

POS 3713 - Political Science Research Methods

Fall 2022

Last Updated: August 22, 2022

Note: All times and dates in the syllabus or other course material correspond to Tallahassee's Eastern Time Zone

Class Time: MON/WED, 3:05PM-4:20PM

Class Location: BEL 0180 (Bellamy building, floor 1)

Instructor: Matthew Pietryka (you can call me *Professor Pietryka* or just *Prof. P*)

Pronouns: he/him

Email: mpietryka@fsu.edu

Office: BEL 561

Office Hours: I will be available to meet in person after most class meetings (for quick conversations) and in my office Tuesdays 2-3pm (for longer conversations). You may alternatively schedule a virtual meeting using this link: <https://calendly.com/pietryka/office-hours>

Course Description

This course provides an introduction to political science research methods. Essentially, it is an introduction to the scientific method with a focus on the application of statistics to political phenomena. Students will be introduced to fundamental concepts in research design and data analysis. We will discuss how to develop research questions, construct theories, generate hypotheses, design experiments and observational studies, measure political variables, and conduct statistical analysis. In sum, the course provides an overview of how political scientists develop and test explanations of the political world. While the course involves a good deal of math, relatively little mathematical background is assumed. We assume only that students have command of high school-level algebra. More advanced mathematical constructs will be introduced as we progress through the material.

Course Objectives

By the end of the semester, students who succeed in this class will be able to:

1. Understand how political scientists (a) develop causal theories and (b) observe the world to test these theories;
2. Calculate and interpret statistics commonly used by political scientists;
3. Understand and critically evaluate causal claims and empirical evidence about political phenomena.

Required Text

Paul M. Kellstedt and Guy D. Whitten. The Fundamentals of Political Science Research. Cambridge University Press, New York, NY, second edition, 2013.

The textbook is available in digital format (PDF) from the FSU library, free of charge for students. You can access an online copy at this link. If off-campus, you will need your FSU login and password to access the online copy.

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

Grades

Students' grades for the course depend on the scores they earn on the assessments described below.

Students can calculate their cumulative percentage using the following formula, expressing their scores in percentage points:

Cumulative Percentage =
 $.40 \times \text{Quiz percentage}$
 $+.20 \times \text{Assignment percentage}$
 $+.40 \times \text{Exam percentage}$

At the end of the semester, the final letter grade will be assigned according to the standard table:

Components of the grade

Each assessment is described briefly below. I will provide students with additional guidance for each assessment in class and on Canvas.

QUIZZES

Quizzes encourage students to recall and recognize key concepts. Repeated recall and recognition help solidify information in long-term memory.

Quizzes will be due each Friday by 5PM. Each quiz will focus mostly on material from the previous week's readings and class material. The quizzes will also occasionally include material covered earlier in the semester. Most quiz questions will be in the multiple-choice format, though some questions may use a different format such as short answers or matching.

I will drop your two lowest quiz scores and thus your final grade will be based on your 12 highest quiz scores.

ASSIGNMENTS

There will be five assignments designed to give students hands-on experience with the course material. They will be graded on the basis of effort rather than mastery.

EXAMS

The course features three unit exams (AKA midterms) and one cumulative final exam. Students will have 90 minutes to complete each exam. Barring unforeseen changes to the schedule, the exams will be available at 7am and due before 11:59PM on the following dates:

Exam	Day	Date
Exam 1: Introduction-Observational Studies	WED	September 28
Exam 2: Measurement-Hypothesis Tests	WED	November 2
Exam 3: Regression	WED	November 30
Exam 4: Cumulative Final Exam	THUR	December 8

WARNING: To take this class, you must be available at those times. If you will not be available during those times, you must contact the instructors **during the first week of instruction** to explain your situation and see if alternative arrangements are possible.

Schedule

K&W = **K**ellstedt & **W**hitten textbook

Note: The schedule is tentative and is likely to change as the semester progresses.

