

**RI: Research Methods in Political Science**

**POS 3703.003**

Tuesdays, 11am – 12:20pm

Instructional Services #113 and via Zoom  
3 credits

Spring 2021

Prof. Angela D. Nichols

Office: SO 384D

Office hours: T, 1-3 online via zoom

Email: [nicholsa@fau.edu](mailto:nicholsa@fau.edu)

Personal website: <http://angeladnichols.weebly.com/>

Research Methods in Political Science is an introduction to the scope and methodology of political analysis. This course 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.

*All students in face-to-face classes are required to wear masks during class, and students must sanitize their own workstations upon entering the classroom. Taking these measures supports the safety and protection of the FAU community. Students who do not adhere to these rules will be asked to leave the classroom and/or be removed from the course. Students experiencing flu-like symptoms (fever, cough, shortness of breath), or students who have come in contact with an infected person should immediately contact FAU Student Health Services (561-297-3512).*

*COVID-19 Statement*

Course should be completed by the end of second semester of junior year. This is a research-intensive (RI) course.

Course website: https://canvas.fau.edu

**Instructional Method**

This is a mixed course with options for meeting both online via zoom and in person. *After two full weeks of face to face instruction with consecutive ‘no show’ of any students in person in the classroom, the modality of this course section may be changed to remote instruction only at the discretion of the university.* You must log into Canvas with your FAU ID and Password to access the materials and assignments in this course. If you do not know your FAU ID or Password, [contact OIT for help](http://www.fau.edu/oit/accounts/index.php).

When we meet in-person, there will always be a synchronous (at the same time as class) online option using zoom. You will receive information, links, and notifications for this course through Canvas.

Please have the necessary equipment to participate if you choose to do so remotely in this course:

* Dependable computer
* Computer speakers
* Headset with microphone
* Webcam
* Recommended: Broadband Internet connection with a speed of 4 Mbps or higher.
* To function properly, Canvas requires a high-speed Internet connection (cable modem, DSL, satellite broadband, T1, etc.). The minimum Internet connection speed to access Canvas is a consistent 1.5 Mbps (megabits per second) or higher.
* [Check your Internet speed here.](http://www.speedtest.net/)

Technical Support

In the online environment, technical issues are always possible (e.g., lost connection, hardware or software failure). Many of these can be resolved relatively quickly, but if you wait until the last minute before due dates, the chances of these glitches affecting your success are greatly increased. Please plan appropriately. If a problem occurs, it is essential you take immediate action to document the issue so your instructor can verify and take appropriate action to resolve the problem. Most issues in Canvas can be resolved by clicking on the “Help” tab located on the menu bar.

When a problem occurs, click “Help” to:

* Report a Problem
* Live Chat with Canvas Support
* Search Canvas Guides

Additional Technical Support

1. Contact the eLearning Success Advisor for assistance: (561) 297-3590
2. If you can, make a Print Screen of the monitor when the problem occurs. Save the Print Screen as a .jpg file. If you are unfamiliar with creating a Print Screen file, see [Print Screen instructions.](http://www.wikihow.com/Take-a-Screenshot-in-Microsoft-Windows)
3. Complete a [Help Desk ticket](https://helpdesk.fau.edu/TDClient/Home/). Make sure you complete the form entirely and give a full description of your problem so the Help Desk staff will have the pertinent information in order to assist you properly. This includes:
   1. Select “Canvas (Student)” for the Ticket Type.
   2. Input the Course ID.
   3. In the Summary/Additional Details section, include your operating system, Internet browser, and Internet service provider (ISP).
   4. Attach the Print Screen file, if available.
4. Send a message within Canvas to your instructor to notify him/her of the problem. Include all pertinent information of the incident (2b-d above).
5. If you do not have access to Canvas, send an email to your instructor with all pertinent information of the incident (2b-d above).
6. If you do not have access to a computer, call your instructor with all pertinent information of the incident. If he/she is not available, make sure you leave a detailed message.
7. If you do not hear back from the Help Desk or your instructor within a timely manner (48 hours), it is your responsibility to follow up with the appropriate person until you obtain a resolution.

**Course Objectives/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 disciple, 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.

**Course Evaluation Method**

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>.

