**POLS 4150: Research Methods for Political Science**

Fall 2023 Professor Alexandria M. Putman

Monday, Wednesday, and Friday Email: amp33579@uga.edu

3PM to 3:50PM Office: Baldwin Hall 303A

Classroom: Baldwin Hall 102 Office Hours: MW 2PM or By Appointment

*Course Objectives*

This course is meant to introduce students to the research process and methods used by political scientists with the hope of giving them the tools to evaluate theories, hypotheses, and data used by social scientists when discusses political topics. The coursework for this class will push students to develop their own ideas about the political process and its patrons while giving them the tools to evaluate their theories with data and methods consistent with what is used by political scientists today. To achieve this goal in the classroom, we will have in depth discussions on how to build a theory and hypotheses, which when supported by prior literature, will be tested using methods in R that will be taught throughout the class through in person tutorials, weekly.

In this course, we will address five primary aspects of conducting research in the discipline today as course objectives:

1. How to build a research design with a literature review, theory, and directional hypotheses.
2. How to find or create data that addresses the theory proposed and determine which method would work best for evaluating the causal relationship.
3. How to clean data to make it usable for the project.
4. How to evaluate statistical outputs and interpret results and graphs.
5. And finally, how to address error and statistical flaws in the data generating process.

*Prerequisites*

POLS 1101 or POLS 1101E or POLS 1105H

*Required Materials*

This class will use three main textbooks to discuss how to code in R and how to conduct research in political science. Before purchasing any copies, it should be noted that all copies suggested below are also available through more budget friendly avenues, like Chegg, Amazon (Used and New), and Kindle. Please make sure to get the edition suggested for the Imai book, in particular, because it includes course material that is different then all other editions. For clarification, this is the book we will be using in class to learn how to code in R and this is the ONLY edition that introduces code in Tidyverse, which is the sub-language that we will be using in class. It is very important that you get this copy (I know, it’s annoying). You can also purchase all texts online as long as they are accessible during class time. Please try to have a copy of the readings in class so that you can follow along with the code in the book while its being discussed during the meeting.

1. *Quantitative Social Science: An Introduction in Tidyverse* by Kosuke Imai and Nora Webb Williams; ISBN: 9780691222271
2. *Thinking Through Statistics* by John Levi Martin; ISBN: 9780226567631
3. *The Fundamentals of Political Science Research* by Kellstedt and Whitten

*Course Grading*

This course will be graded based on the university’s plus/minus grading system:

A= 100-94 A-= 93-90

B+= 89-87 B= 86-83 B-=82-80

C+= 79-77 C= 76-73 C-=72-70

D+= 69-67 D= 66-63 D-=62-60

F= <60

*Course Requirements*

Participation:

One of the main aspects of the course will be learning how to discuss research in an academic setting. As a part of this goal, students are expected to have read the material before class and be ready to discuss that reading with peers. Participation will be assessed during class discussions after the roll is taken to see who is present. We will also have a number of in class assignments that will count toward the student’s participation grade and will be turned in at the end of class. This portion of the grade will be 10% of the final grade and will be entirely based participation in discussions during class time, completion of in class work, and attendance at lectures.

Lab Work:

Each week, for the most part, there will be a lab assignment due on Thursday at midnight which will engage the skills that I have worked with the students on in the week prior. This will often include developing practical skills in R through coding labs and interpretive skills by looking at external articles and research. These assignments will be provided after coding sessions on Fridays and will include R code, data sets, and prompts to be worked with in the assignment. These assignments will take up 40% of the student’s final grade and **will not be accepted late** because the assignments will be discussed in the class session directly after the lab is due.

Final Coding Assignment:

In this class, you will have two projects due over the course of the semester. The first will be a coding assignment where students will be asked to collect their own data from observation and then run and interpret results from the data they’ve collected. To complete this assignment, the students will have to collect data of their own based on public interactions, use code learned in class to run a basic regression on the data, and then interpret the results and limitations of the experiment. This will be covered more in class and will be submitted in two parts; the first, being a proposal for the data that they will collect and how they plan to organize it and the second being the actual set of data proposed with accompanying analysis and code. Effectively this means that students will turn in a proposal that will be graded and discussed, which the students will then get an opportunity to revise before turning in the final project, with data and code, which will be submitted for the bulk of this grade. As a part of this revision, students should schedule a meeting with me to discuss the work and will be asked to complete the revisions suggested by me. The coding project will count toward 20% of your final grade in this course with the preliminary portion counting for 5% of the grade and the final draft as 15%.

