This course is designed to provide students with an introduction to the research methods most commonly used to study political phenomena. Why is the conflict between pro-choice and pro-life groups over abortion more likely to turn violent in some states than others? Does the increasing scope of economic globalization around the world make the likelihood of civil war more or less likely? On what basis do urban political machines distribute the patronage jobs that they have at their disposal? Do campaign ads and grassroots mobilization efforts cause turnout rates to go up or down (or neither)? Why do many Americans express negative views about government generally, and about Congress in particular? How can we explain the fact that divided government (governor from one party, legislature controlled by the other) became much more common during the latter half of the 20th century than it was earlier? What are some of the ways members of Congress try to cultivate support within their respective constituencies?

While these are among the topics that we will be looking at over the next few months, our goal is not to provide definitive answers but rather to learn about the techniques and methodologies through which answers can be obtained. In other words, our focus here is on the how rather than the what of political research. After discussing various stages of the research process and learning the important terminology, we will review a number of different approaches – including some that you may be more familiar with than you realize: survey research (election polls), aggregate data analysis (economic indicators such as gross national product and unemployment rates), experimentation (medical research on the effects of new drugs), and others. Later in the course, you will have the opportunity to do some analysis of your own using the Pollock book. Finally, we will close with a discussion of ethical issues raised by various types of social science research.

Your grade in this course will be determined by the following criteria:

- Daily tests: 10 percent
- Midterm exam: 20 percent (date TBA)
- Written assignments: 20 percent
- SPSS assignments: 20 percent
Class participation 10 percent
Final exam 20 percent (Wednesday, December 17, 3 pm)

Regular class attendance is assumed. Not only does it figure into both the participation and pop quiz (or daily test) components of your grade, but frequent absences will make it impossible for you to keep up with the course material.

Students are bound by the University of Florida's Student Code of Conduct. Anyone who commits an act of academic dishonesty, such as cheating on exams or committing plagiarism on written assignments, will suffer appropriate sanctions and be referred to university authorities for further action.

Any student with a handicap or special need should notify me (and coordinate with Student Services at 202 Peabody Hall) as soon as possible at the beginning of the semester. Every effort will be made to accommodate your situation within the guidelines set forth by the university.

A class listserv has been established so that I can send you occasional announcements and keep you informed about any changes that might occur in the schedule. You are automatically on the list by virtue of being enrolled in this course, and it is important that you check the email in your gatorlink account on a regular basis.

COURSE OUTLINE

1. Introduction
   Johnson-Reynolds, Chapters 1-2.

2. The Research Process: Preliminaries
   Johnson-Reynolds, Chapters 3-6.

Optional:

3. The Research Process: Analyzing Data
4. Aggregate Data

Johnson-Reynolds, see index.


Optional:


5. Survey Research, Depth Interviewing, and Focus Groups

Johnson-Reynolds, Chapters 7, 10.


Optional:


David Hedge, James Button, and Mary Spear, "Accounting for the Quality of Black Legislative Life: The View from the States," *American Journal of Political Science* (February 1996).


6. Experiments, Quasi-Experiments, and Case Studies

Review Johnson-Reynolds, Chapter 5.
David W. Nickerson, Ryan D. Friedrichs, and David C. King, "Partisan Mobilization Campaigns in the Field: Results from a Statewide Turnout Experiment in Michigan," *Political Research Quarterly* (March 2006).

Optional:

7. Data Analysis Projects
Pollock, chapters and class assignments TBA.

8. (Sometimes) Unobtrusive Measures
Johnson-Reynolds, Chapter 8, 9.
David F. Damore, "Candidate Strategy and the Decision to Go Negative," *Political Research Quarterly* (September 2002).


Optional:
Jeffrey A. Segal and Albert D. Cover, "Ideological Values and the Votes of United States Supreme Court Justices," *American Political Science Review* (June 1989).

9. Ethical Issues in Social Research