

RESEARCH METHODS

Fall 2013



Instructor: Dr. Magda Giurcanu

Office: 210 Anderson

Office hours: T 10.30-12.00 am

By appointment (210 Anderson)

Email: Use the MAIL tool in E-learning or magiur@ufl.edu

Course Meetings

T: 2-3 (8.30-10.25)

Th: 3 (9.35-10.25)

MAT 18

Course description

This course is designed to familiarize students with the research methods most commonly used to study political phenomena. The course has two main objectives: 1) to aid students in understanding and evaluating quantitative and qualitative analyses and 2) to provide students with the necessary tools to design and conduct their own research projects in political science. While the examples used to illustrate the techniques and methodologies throughout the semester are pertinent to the political science discipline, it is important to mention that the various stages of the research process covered are suitable to research questions *across all* social science disciplines.

The course is structured around important aspects of the research process and will span over identifying and refining research questions, formulating hypotheses and assessing theories, writing literature reviews, and formulating original research projects. Methodologies covered will include experimental and non-experimental approaches to research design, with particular emphasis on ‘large-N’ /quantitative analysis, Survey Analysis, Content Analysis, and ‘small-N’ qualitative reasoning.

Course materials

There are 2 textbooks required for this class. The books are available through the UF Bookstore.

1. Johnson, Janet D. and H. T. Reynolds. Political Science Research Methods, 2012, (7th ed.).
2. Kirkpatrick, Lee and Quentin Kidd. A Simple Guide to SPSS for Political Science, 2013, Wadsworth CENGAGE Learning.

Additional readings will be available through 'e-Learning in Sakai'. They will consist of scholarly articles that will allow us to evaluate methodologies across different political science subfields-- American Politics, Comparative Politics, and International Relations.

Most importantly, some lectures will require the use of a computer lab, and that information will be forthcoming.

STUDENTS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL MATERIALS COVERED IN LECTURES, READINGS, HANDOUTS, & POSTINGS ON THE COURSE WEBSITE.

E-Learning in SAKAI You should become familiar with 'e-Learning in Sakai'. All electronic materials assigned as readings (articles and book chapters) will be posted here, as well as power point slides for the class. In addition, ALL GRADES will be posted here too.

Course requirements and grading:

- 2 in-class tests (40 %--20% each of the final grade)
- 1 research design project (15 % of the final grade)
- 1 statistics group project (15 % of the final grade)
- 4 take-home assignments (20 % of the final grade)
- 3 in-class assignments (10 % of the final grade)

Tests 40%: Will we have a midterm and a final exam, each worth 20%, with the second exam not being comprehensive. The exams will focus mostly on the concepts and methods discussed in the main textbook, *Political Science Research Methods*, and class slides. Most importantly, the exams will not be multiple choice, but rather a mix of short and long answer questions.

Research design project (RDP) 15%: Each student is required to produce a research design developed throughout the semester. There are several deadlines that you need to follow to receive all points for this assignment.

1. Students are expected to come up with a research topic and introduction and have it approved by the instructor (2%) RDP1
2. Write a brief literature review that will allow you to advance a theoretical standpoint and hypotheses (5%) RDP2
3. Propose the necessary methodology to test the hypotheses (5%). RDP3
4. Last revisions and final submission (3%). RDP4

To prevent plagiarism, I will check the papers using Turnitin.com. More instructions on this assignment will be posted later in the semester.

Statistics group project 15%:

1. Students will participate in group projects where they will evaluate a research question with a data set provided to them. Groups will be formed during the **ninth** week of class, based on students' interests. (10%)
2. This project will culminate in mock conference presentations at the end of the semester. (5%) More instructions on this assignment will be posted later in the semester.

Take-home assignments 20%: Throughout the semester students will be assigned 4 short assignments. They will take the form of short responses to prompts issued at the end of class on Thursday.

In-class assignments 10%: There will be no regular attendance taken. Yet, regular class attendance is *assumed* – as you cannot simply review the required readings to prepare for the exam. In addition,

attendance and participation will figure into the in-class assignments, which will be unannounced, and will test your knowledge on that day's readings.

Policies of the course

1. **Assignments:**
 - a. All assignments must be submitted **BY THE DEADLINE** and following ALL instructions.
 - b. Extensions will be granted at my discretion and, if granted, they will require proper documentation. Make sure you ask for an extension **only PRIOR (at least 24 hours)** to the deadline date.
2. **Cheating/plagiarism:** DON'T. Any student caught violating the honor code will fail the class. For more information, read the Code of Student Conduct <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcode.php>
3. **Courtesy:** Don't come late and turn off your cell-phones. Any disruptive behavior (reading newspapers or materials related to other courses, talking outside of class discussions) will not be tolerated and you will be asked to leave the class.
4. **Special Needs:** If you have a disability that requires special arrangements (e.g. note- and/or test-taking), please register with UF's Office of Students with Disabilities and contact me **within the first week** of class. Every effort will be made to accommodate those with registered disabilities.