Final Research Design:

The research design will encompass the bulk of the content in the class and will require the students to come up with a research question, which they will evaluate through a research design. This design will include a literature review, theory, hypotheses, proposed methods and data, and expected results. This will be a detailed project and will be thoroughly discussed in class to ensure that students feel well equipped to complete the assignment. Like the coding assignment, this will also be graded in two parts; the first being a proposal for the project, including a discussion of the research question, theory, and surrounding literature. This will give me a better idea of what the project will be and will help me give suggestions for the continuation of the paper and these suggestions will be discussed with the student during a scheduled meeting time with me prior to the submission of the final paper. The second part of the assignment will be due during finals and will include the full research design with the suggestions included by the professor. This final project should be at least 10 double spaced pages and will not be accepted late without documentation of an excuse and a pre-approved extension from the professor. The final will be 30% of the students grade with 10% of it being for the initial proposal and 20% going toward the final draft of the assignment. It is important to note that this will not be graded on completion and will require work ahead of the deadline to organize, so please meet with me ahead of time if you have any questions about the work well before the deadline for submission.

Final Grade:

20% = Attendance/Participation

40% = Lab Assignments

5%= Coding Assignment Proposal

15% = Final Coding Assignment

5% = Research Design Proposal

+15% = Final Research Design

100%

*Academic Honesty*

All students at the University of Georgia are held to the academic standards put forward in the UGA Student Honor Code. No acts of plagiarism or cheating will be tolerated in this class in accordance with the Honor Code.

UGA Student Honor Code: "I will be academically honest in all of my academic work and will not tolerate academic dishonesty of others." A Culture of Honesty, the University's policy and procedures for handling cases of suspected dishonesty, can be found at [www.uga.edu/ovpi](http://www.uga.edu/ovpi) .

*Discussion and Online Etiquette*

As mentioned above, much of the class will depend on active discussion from you, the students. The topics addressed in the class may, at times, include subjects of a political or intense nature and as such, it is important to recognize that these may be hard discussions for some of your peers. Please treat others in this class with respect and compassion during these discussions, especially in the case of disagreement among peers. I will do my part to remain neutral and to moderate these discussions, but we must all try to be understanding of each other’s beliefs and experiences.

*Disability Accommodation*

If you have a disability and would like accommodation, please contact me either via email or in person in office hours, so that appropriate accommodations can be made for you as soon as possible. Please also contact the Disability Resource Center at [drc@uga.edu](mailto:drc@uga.edu) or (706)542-8719 to receive the necessary accommodation for class. They can also be reached by visiting Clark Howell Hall or their website, <http://drc.uga.edu>.

*Health and Safety*

During these recent years, it is required now more than ever that we work to protect the health and safety of our fellow Dawgs. As such, please see the below resources if you or someone you know is in need of assistance:

* Student Care and Outreach: (706)542-7774 or <https://sco.uga.edu>
* Mental Health Service at BeWellUGA: <https://healthcenter.uga.edu/>
* Crisis Support: <https://healthcenter.uga.edu/>
* Additional resources are provided via the UGA app and CAPS.

Please reach out if you need any help accessing these or need further assistance.

Continually, if you are sick, please protect yourself and others and stay home and seek medical help, if possible. In these unprecedented times, it is important to make your health a priority. Please reach out if you are feeling unwell, so that we can make accommodations for class work or discussion during your absence. Remember that you will need a doctor’s note or other official university excuse for the absence to be excused. Also consider wearing a mask to class in the event that you are sick if you cannot stay home.

*Attendance*

Attendance will be taken every day in class and is ***REQUIRED***. You will receive 3 free absences that are unexcused and then after that you will lose a point from your grade for every unexcused absence. For absences to count as excused, you will need a written doctors excuse or university excuse. Please try to stay home and seek treatment if you are sick. We will do our best to work around any days missed either through online accommodations or other arrangements. If you cannot make class due to an illness or other unforeseen circumstances, please contact me and let me know, so that we can get you up to speed on anything missed.

*Makeup Procedures*

In general, late work will not be accepted in the absence of a doctors excuse or university excuse. If you are sick or out with the university, then accommodations can be made to ensure the student has adequate time to complete the assignment. This may be done through the extension of the deadline for the assignment, if necessary and applicable. If you are seeking an extension for any documented excuse, please contact me before the deadline to receive approval to turn in the assignment late.

*FERPA Notice*

The Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) grants students certain information privacy rights. See the registrar’s explanation at reg.uga.edu/generalinformation/ferpa/. FERPA allows disclosure of directory information (name, address, telephone, email, major, activities, degrees, awards, prior schools), unless requested in a written letter to the registrar.

