

POLS 1110-003: American Politics

Fall 2019

Th 10–11:15 am

Instructor: Dr. Mel Atkinson

Classroom: Fretwell 113

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Office Hours: T/Th 2:30-3:30 pm & by appointment

Preceptor: Shivani Mortamarri, smotamar@uncc.edu

Course Description

This is a hybrid course. 50% of the course instruction will take place face-to-face in a lecture format and 50% will be delivered online. This format requires students to complete a substantial amount of work outside the classroom. **Students should be prepared to complete three hours of homework each week in addition to completing an hour and fifteen minutes of online instruction each week.** We will meet in person for an hour and fifteen minutes each Thursday for a short lecture and a Q&A session. Students are encouraged to prepare questions in advance and come to class ready to discuss any problems or difficulties with the week's material.

This course is an introduction to American government and politics. It will provide a broad overview of the American political system by covering topics such as: 1) The founding of the nation and the drafting of the constitution 2) the history of civil rights and civil liberties in the U.S. 3) the structure of the federal government and the role of federalism in the political system 4) the avenues through which citizens learn about government actions and provide input into the political system, and 5) the role of the news media in our democracy.

By the end of the semester, you should be able to answer some broad questions in these areas, such as:

- What is an institution? How do institutions help us overcome collective action problems? How do institutions shape political outcomes?
- What is the basic structure of the federal government? How are the powers of the federal government checked, balanced, and separated by this structure? How are state and federal powers to govern delineated?
- What are the mechanisms by which the public influences the government? Who participates, who does not, and why? Why and to what degree does participation matter?

Course Reading and Materials

The Logic of American Politics, 7th Edition. Kernell, Jacobson and Kousser. CQ Press.

Movie: *All the President's Men* (rent online from Amazon or iTunes)

Additional readings and videos as assigned (posted on Canvas).

You must also have regular access to a personal computer with a reliable, high-speed internet connection to complete this course.

Getting in Touch

If you would like to schedule a time to meet with me during office hours, please use the “appointment scheduler” on our canvas page. There, you can see the appointments I have open and choose the one that works best for you. If you can not find a time that will work for you, email me for an alternative appointment time.

Because this course is 50% online, I expect students to regularly check their uncc email and the course canvas page for updates about the course.

When emailing me, please include a subject line that begins with the course name and number (POLS 1110-003) and sign your email with your first and last name. If you do not follow this format, I cannot guarantee that I will respond to your message in a timely fashion. Please address your emails to “Dr. Atkinson.”

Expectations And Procedures

This syllabus contains the policies and expectations I have established for POLS 1110: American Politics. Please read the entire syllabus carefully before continuing in this course. These policies and expectations are intended to create a productive learning atmosphere for all students. Unless you are prepared to abide by these policies and expectations, you risk losing the opportunity to participate further in the course. Students who are disruptive may be asked to leave the class.

The standards and requirements set forth in this syllabus may be modified at any time by the course instructor. Notice of such changes will be by announcement in class or by written or email notice or by changes to this syllabus posted on Canvas.

If I am late in arriving to class, you must wait a full 15 minutes after the start of class before you may leave without being counted absent, or you must follow any written instructions I may give you about my anticipated tardiness.

If you notice an error or problem with the syllabus or online materials it is your responsibility to bring it to my attention prior to the due date in question. Otherwise, I will expect you to meet all deadlines listed on the syllabus.

Phones, Laptops, Recording Devices, etc.

The use of laptops, cell phones, smart phones, or other mobile communication devices is disruptive, and is therefore prohibited during class. Students who break this rule may be asked to leave class, so please come prepared to take notes with a pencil or pen and paper. Recording devices of all kinds are also prohibited. You should not record our class meetings unless you have a documented disability that requires such an accommodation. See the “disabilities” section of the syllabus for more on that topic.

When I see a student using a cell phone or laptop, I treat that as a raised hand. **Please be aware that I may call on you to answer questions if I see you using your phone or computer.**

Disabilities

I am happy to make accommodations for students with disabilities who require them. Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should, 1) contact the UNCC Office of Disability Services¹ and 2) follow the instructions of that office for obtaining accommodations. This should be done during the first week of school. Even if you aren’t sure whether you will require any accommodation, contact the department of disability services and talk with me about your disability at the start of the semester. If the need for accommodation arises and your disability has not been documented, I might not be able help due to university policies regarding the exam schedule, etc.