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 more information: [http://www.fau.edu/ouri/undergrad\_symposium.php.](http://www.fau.edu/ouri/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 <http://www.fau.edu/graduate/old-currentstudents/rcr/>. 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/ouri/student\_workshops.php.](http://www.fau.edu/ouri/student_workshops.php)

**Student Assignments & Responsibilities**

*Quizzes:* Twenty-five percent of your grade will be determined by pop quizzes. The quizzes will be assigned and completed in Canvas. There is no manner by which a quiz can be made up. If you miss a miss, you will not receive credit for that quiz.

*Literature Review:* You must also complete an extensive literature review for this course. The paper will be broken down into component parts with multiple due dates and peer review sessions. These assignments will comprise your homework grade for the course and be equal to 15% of your final grade. These assignments are designed to help you familiarize yourself with the scientific method as applied to social science, as well as the peer review process. It also allows you to learn from your mistakes and adjust before the final product is due. Further, a rough draft worth 10% of your final grade is also due prior to the final draft. Again, this is intended to allow you to improve your work and improve your grade. More information regarding this assignment will be distributed throughout the course. The final version of this assignment is worth 25% of your final grade. All of this combined is worth 50% of your final grade. THIS ASSIGNMENT IS NOT OPTIONAL AND MUST BE COMPLETED IN ORDER TO RECEIVE A PASSING GRADE IN THIS COURSE.

*Attendance & Participation:* The topics and issues we will cover throughout the semester can be most clearly understood through discussion and the evaluation of alternative perspectives. In other words, participation increases active learning. While this course will have a substantial lecture component, there will also be opportunities for participation in classroom exercises and discussions. Thus, attending class and participating regularly are key to achieving the course objectives discussed above.

To this end, attendance and participation is worth 25% of your final grade. I will take attendance daily throughout the semester. I will also take note of how regularly you participate in class, both in productive and distractive ways. Your base attendance and participation grade will be based upon the proportion of times you are in class. Then, I will adjust that grade up or down depending on your participation. To maximize this part of your grade, it is highly recommended that you come to class prepared (e.g., having done the assigned readings) and willing to participate. Merely showing up and occupying a seat will not constitute full participation. Other ways to lose participation points include but are not limited to: being a disruption to others (e.g., side conversations with friends, reading for other classes), repeatedly failing to answer a question if called upon, and not participating in classroom discussions and exercises in a productive manner.

**The** [**University Center for Excellence in Writing**](http://www.fau.edu/UCEW) **is available to help you improve your writing. We even have a consultant dedicated to Political Science Students. Gail Choate is an amazing instructor and tutor. Please watch this short video intro she created:** [**https://youtu.be/pz5gyn6SERs**](https://youtu.be/pz5gyn6SERs)

**Course Grading Scale**

Grades are assigned in accordance with the following scale:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 90 - 100% = A 86 - 89% = B+ | 76 - 79% = C+ | 66 - 69% = D+ below 60% = F |
| 83 - 85% = B | 73 - 75% = C | 63 - 65% = D |
| 80 - 82% = B*−* | 70 - 72% = C*−* | 60 - 62% = D*−* |

**Classroom Etiquette Policy**

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. I expect you to offer substantive comments and questions when appropriate in class. I also expect you not to dominate a discussion, but to allow free discussion and exchange of ideas.

Due to the casual communication common in the online environment, students are sometimes tempted to relax their grammar, spelling, and/or professionalism. Please remember that you are adult students and professionals—your communication should be appropriate.For more in-depth information, please see the [FAU statement on netiquette](http://www.fau.edu/oit/student/netiquette.php).

**Attendance Policy**

*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 without any reduction in the student’s final course grade as a direct result of such absence.*

**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/*](about:blank)

**Disability Policy**

*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/*](about:blank)*.*

**Code of Academic Integrity**

*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*](about:blank)*.*

Classroom Response Time & Feedback

Email/Video Conferencing Policy

Except for weekends and holidays, the instructor will typically respond to email (Canvas inbox or FAU email) within 72 hours. You should ask course-related questions in the FAQ discussion board. If you have questions of a personal nature, you should email the instructor.

Assignment Feedback Policy

The instructor will provide detailed feedback on assignments when requested. Due to the heavy writing component of this course, assignments will take longer to grade.

Course-Related Questions Policy

Except weekends and holidays, the instructor will generally answer questions within 72 hours.

