

**POS 3713 Honors / Research Intensive  
Political Science Research**

Fall 2009, Monday and Wednesday 3:35 – 4:50, Bellamy 112

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**Office Hours**

Wed. 1:00 – 3:00  
and by appointment

**Overview of the Course**

How do we learn about the behavior of voters, politicians or interest groups? How do we evaluate the success of public policies? Why are public opinion polls accurate (or, in some cases inaccurate)? Can we make generalizations about politics and policies from a limited amount of information? This course is designed to answer these questions by examining how political scientists collect and analyze data. You will be introduced to a range of techniques to study political phenomenon with a special focus on survey research. This class takes a “hands on” approach to learning the craft of research. You will analyze a data from recent public opinion polls designed to answer questions about political attitudes and behavior. We will also investigate other types of data, such as time series data and aggregated country-level data. Finally, you will learn basic statistical concepts necessary to test hypotheses using STATA, a statistical software package that is commonly used in academics, business, and government. At the end of the course, you will have developed a theoretical and practical understanding of how to conduct and assess political research.

This course is the first of a sequence for the Research Intensive Bachelor’s certificate so it is designed to emphasize the practical use of statistics in research applications. This course will help you learn to design and answer your own research questions and, for those of you working towards certification, will be invaluable in preparing you for subsequent courses and internships.

**Required Texts**

Required:

Kellstedt, Paul M. and Guy D. Whitten. *The Fundamentals of Political Science Research*  
Cambridge University Press. (abbreviated in syllabus as FPSR)

Recommended:

Frankfort-Nachmaias, Chava and Anna Leon-Guerrero *Social Statistics for a Diverse Society*. 4<sup>th</sup>  
edition or earlier is fine. Older editions can be purchased at a low price.

## Grade Components

**Exams – 60%**  
**Homework – 40%**

Please note the official University “drop” date. After the drop date you must be passing the class with a “D” average or better to withdraw with a W. If you withdraw after this date and you are failing the class, you will receive an F for your final grade.

### Exams - 60%

Midterm	30%
Final Exam	30%

The exams in this class will contain a combination of multiple choice, short answer and analytic problems. The exams will cover material from the textbook, class notes and homework. The final exam must be taken and the exam is cumulative.

*Make-up Exams:* Make-up exams are given only in extraordinary circumstances, such as a *documented* illness or family emergency. If you must miss an exam due to a University sponsored activity, you must provide documentation *prior to the exam* for approval.

Note that I will follow special University policies regarding illness this year due to HSN1 outbreaks and will provide make-up exams without documentation in the event of a flu outbreak.

### Homework and final project- 40%

You will be given 6 homework assignments during the semester, many of which involve preparing you to write your final paper. The homework is worth 20% of your grade and the final project is worth 20%. I will drop the lowest homework grade.

The homework assignments are designed to give you practical experience in analyzing and interpreting data. You will need to use STATA, a statistical software package, to complete the homework. This software is available with the purchase through a representative on campus. I will provide information on how to do this during the first week of classes. We will discuss how to use STATA in class, however, You will be expected to spend substantial time outside of class familiarizing yourself with this software package. Due dates on homework TBA.

The final project will be a short research paper. Your paper must outline a research question of interest, make a theoretical argument, identify a set of empirical hypotheses that can be tested using a dataset that I provide to you, followed by the appropriate data analysis to test your hypotheses. Many of the homework assignments will help you work

through this process step by step, so the final paper should be easy to write. You will be given additional information about this project early in the semester.

### **Attendance**

It is essential that you attend class on a regular basis and complete the reading assignments. **The exams will cover material from lecture as well as the readings. You should not expect to score well on the exams if you have not attended class.** If you must miss a class, please make arrangements to get notes from a classmate.

Your participation in class discussions is expected and will be solicited. You will be called upon to react to or comment on material covered in lectures and readings so you should come to class well prepared.