Course Policies

How to ask questions and get help

I encourage you to reach out if you have questions, thoughts, or suggestions you'd like to share about the course. I will strive to respond to all inquiries within 24 business hours as long as you follow these instructions:

- **Most questions** about the syllabus, assignments, and course material **should be posted to the course Q&A discussion thread** (Canvas -> Ask a Question).
- For short questions of a personal nature or for questions about the content of quiz or exam questions and answers, please contact Professor Pietryka directly via email at mpietryka@fsu.edu.
- For questions that require a response of more than a few sentences, seek help in office hours.

How I will communicate with you

- When contacting individual students, I will reach out via Canvas Inbox or their @fsu.edu email.
- When contacting all students, I will use the Announcements feature of the course Canvas.
- To ensure you do not miss an announcement, you can receive email alerts or push notifications each time announcements are posted. To do so, you must configure your Canvas notification settings.

Student Responsibilities

- Students should log on to Canvas at least every other day to check for course updates.
- Students are expected to keep up with the class, engage with the course material, and submit assignments by the due dates.
- All work that students submit is expected to be products of the individual students per the FSU Academic Honor Policy. Students should not discuss any of the questions with each other before or during the actual assignments, discussions, quizzes, or exams without instructor approval.
- To receive credit, students must follow the instructions carefully, follow word limits as instructed, and use correct spelling and grammar.
- For email, please respond to your instructor's messages within a 24-hour period on weekdays and 48-hour period on weekends.
- Please use your @fsu.edu email address for all course-related emails.
- When communicating with the instructor or your fellow classmates, be respectful and use professional email etiquette

Day	Date	Topic	Reading
MON	August 22	Introduction	
WED	August 24	Theories I	K&W Chapter 1
MON	August 29	Theories II	K&W Chapter 2
WED	August 31	Causality	K&W Chapter 3
MON	September 5	No Class: Labor Day	
WED	September 7	Experiments I	K&W Chapter 4 (Sections 4.1-4.2.3)
MON	September 12	Experiments II	
WED	September 14	No Class: APSA Conference	
MON	September 19	Observational studies I	K&W Chapter 4 (Sections 4.3-4.4)
WED	September 21	Observational studies II	
MON	September 26	Review	
WED	September 28	Exam 1: Introduction-Observational Studies	
MON	October 3	Measurement	K&W Chapter 5 (Sections 5.1-5.8)
WED	October 5	Descriptive statistics I	K&W Chapter 5 (Sections 5.9-5.12)
MON	October 10	Descriptive statistics II	
WED	October 12	Statistical Inference I	K&W Chapter 6
MON	October 17	Statistical Inference II	
WED	October 19	Hypothesis tests I	K&W Chapter 7 (Sections 7.1-7.4.1)
MON	October 24	Hypothesis tests II	K&W Chapter 7 (Sections 7.4.2)
WED	October 26	Hypothesis tests III	K&W Chapter 7 (Sections 7.4.3-7.5)
MON	October 31	Review	
WED	November 2	Exam 2: Measurement-Hypothesis Tests	
MON	November 7	Bivariate regression I	K&W Chapter 8
WED	November 9	Bivariate regression II	
MON	November 14	Multiple regression I	K&W Chapter 9
WED	November 16	Multiple regression II	K&W Chapter 10
MON	November 21	Multiple regression III	K&W Chapter 11
WED	November 23	No Class: Thanksgiving	
MON	November 28	Review	
WED	November 30	Exam 3: Regression	
THUR	December 8	Exam 4: Cumulative Final Exam	

Participation & Lateness Policy

If you think you cannot finish an assignment by the due date, please let me know via email. I will do my best to accommodate any reasonable needs, but **only if you alert me to these needs before the class or due date** (or, in extreme circumstances where communication is not feasible prior to the due date, as soon as feasible thereafter).

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.

Grade Grievances

Each student is responsible for ensuring their gradebook is correct and up to date.

The instructor works to ensure that all grades are unbiased by grading with students names blinded where possible. Therefore, regrades are only allowed in cases of mistakes.

If you think you received an incorrect grade by mistake, please do the following:

1. Wait 24 hours after receiving the grade.
2. Email the instructor. In the email, respectfully explain why you believe the grade you received was a mistake. The email must make clear that you have read the feedback you received on the assignment.