Academic Honesty

All students are required to read and abide by the Code of Student Academic Integrity. Violations of the Code of Student Academic Integrity, including plagiarism and the impersonation of other students, will result in disciplinary action as provided in the Code. The Code is available from the Dean of Students Office and online.

Students are required to sign in during the class period and each student’s attendance grade is based on this record. Signing in anyone other than yourself is strictly prohibited and constitutes a violation of the Code of Academic Integrity.

Note that all online activities, including quizzes and exams, should be completed individually by each student without outside help or resources unless group work or notes are expressly permitted. **Students who work together or who use unauthorized materials to complete course assignment are violating the code of academic integrity and will be disciplined accordingly.** Disciplinary action can result in the student(s) receiving a zero on the assignment in question, or a failing grade in the course, for example.

¹Text that is underlined is hyperlinked. Mouse over the text and click to access the link.

Course Requirements

Attendance: 5%
Reading Quizzes: 10%
Online Activities: 15%
Experiential Learning: 10%
Exam One: 20%
Exam Two: 20%
Exam Three: 20%

Attendance

Because this class only meets once per week, it is very important that students attend the lectures regularly. I will take attendance each Thursday and 5% of your grade for the course will be based on your attendance record.

I know that most students will occasionally need a day off due to illness, car trouble, a family emergency, etc. For that reason, each student gets one “personal day” during the semester—just like you would at your job. You can take this day off whenever you need to, without explanation. I will calculate attendance scores at the end of the semester such that one missed class will not affect your grade. But use your personal day wisely—once it is gone, excused absences will only be granted in the most extreme cases, such as the student’s hospitalization.

Please note that if you are not present when the roll is taken because you arrived to class late or left early, you will not receive credit for attendance. It is disruptive to those around you if you come and go during class, so I expect students to arrive on time and to remain until the class has been dismissed.

I expect students to take responsibility for getting caught up on the rare occasions that they must miss class. This means that if you miss a class, you should 1) Look at the syllabus to see what you missed, 2) get notes from a friend for the date missed, 3) After doing one and two, you should come to me or the preceptor with any *specific* questions about the material missed. Neither the preceptor nor I will offer general review sessions covering missed material.

Reading Quizzes

The quizzes are designed to review material covered in class *and* to make sure that students are keeping up with their reading. This means that many of the quiz questions will cover material from the textbook that we have not yet discussed in class.

It is the responsibility of each student to make sure he or she keeps up with the online quizzes and meets all posted deadlines. You should allow yourself enough time to complete the quizzes so that any technical issues (like a disruption in your network connect) can be resolved before the deadline. If you experience a technical problem with Canvas or with the university network connection, you should **call tech support at X5500** as soon as the problem arises. If tech support is unable to resolve the problem, **contact me before the due date for the quiz.**

Students will have at least 48 hours to complete each reading quiz. For this reason, I only offer extensions on quizzes in the most extreme circumstances, such as the student's hospitalization, the arrival of a new child, or military training. Documentation of such circumstances will be required.

Because we all occasionally have a bad day, I will drop your lowest quiz grade at the end of the semester.

Online Activities

Students will typically complete one or two online activities each week to satisfy the online component of the course. These activities are designed to highlight and provide examples of concepts contained in the reading for the week. Activities include tasks such as watching and responding to videos and news casts, completing online simulations, responding to discussion prompts, etc.

Activities are typically due each week on Tuesday at 11:59 pm and students will typically have at least 48 hours to complete the week's activities. For this reason, I only offer extensions on these assignments in the most extreme circumstances, such as the student's hospitalization, the arrival of a new child, or military training. Documentation of such circumstances will be required.

If you've read this far in the syllabus, great job. Thanks for reading thoroughly. Email a photo of your favorite cat meme to the preceptor by Aug. 29 for some extra credit points.

A note on following directions: Please carefully read the directions for each quiz, exam, and online activity. Some will be timed, others will not. Some will allow you to try again if you get an answer wrong, some will not. Some will allow you to navigate freely from question to question, some will not. The instructions at the start of each quiz and activity will tell you what to expect so there won't be any surprises. Each student is responsible for reading those instructions and making sure they understand them before beginning the quiz or activity.