*Mental Health and Wellness*

If you or someone you know is experiencing difficulty with mental health or general wellness, please see below some of the resources the university can provide. In addition, please reach out if you need help with any of the below or help with access to mental health resources.

Mental Health and Wellness Resources:

* If you or someone you know needs assistance, you are encouraged to contact Student Care and Outreach in the Division of Student Affairs at 706-542-7774 or visit https://sco.uga.edu/ . They will help you navigate any difficult circumstances you may be facing by connecting you with the appropriate resources or services
* UGA has several resources for a student seeking mental health services (hhtps://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga) or crisis support ( https://www.uhs.uga.edu/info/emergencies).
* If you need help managing stress anxiety, relationships, etc., please visit BeWellUGA ( https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga ) for a list of FREE workshops, classes , mentoring, and health coaching led by licensed clinicians and health educators in the University Health Center.
* Additional resources can be accessed through the UGA App.

*Disclaimer*

All aspects of the schedule and syllabus are tentative and subject to change in the event that we need more time for a topic or need to rearrange our course structure. All changes will be posted to eLC and discussed both in class and via email if they become necessary.

*Course Schedule*

***August***

16th: First Day of Class: Syllabus Review

18th: **Lab Day**: Introduction and R Download

**Week 1: Research Questions (21st, 23rd, and 25th)**

***22nd: End of Drop/Add Period***

**Reading:** Imai, Chapter 1: K&W, Chapter 2

**Lab Day:** Introduction to coding in R!

**Week 2: Literature Reviews (28th and 30th)**

***1st: No Class!***

**Reading:** Imai, Chapter 1: K&W, Chapter 2

**Lab Day:** No Class!

**Lab 1 Due:** Aug. 31st, 11:59 PM

***September***

**Week 3: Building a Theory (6th and 8th)**

***4th: Labor Day/ No Class***

**Reading:** Imai, Chapter 1: K&W, Chapter 2

**Lab Day:** Introduction to R: Part 2

**Lab 2 Due:** Sept. 7th, 11:59 PM

**Week 4: Hypotheses (11th – 15th)**

**Reading:** Imai, Chapter 2: K&W, Chapter 2: Martin, Chapter 5

**Lab Day:** Writing Lab!

**Lab 3 Due:** Sept. 14th, 11:59 PM

**Week 5: Variables (18th – 22nd)**

**Reading:** K&W, Chapter 6: Martin, Chapter 3&4

**Lab Day:** Building Data

**Lab 4 Due:** Sept. 21st, 11:59 PM

**Week 5: Data (25th – 29th)**

**Reading:** Imai, Chapter 3&5: Martin, Chapter 2

**Lab Day:** Data Cleaning

**Lab 5 Due:** Sept. 28th, 11:59 PM

***October***

**Week 6: Choosing Models (2nd – 6th)**

**Reading:** Imai, Chapter 4

**Lab Day:** Data Cleaning, Part 2

**Lab 6 Due:** October 5, 11:59 PM

**Week 6: Linear Models (9th – 13th)**

**Reading:** Imai, Chapter 6

**Lab Day:** Writing Workshop!

**Data Project Midterm Due:** October 12, 11:59 PM

**Week 7: Linear Models, Part 2 (16th – 20th)**

**Reading:** Imai, Chapter 6

**Lab Day:** Linear Models

**Writing Midterm Due:** October 19, 11:59 PM

**Week 8: Logit and Probit (23rd – 27th)**

***23rd: Withdrawal Deadline***

***27th: Fall Break!***

**Reading:** TBD

**Lab Day:** No Class

**Lab 7 Due:** October 26, 11:59 PM

***November***

**Week 9: Mixed Models (30th – 3rd)**

**Reading:** TBD

**Lab Day:** Mixed Models

**Week 10: Limitations and Error (6th – 10th)**

**Reading:** Imai, Chapter 7: Martin, Chapter 7&8

**Lab Day:** Finding and Evaluating Error

**Lab 8 Due:** November 9th, 11:59 PM

**Week 11: Abstracts and Introductions (13th – 17th)**

**Reading:** No Reading

**Lab Day:** Q and A

**Lab 9 Due:** November 16th, 11:59 PM

**Week 12: Thanksgiving! (20th – 24th)**

***10th: Extra Credit Attendance!***

**Reading:** No Reading

**Lab Day:** No Class!

**Week 13: In Class Presentations (27th – 1st)**

**Reading:** No Reading

**Lab Day:** No Lab

***December***

**Week 14: Wrap up (4th – 8th)**

**Reading:** No Reading

**Lab Day:** No Lab

***8th: Final Coding Project Due at 11:59PM***

***13th: Final Research Design Due at 11:59PM***