

RI: Research Methods in Political Science

Political Science 3703 (Spring 2024)

CRN 12561 (3 credits)

W F 12:30-1:50 at Fleming Hall 409

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Office Hours: : W F: 11:00 am -12:00 pm, 2:00-3:00 and by appointment

Office: Social Science (SO) 384b

Course Description

This course is an introduction to the scope and methodology of political analysis. It includes introductory examinations of research design, survey research, computer applications, data analysis, and library research. This course is required for all political science majors as a research tool and should be completed by the end of students' junior year. The goal of the course is to familiarize students with methods of research and statistics in the social sciences generally, and political science specifically. Information regarding the philosophy of science and various methods of applying the scientific method to social science questions is covered. The foundational skills of logic, critical thinking, and scientific inquiry are essential to this course. Students will hone and develop these skills over the course of the semester. Students are also required to demonstrate content knowledge, core principles, and research skills in political science. Additionally, students are required to formulate and test falsifiable research questions. Students will develop and complete a plan of action—or research design—guided by the professor in this class. As such, multiple iterations of assignments are designed to assist with this process and help students produce and present a rigorous final paper. There are no prerequisites for this course.

Research Intensive (RI) course & Research Certificate

This course contains an assignment or multiple assignments designed to help students conduct research and inquiry at an intensive level. If this class is selected to participate in the university-wide assessment program, students will be asked to complete a consent form and submit electronically some of their research assignments for review. Visit the Office of Undergraduate Research and Inquiry (OURI) for additional opportunities and information at <http://www.fau.edu/ouri>.

FAU now offers an Undergraduate Research Certificate to recognize undergraduate students for the systematic development of excellence in undergraduate research. Students seeking a certificate must complete 12 credits in research-intensive (RI), skill-building, exposure, and research

dissemination activities. Learn more about the RI Certificate here. Completing this course earns you three credits in research intensive coursework.

Student Learning Outcomes

This course is considered a research intensive course. Research projects are expected to achieve all six of the following Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs):

SLO 1: Knowledge. Students are expected to demonstrate content knowledge, and knowledge of core principles and skills in political science. They should be familiar with language specific to the discipline, as well as scientific inquiry.

SLO 2: Formulate Questions. Students are required to formulate research questions, scholarly or creative problems in a manner appropriate to the planning discipline. Students will identify a research puzzle from which a series of research questions are identified. Further, students will examine one of the identified questions throughout the course.

SLO 3: Plan of Action. Students are expected to develop and implement a plan of action to address research and inquiry questions or scholarly problems.

SLO 4: Critical Thinking. Students are expected to apply critical thinking skills to evaluate information, their own work, and the work of others. Students will be required to complete assignments in logic and critical thinking. Students will also engage in self and peer review sessions.

SLO 5: Ethical Conduct. Students are expected to identify significant ethical issues in research and inquiry and/or address them in practice. Students will be asked to identify potential ethical issues associated with conducting research in the social sciences.

SLO 6: Communication. Students will convey all aspects of their research and inquiry (processes and/or products) in appropriate formats, venues, and delivery modes. Students will present during class, but are also encouraged to present at OURI Annual Undergraduate Research Symposium http://www.fau.edu/ouri/undergrad_symposium.php.

Florida Atlantic University's Undergraduate Research Symposium

Students are encouraged to submit their research projects to the Undergraduate Research Symposium held at Florida Atlantic University (Boca Raton campus) each Spring Semester. Use the following link for information: http://www.fau.edu/our/undergrad_symposium.php.

Responsible Conduct of Research

It is also strongly recommended that students complete the Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) certificate through the CITI training of academic research on-line at <https://www.fau.edu/research/research-integrity/citi-training.php#citi>. Students are also encouraged to attend FAU OURI work- shops on topics related responsible conduct of research. Information on OURI workshops can be found here http://www.fau.edu/our/student_workshops.php.

Course Requirements:

Students are expected to perform the following at satisfactory levels to be able to get a passing grade: reading the text, writing a research proposal, completing the assigned homework problems, taking the exams, and attending and participating in the classes.

Since this course focuses on statistical analysis of politics, it is required for students to acquire knowledge on how to use statistical software. In addition to understanding and learning the logic of scientific research, conducting practical research is a core goal of this class. Thus, there will be ample opportunity for students to learn how to use the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) in performing their analyses. The program will be available on the computers around campus. While we are using SPSS as the main software for this class, if students want to use other software programs (e.g., Stata, R, Python), that is permissible if done in consultation with the instructor.