Grading scale: (<http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/regulationgrades.html>):

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	E
94-100	90-93.9	87-89.9	83-86.9	80-82.9	77-79.9	73-76.9	70-72.9	67-69.9	63-66.9	60-62.9	< 59.9

*****I reserve the right to alter this schedule with prior notice—one week in advance.**

Course Schedule

Part I: Preliminaries of Scientific Research

Week 1: Aug 22

Introduction and Course overview

Week 2: Aug 27-29

Studying politics scientifically

T:

- Johnson and Reynolds, Ch 2
- King, Keohane, and Verba, Ch 1 (available on SAKAI)

Th:

- Class cancelled—the instructor is attending the APSA meeting in Chicago
- Still, look over --Clive Thompson, *Why We Should Learn the Language of Data* (available on SAKAI)

Week 3: Sept 3-5

The building blocks of social scientific research

T:

- Johnson and Reynolds, Ch 3 & 4

Th:

- King, Keohane, and Verba, Ch 4 (available on SAKAI)

- **Take home Assignment 1** due the following meeting

**Sometime during the weeks 2 or 3 we will have David Schwieder, the Political Science librarian, visit our class for a demo on how to navigate the UF databases. Once I know more about his time availability I will insert the visit in the syllabus.

Week 4: Sept 10-12

Measurement

T:

- Johnson and Reynolds, Ch 5
- King, Keohane, and Verba, 150-161 (available on SAKAI)

Th:

- Munk and Verkuilne, 2002. "Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy: Evaluating Alternative Indices", *Comparative Political Studies*. 35: 5-34 (available on SAKAI)

Part II: Research Design

Week 5: Sept 17-19

Research Design I Experiments

T:

- Johnson and Reynolds, Ch 6 (up to page 194)
- Morton and Williams. 2008. 'Experimentation in Political Science' in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press (available on Sakai)

Th:

- Shanto Iyengar and Don Kinder. Ch 2 &3 in *News That Matter* (available on SAKAI)
- **Take-home Assignment 2** due the following meeting

Week 6: Sept 24-26

Research Design II Non Experimental Approaches (Small-n Approaches)

T:

- Johnson and Reynolds, Ch 6 (start on page 195)
- Gerring. 2004. "What is a Case Study and What is it Good For?" *American Political Science Review*. 57: 45-56. Hix and Høyland: pp. 31-40 & 79-89

Th: Test Review & Literature Review

- Catch-up with the readings
- Knopf. 2006. "Doing a Literature Review". *PS—Political Science & Politics*. 39: 127-132
- **RDP 1: Submit a research topic**

Week 7: Oct 1-3

T:

- **In-class Test 1**

Th:

- In-class work on the Research Design projects

Part II: Data Collection Aspects and sample of methods

Week 8: Oct 8-10

Sampling and Survey Research

T:

- Johnson and Reynolds, Ch. 7 & 10 (up to page 341)

Th:

- Lupia and Philot. 2005. "Views from Inside the Net: How Websites Affect Young Adults Political Interest", Journal of Politics, 67:1122-1142. (available on SAKAI)
- **RDP 2: Submit the lit review**

Week 9: Oct 15-17

Content Analysis, Interviewing, Focus Groups, and Ethnographic Research

T:

- Johnson and Reynolds, Ch 9 (start on page 292) & 10 (start on page 341)

Th:

- Aberback and Rockman. 2002. Conducting and Coding Elite Interviews. PS- Political Science & Politics, 35: 673-676 (available on SAKAI)
- John R. Hibbing, Elizabeth Theiss-Morse. 1995. Congress as public enemy: public attitudes toward American political institutions. Cambridge University press (Chapter 5, "focus Groups and Perceptions of the Washington System, pp 84-105) (available on SAKAI)
- Kirk & Miller, Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research (pp 25-26, & pp 29-32) (available on SAKAI)
- **Take-home Assignment 3** due the following meeting
- **Student Groups for the Stats projects**

Part III: Large-N Analyses

Week 10: Oct 22-24

STATS 1

T:

- Johnson and Reynolds, Ch 11 & 12

Th:

- SPSS lab (location TBA)

Week 11: Oct 29-31

STATS 2

T:

- Johnson and Reynolds, Ch 13 & 14

Th:

- SPSS lab (location TBA)
- **RDP 3: submit the methods section**

Week 12: Nov 5-7

STATS 3

Group projects and test review

T:

- Catch up with STATS
- SPSS lab (location TBA)

Th:

- Test 2 review
- **Take-home Assignment 4** due the following meeting

Week 13: Nov 12-14

T:

- In-class Test 2

Part IV: Bringing it all together

Th: Ethical issues in Social Research

- Babbie, Earl. 2014, *The Basics of Social Research*, 6th edition. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth (Chapter 3” The Ethics and Politics of Social Research) (available on SAKAI)
- Johnson and Reynolds (pp 271-272)

Week 14: Nov 19-21

Concluding thoughts

T:

- First submission of Group Projects
- Mahoney and Goertz. 2006. A Tale of two Cultures: Contrasting Quantitative and Qualitative Research. *Political Analysis* 14: 227-249. (available on SAKAI)

Th:

- Fearon, James D. and David Laitin. 2008. Integrating Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods. In *The Oxford Handbook of Political methodology*, Eds. Box-Steffensmeier, Brady, Collier (available on SAKAI).

Week 15: Nov 26-28

Thanksgiving week

T: In-class work

- Last revisions on Research Designs Projects due midnight
- Last revisions on Group Projects due December 2nd midnight.

Th:

- Enjoy Thanksgiving

Week 16: Dec 3

T:

- Mock student conference: Group Project presentations