### **CLASS POLICIES**

#### **Courtesy in the Classroom**

Classroom courtesy is necessary to ensure that all students have the opportunity to learn without distractions. Please, no cell phones, talking during lectures, reading newspapers, etc. during class. If you must have a cell phone to receive emergency calls about kids or other family members, keep it on “vibrate.” Please be on time for class and stay until the end. Entering and leaving is distracting to me and to other students. If you must enter late or leave early, please take the seat nearest an exit and enter or leave as quietly as possible. Repeated disruption of class may lead to penalties that reduce your final grade.

Class discussions of political issues can often stimulate strong feelings and heated debate. I ask all of you to respect the opinions of your fellow students, even if you do not agree with them. In simple terms, that means not interrupting other students while they are speaking and not verbally attacking them for their beliefs. While I believe that it is essential to connect theory to current events, I will cut short debates of current events that do not enhance the understanding of course concepts.

#### **Cheating**

Don't do it. The penalties for cheating in my class are severe and simply not worth the risk. **Academic dishonesty on even the smallest quiz or assignment can result in you failing this course and facing University disciplinary action.** Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the use of unauthorized information during a quiz or exam, plagiarism, submitting the same paper for multiple courses, or depriving another student of the ability to perform his or her work. If you have questions about University policy on academic dishonesty, please see the Academic Honor System at <http://www.fsu.edu/Books/Student-Handbook/2003codes/honor.html>

Note: Many of you will be tempted to work in groups on the homework. I strongly discourage this because it will hamper your ability to answer the questions on your own during the exam. Moreover, it is obvious when students copy answers or computer output from one another. Copying homework, even when you have worked the answer out as a group, is a form of cheating and subject to the penalties listed above.

### Students with Disabilities

Any student who, because of a disabling condition, may require some special arrangements in order to meet the course requirements should contact the instructor **as soon as possible** to make the necessary accommodations. Students should (1) register with the Student Disability Resource Center and (2) bring a letter to the instructor from the SDRC indicating the required accommodations. This should be done during the first week of class. This syllabus and other course materials are available in alternate form upon request.

### *TENTATIVE SCHEDULE*

Please note, readings, assignments and test dates may be adjusted during the semester. Changes to schedules will be announced in class.

<b>Week of:</b>	<b>Reading Assignments and Schedule of Exams</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Aug 24	Introduction to Statistics and Research Methods <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• FPSR Chapter 1</li></ul>	
Aug 31	Theory Building and Evaluating Causation <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• FPSR Chapter 2 - 3</li></ul>	
Sept 7	Research Design <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• FPSR Chapter 4</li></ul>	Monday = Labor Day & No Class!
Sept 14	Measurement & Descriptive Statistics <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• FPSR Chapter 5 &amp; 6</li></ul>	Homework 1 due Wednesday in Class
Sept 21	Descriptive Statistics and Distributions <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• FPSR Chapter 6 &amp; 7</li></ul>	
Sept 28	Hypothesis Testing - Bivariate <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• FPSR Chapter 8</li></ul>	Homework 2 due Monday in class
Oct 5	Hypothesis Testing – Bivariate Regression <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• FPSR Chapter 9</li></ul>	Homework 3 due Monday in class
Oct 12	EXAM I	
Oct 19	Multiple Regression I Part 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• FPSR Chapter 10</li></ul> Chapter 8	

Oct 26	Multiple Regression I Part 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FPSR Chapter 11</li> </ul>	Homework 4 due
Nov 2	Extensions to Multiple Regression Models <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FPSR Chapter 12</li> </ul>	
Nov 09	Extensions to Multiple Regression Models <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FPSR Chapter 12</li> </ul>	Homework 5 due
Nov 16	Extensions to Multiple Regression Models <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FPSR Chapter 11 &amp; 12</li> </ul>	
Nov 24	Analyzing Categorical and Limited Dependent Variables <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FPSR Section 11.4</li> <li>• Readings TBA</li> </ul>	
Nov 31.	Analyzing Categorical and Limited Dependent Variables <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Readings TBA</li> </ul>	Homework 6 due
Dec 10 (Thurs)	10:00 – 12:00 AM	Final project due at final exam