Adequate communication between instructor and students is critical. Students should use their FAU email account freely to communicate with the instructor and classmates. Whenever students send emails to the instructor, you should use the subject title **POS3703:(student's last name) re: (subject of the email)**. Since the instructor will get numerous emails, it is imperative to use this format to prevent any potential confusion or miscommunication between us.

Prerequisite: Although there is no formally required prerequisite for this class, it is recommended for students to have taken **POS2041: Government of the U.S.**

Teaching format: The class will be a combination of lecture and discussion. I will lecture based on the text book, covering the main points of the chapters and providing illustrations from the readings. To encourage discussion, I will regularly ask questions of the class. Students are strongly

encouraged to bring their own questions, comments, and ideas to participate in the discussion. In addition, this class will use computers and statistical software to perform actual analysis of data. Students are strongly encouraged to do their homework and to participate in the computer lab exercises.

Evaluation: Grades will be determined as follows.

Exams (10%)
Research paper (40%)
Participation and Attendance (15%)
Presentation (10%)
Homework (25%)

Exams: There will be a short exam featuring multiple choice questions sometime during each week's meeting. The questions will be drawn from the textbook, the lectures, and the other readings.

Research Paper: The research paper is a crucial task for success in this class. The paper should include the following basic requirements of a full research paper: a research question, theory, literature review, hypotheses, data, measurements, analyses, and conclusion. Each student must write a research paper on a topic that can be chosen by the student in consultation with the instructor. If students do not have specific topics, I can provide some alternative topics and data sets with which students can work. The list of potential questions is included in the sample question document in Canvas. In selecting a research question, you will learn how to formulate a question (SLO 2). In addition, you will demonstrate your knowledge (SLO 1) of the chosen question and apply your critical thinking skills (SLO 4) in building your theory and literature review based on your reading of existing studies. Proposing hypotheses drawn from the theory requires you to think critically about your question from an empirical perspective. Furthermore, you will learn how to plan and design research (SLO 3) and ethically conduct research (SLO 5) by elaborating on your plan for data collection and measurements of key concepts used in your research. As you provide your findings from the data analysis, you will improve your critical thinking skill by engaging in self-review of the connection between the findings and the theory. Finally, you will be able to present your research in the class (SLO 6) or in other venues (e.g., student symposium or conferences). The length of the paper should be 5-10 pages double spaced with 12 point font size and one-inch margins. The basic guidelines for the research paper will be posted on Canvas. Students should submit a **hard copy** and an electronic version of the paper to the instructor and into "assignment" on the Canvas by the end of the class on the due date. You can revise the paper during the course. Those who submit after the deadline will lose 10 points per day out of 100 possible points.

Homework: Homework assignments are designed to give students opportunities to exercise using data what they have learned in the class. Also they are designed to help students build their research paper. They will be important components of students' grades. Students can work together to do the homework, but they have to turn in their independent work. These assignments are going

to be posted on Canvas in advance. A significant portion of the assignments require learning how to use SPSS and to interpret the results from the analysis. Although the student version of SPSS will be available, the full version of SPSS is accessible only on campus. Students are advised to do their homework on campus if they do not purchase the software. Homework should be typed, and the computer output should be attached to the work sheets. The format of the homework is the same as the research paper.

Discussion: I believe in the exchange of ideas, discussions, and debates as important tools for learning. Thus, it is important to engage in constructive debates in the class as well as to make good comments on the subjects and issues. It is necessary to read the text and the other books in advance to prepare for and participate in the discussions.

Presentation: Each student must present their research proposal or research project in the class in a 10-15 minute presentation. Power points or other presentation methods can be used.

Attendance: As there will be no separate discussion sessions, it is strongly recommended that you attend the class. You can use 1 exemption and not lose points for missing the class. For medical or non-medical emergencies, you need to submit to me proof of such events (e.g., doctor's note).

Usage of Electronic Devices: Students must turn off their cell phones before class, and should refrain from surfing the internet or responding to email or IM during class.

Grading standard: Letter grades will be assigned according to the following scoring scheme. A: 93-100, A-: 90-92.9, B+: 87-89.9, B:83-86.9, B-:80-82.9, C+: 77-79.9 , C: 73-76.9, C-: 70-72.9, D+: 67-69.9 , D:63-66.9, D-:60-62.9, F: below 60

Emergencies: If an emergency arises during the semester that makes fulfillment of class requirements difficult, please discuss the situation with me as early as possible, so we can discuss how to resolve the problem and maintain your good standing.

