a different time?**
(A) No, you must take the exam at its scheduled time; drop the class if you cannot attend one of the exams. Documented excuses are the *only* acceptable reason to miss an exam.
- (Q) What type of doctor's note do I need to be excused from an exam?**
(A) Once you are no longer contagious, bring me a doctor's note stating that you were not well enough to attend class on the day of the exam. A note stating only that you saw the doctor that day is not sufficient.
- (Q) If I have an emergency, when and where can I take a makeup exam?**
(A) All makeup exams will be held on the same day. Meet in my office on Fri 12/09 9-10:15AM. Students must get the instructor's approval to take a makeup prior to the makeup exam date and within one week of returning to class.

5 SCHEDULE

Date	Topic	Reading	Due
Tue., 8/30	Introduction	Ch. 1 (pgs. 1-15)	
Thur., 9/1	Theories	Ch. 1 (pgs. 15-23)	
Tue., 9/6	Hypotheses	Ch. 2 (pgs. 24 - 34)	
Thur., 9/8	Formal theory	Ch. 2 (pgs. 34 - 50)	
Tue., 9/13	Causality	Ch. 3 (pgs. 51 - 68)	
Thur., 9/15	Experiments I	Ch. 4 (pgs. 69-82)	
Tue., 9/20	Experiments II		
Thur., 9/22	Observational studies I	Colbert (on Blackboard)	
Tue., 9/27	Observational studies II	Ch. 4 (pgs. 82-91)	
Thur., 9/29	Measurement	Ch. 5 (pgs. 92-98)	
Tue., 10/4	Review for Midterm 1		
Thur., 10/6	Midterm 1		
Tue., 10/11	Descriptive statistics I	Ch. 5 (pgs. 98-128)	
Thur., 10/13	Descriptive statistics II		
Tue., 10/18	Statistical Inference I	Ch. 6 (pgs. 129-144)	Problem Set 1
Thur., 10/20	Statistical Inference II		
Tue., 10/25	Hypothesis tests I	Ch. 7 (pgs.145-156)	Problem Set 2
Thur., 10/27	Hypothesis tests II	Ch. 7 (pgs. 156-161)	
Tue., 11/1	Hypothesis tests III	Ch. 7 (pgs. 161-170)	
Thur., 11/3	Review for Midterm 2		Problem Set 3
Tue., 11/8	Midterm 2		
Thur., 11/10	Bivariate regression I	Ch. 8 (pgs. 171-178)	
Tue., 11/15	Bivariate regression II	Ch. 8 (pgs. 178-189)	
Thur., 11/17	Multiple regression I	Ch. 8 (pgs. 189-196)	
Tue., 11/22	Multiple regression II	Ch. 9 (pgs. 197-219)	
Thur., 11/24	No Class		
Tue., 11/29	Multiple regression III	Ch. 10 (pgs. 220-237)	Problem Set 4
Thur., 12/1	Review for Midterm 3	Ch.11 (pgs. 247-255)	
Tue., 12/6	Midterm 3		
Thur., 12/8	Review for Final		

Final Exam: Thur., 12/15 7:30-9:30AM

Note: schedule is tentative and may change as semester progresses.