Classroom Recording

In this class, consistent with state law and university policy, students are permitted to make recordings of class lectures for personal use only. As noted, sharing, posting, or publishing classroom recordings may subject you to honor code violations and legal penalties associated with theft of intellectual property and violations of other state law. Moreover, students and educators have expressed concern that recording classroom activities may negatively impact the learning experience for others, especially in classes that involve questions, discussion, or participation. To protect a learning environment in which everyone feels free to experiment with ideas, we ask you refrain from recording in ways that could make others feel reluctant to ask questions, explore new ideas, or otherwise participate in class. Students must monitor their recording so that they do not include participation by other students without permission. Students with disabilities will continue to have appropriate accommodations for recordings as established by the Office of Accessibility Services.

I will record each class meeting and post them to the course Canvas. These recordings are only for your own use and may not be shared with others. If at any point you share something in class that you wish to have edited out of the recording, please email me.

University Policies

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 <https://fda.fsu.edu/academic-resources/academic-integrity-and-grievances/academic-honor-policy>)

ACADEMIC SUCCESS Your academic success is a top priority for Florida State University. University resources to help you succeed include tutoring centers, computer labs, counseling and health services, and services for designated groups, such as veterans and students with disabilities. The following information is not exhaustive, so please check with your advisor or the Department of Student Support and Transitions to learn more.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT Florida State University (FSU) values diversity and inclusion; we are committed to a climate of mutual respect and full participation. Our goal is to create learning environments that are usable, equitable, inclusive, and welcoming. FSU is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities in a manner that is consistent with academic standards of the course while empowering the student to meet integral requirements of the course.

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should:

- (1) register with and provide documentation to the Office of Accessibility Services; and
- (2) request a letter from the Office of Accessibility Services to be sent to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type; and,
- (3) meet (in person, via phone, email, skype, zoom, etc...) with each instructor to whom a letter of accommodation was sent to review approved accommodations.

Please note that instructors are not allowed to provide classroom accommodations to a student until appropriate verification from the Office of Accessibility Services has been provided.

This syllabus and other class materials are available in alternative format upon request.

For the latest version of this statement and more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities, contact the:

Office of Accessibility Services 874 Traditions Way 108 Student Services Building Florida State University Tallahassee, FL 32306-4167 (850) 644-9566 (voice) (850) 644-8504 (TDD) oas@fsu.edu
<https://dsst.fsu.edu/oas>

CONFIDENTIAL CAMPUS RESOURCES Various centers and programs are available to assist students with navigating stressors that might impact academic success. These include the following:

Victim Advocate Program University Center A, Rm. 4100 (850) 644-7161 Available 24/7/365 Office Hours: M-F 8-5 <https://dsst.fsu.edu/vap>

Counseling and Psychological Services Askew Student Life Center, 2nd floor 942 Learning Way (850) 644-8255 <https://counseling.fsu.edu/>

University Health Services Health and Wellness Center (850) 644-6230 <https://uhs.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.

PANDEMIC PROTOCOLS The CDC recommends that all individuals, even vaccinated individuals, wear proper and well-fitting masks in public indoor spaces, like classrooms, especially where social distancing is not possible and virus rates are high. The CDC assesses the infection rate in Leon County as High.

As of August, Florida is experiencing a surge of the Omicron BA.5 variant, the most easily transmissible Covid variant to date, which is able to evade previous immunity from infection and vaccination. It is a much more transmissible variant than the original virus, the Delta variant, or even the earlier Omicron variants. It can infect even vaccinated individuals and can be spread by them to others. It poses a special threat to members of the community with underlying health conditions and family members vulnerable to the virus. The best way to protect against serious illness is to be fully vaccinated, but not everyone among us can be.

For these reasons, FSU expects each of us to continue cooperating with common-sense public health protocols, including (1) getting vaccinated and boosted, (2) testing for the virus if you have symptoms, (3) staying home and away from others if you are sick, and (4) masking in public indoor spaces to protect yourself and others whenever there is reason for concern. **Please remember that you should NOT attend class if you have tested positive for Covid-19 or are in quarantine.**