Makeup exam policy: In principle, I do not allow makeup exams except in cases of medical or unmanageable emergencies. In these cases, students need to document the situation.

Attendance Policy Statement: Students are expected to attend all of their scheduled University classes and to satisfy all academic objectives as outlined by the instructor. The effect of absences upon grades is determined by the instructor, and the University reserves the right to deal at any time with individual cases of non-attendance. Students are responsible for arranging to make up work missed because of legitimate class absence, such as illness, family emergencies, military obligation, court-imposed legal obligations or participation in University approved activities. Examples of University-approved reasons for absences include participating on an athletic or scholastic team, musical and theatrical performances and debate activities. It is the student's responsibility to give the instructor notice prior to any anticipated absences and within a reasonable amount of time after an unanticipated absence, ordinarily by the next scheduled class

meeting. Instructors must allow each student who is absent for a University-approved reason the opportunity to make up work missed 3 without any reduction in the student's final course grade as a direct result of such absence.

Disability policy statement: In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA), students who require reasonable accommodations due to a disability to properly execute coursework must register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS) and follow all SAS procedures. SAS has offices across three of FAU's campuses – Boca Raton, Davie and Jupiter – however disability services are available for students on all campuses. For more information, please visit the SAS website at www.fau.edu/sas/.

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS): Center Life as a university student can be challenging physically, mentally and emotionally. Students who find stress negatively affecting their ability to achieve academic or personal goals may wish to consider utilizing FAU's Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) Center. CAPS provides FAU students a range of services – individual counseling, support meetings, and psychiatric services, to name a few – offered to help improve and maintain emotional well-being. For more information, go to <http://www.fau.edu/counseling/>

Code of Academic Integrity policy statement: Students at Florida Atlantic University are expected to maintain the highest ethical standards. Academic dishonesty is considered a serious breach of these ethical standards, because it interferes with the university mission to provide a high quality education in which no student enjoys an unfair advantage over any other. Academic dishonesty is also destructive of the university community, which is grounded in a system of mutual trust and places high value on personal integrity and individual responsibility. Harsh penalties are associated with academic dishonesty. For more information, see University Regulation 4.001.

Required Texts

Earl Babbie. 2013. *The Basics of Social Research*. 6th ed. CA: Cengage Learning

Reading schedule¹

Week 1 (Jan 10 -): Introduction and basics of scientific research
ch. 1: Human Inquiry and Science

Week2: (Jan 17-): Basics of scientific research

- ch. 2: Paradigms, Theory, and Social Research

¹ This schedule is subject to change according to the progress of the class.

- ch. 15: Reading and Writing Social Research

Week 3 (Jan 24-): Structuring research

- ch. 3: The Ethics and Politics of Social Research
- ch. 4: Research Design
- hw # 1: Selection of research question and list of references due Jan 31.

Week 4 (Jan 31 /Feb 2): Structuring research

- ch. 5: Conceptualization, operationalization, and measurement
- ch. 6: Indexes, Scales, and Typologies
- hw #2: Annotated Bibliography, Literature Review, Theory, and Hypothesis due Feb 7

Week 5 (Feb 7-): Modes of research I

- ch.7: The logic of Sampling

Week 6 (Feb 14-): Modes of research II

- ch. 9: Survey Research
- hw #3: Obtaining Data, Extracting Variables, and Descriptive Statistical Analysis due Feb 21

Week 7 (Feb 21-): Modes of research III

- ch. 8 : Experiments

Week 8 (Feb. 28-): Modes of research IV

- ch. 10: Qualitative Field Research
- Ch. 11: Unobtrusive Research (content analysis; comparative historical methods)
- hw #4: Manipulating variables, making Graphs, and Creating an Index due March 13

Spring Break: Mar 2 (Sat.) - 8 (Fri)

Week 9 (Mar 13-): Modes of research V

- Ch. 11: Unobtrusive Research (continued)

Week 10 (Mar 20-): Data Analyses II

- ch. 14: Quantitative Data Analysis
- hw #5: Conducting Bivariate Analysis and Interpretation of the Outcomes due March 27.

Week 11 (Mar. 27-): Data Analyses III

- ch. 14: continued
- hw #6: Conducting Multivariate Analysis and Interpretation of the Outcomes due April 3.

Week 12(April 3-): Data Analyses IV

- ch. 16 (from *The Practice of Social Research*) : Statistical Analyses

Week 13(April 10-):
Student Presentation

Week 14(April 17-):
Student Presentation