**Electronic Communication Policy**

In addition to the University’s policy, please consider the following:

* Privacy, confidentiality, and security in all electronic communications.
* All electronic communication resources must be used for the course and in alignment with to the University mission.
* Prohibited use of false identity, false identity pseudonyms, or anonymous (sender’s name or electronic identification is hidden).
* Access without consent.
* Disruption of services including introducing computer contaminants (viruses).
* Harassment of any kind.

Please see the Office of Information Technology’s policies on [Cyber Security Awareness](http://fau.edu/security/policies/).

**Required Texts/Readings**

Reading assignments typically come from academic and policy journals, and are available from three sources:

my website

google scholar

directly from an online provider (typically JSTOR)

JSTOR is likely your best option to access the assigned material. JSTOR is an academic journal service that FAU provides for us. Access is free from any FAU computer (e.g., in computer labs or dorms, or via FAU wireless networks); you can search for individual articles by author or title, or browse by journal name and issue at [www.jstor.org.](http://www.jstor.org/) Additionally, you can access the FAU electronic journal library via [http://www.fau.edu/library/ecollect/ejournals.php.](http://www.fau.edu/library/ecollect/ejournals.php)

The remaining readings are available online, via links provided in this syllabus. Be sure to access these readings early in the semester, because pages on the Web may move or disappear at inconvenient times.

**Course Topical Outline**

The following is an approximate schedule of class readings and assignments. Please complete each assigned reading prior to the class it is listed under. Every attempt will be made to adhere to this schedule. However, departures from the schedule may occasionally occur. Exam and activity dates should be considered firm, and you should arrange your personal schedule to be present at the appointed dates and times.

*Class 1: Introduction*

Introduction, no required reading

*Class 2: Logic, Deductive Reasoning, and Scientific Inquiry*

Silver Blaze

Logic Homework Assigned

*Class 3: Overview of Political Science*

*Logic homework due, read op-eds and other material related to your area of interest*

*Class 4: Puzzles*

Putnam, R.D., 1995. Bowling Alone: America’s Declining Social Capital. Journal of Democracy, 6, pp.65-78.

*Class 5: Writing Literature Reviews in Political Science?*

Pugh, Jeff. 2005. “Democratic Peace Theory: A Review and Evaluation.”

Knopf, Jeffrey W. 2006. "Doing a Literature Review." PS: Political Science Politics 39.1(2006): 127-132*.*

*Annotated bib and LR assigned*

*Class 6: LR continued*

*Work on annotated bib and LR*

*Class 7: Experiments*

Druckman, J.N., Green, D.P., Kuklinski, J.H. and Lupia, A., 2006. The growth and development of experimental research in political science. *American Political Science Review*, pp.627-635.

Fisman, Ray, and Edward Miguel. 2006. Cultures of Corruption: Evidence from Diplomatic Parking Tickets. (on canvas)

*annotated bibliography due*

*Class 8: What do Political Scientists study?*

DeMeritt, J.H. and Young, J.K., 2013. A political economy of human rights: Oil, natural gas, and state incentives to repress. Conflict Management and Peace Science, 30(2), pp.99-120.

Posner (2004) “The Political Salience of Cultural Differences: Why Chewas and Tumbukas Are Allies in Zambia and Adversaries in Malawi.” American Political Science Review. 98(4): 529-545. -really elegantly written piece using a natural experiment with both quantitative and qualitative aspects of the research design and data collection

LaRocco, A. A. (2019). Infrastructure, wildlife tourism, (il)legible populations: A comparative study of two districts in contemporary Botswana. *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space*, 2514848619877083.

*Class 9: Peer Review #1*

*Email LR to peer review partner before class (& turn in on canvas)*

*Class 10: Qualitative Research Methods*

Collier, D. (2011). Understanding process tracing. PS: Political Science & Politics, 44(4), 823-830.

George, A. L., Bennett, A., Lynn-Jones, S. M., & Miller, S. E. (2005). Case studies and theory development in the social sciences. MIT Press.

*Class 11: Qualitative Research Methods*

Kapiszewski, D., MacLean, L. M., & Read, B. L. (2015). Field research in political science: Practices and principles. Cambridge University Press.

Gerring, J., 2006. *Case study research: Principles and practices*. Cambridge university press.

*Class 12: Peer review #2*

*Email LR to peer review partner before class (& turn in on canvas)*

*Class 13: Surveys and Ethical Practices in Research*

*Reading TBD*

*Class 14: Big Data*