Experiential Learning

Politics is not an abstract thing. There are lots of ways that you can get involved with political issues that are important to you at the local, state, or national level. Over the course of the semester, you will choose to do three tasks from the list of experiential learning activities listed below and upload evidence of each activity's completion to Canvas. Your grade comes simply from completing these tasks. So as long as you do them (and provide documentation), you'll get a perfect score for this portion of the class.

- Register to vote *or* help a friend or family member do so. (Provide a digital image of the voter registration form with any sensitive personal info blacked out.)
- Write to one of your U.S. Senators about an issue that is important to you. This usually has to be done through a page on the Senator's web site. (Provide a screen shot of your submission that makes it clear you are writing to a Senator.)
- Attend a political protest or demonstration. (Provide a photo of you at the event that makes it clear where you are.)

- Join an interest group *or* volunteer with an organization you care about (Provide an email from the group to you, or a screenshot of your registration as a new member, or documentation of your volunteerism.)
- Attend a city council meeting (The Charlotte City Council has “Public Forums” that are open to the public). (Provide a photo of you at the meeting that makes it clear where you are.)
- Attend a campaign rally/event *or* volunteer for a political campaign. (Provide a photo of you at the event that makes it clear where you are, or provide documentation of your volunteerism.)
- Write and submit a “Letter to the Editor” about a political issue of importance to you to a newspaper of your choice. (Provide a copy of the letter.)
- Attend a talk on campus related to politics or a political event. (If a sign-in sheet is provided, make sure you sign in. Also submit a photo of yourself at the event that makes it clear where you are.)

Exams

Three timed, closed book exams will be given during the semester. They will test your understanding of the key concepts covered in the course and your ability to use those concepts to think critically about current political debates. Exam questions will come from the required readings, from issues discussed during the lectures, from films viewed online, and from online activities—so take notes on each of these course elements!

Students are expected to take their exams on the days listed in the syllabus. Students who must miss an exam due to a serious problem that is beyond their control (such as a medical emergency) will be allowed to take a makeup exam without penalty. Documentation of the reason for the missed exam will be required. Please note that an out of town trip, oversleeping, or not being prepared for the exam are not acceptable excuses for a missed exam.

Students who miss a midterm exam but do not have documentation of a permissible excuse may take a makeup exam, but a 20-point penalty will be applied to the exam grade. This option is not available for the final exam due to the short time between the exam date and the end of the semester.

All make-up exams will be scheduled at the convenience of the instructor and may be significantly different from the exam given on test day. They should typically be completed within one week of the exam date.

Per the university exam schedule, the final exam will be given on December 12 at 8 am. The instructor is not permitted to alter the exam date and time. If you have a scheduling conflict (two exams at the same time or three exams on the same day) and need to reschedule an exam for this reason, the university requires you to submit a “Final Exam Conflict Form.”

Exam dates and times are clearly listed on this syllabus and so I expect students to arrive for them ON TIME. I reserve the right to turn away students who arrive late to exams.

Grading Scale

A: 90-100

Mastery of the course material. Deep understanding of course concepts and their importance to the study of American politics. Able to apply major concepts to new problems and examples. Attends class regularly and completes assignments on time.

B: 80-89

Strong grasp of course material. Solid understanding of course concepts and their importance to the study of American politics. May have some difficulty applying concepts to new problems. Attends class regularly and completes most assignments on time.

C: 70-79

Satisfactory understanding of most course material. Able to identify major concepts, but has trouble applying them to new problems or examples. Sometimes misses class and/or quizzes and activities.

D: 60-69

Weak understanding of most course material. Has difficulty with the definitions of major concepts and cannot apply those concepts to new situations or examples. Has a poor attendance record and missing grades.

F: 59 and Below

Does not understand the basic course material and key concepts. Has a poor attendance record and several missing grades.

Tentative Course Timeline

Readings are listed in bold and correspond to the dates below them. Assignments are due on the dates listed.

Tuesday	Thursday
Logic Ch 1: Introduction	
8/27: Syllabus Quiz, Collective Action Problems	8/22: Welcome Lecture 8/29: Ch. 1 Reading Quiz
Logic Ch 2: The Constitution	
9/3: Constitution Activity	9/5: Ch 2 Reading Quiz
Logic Ch 3: Federalism	
9/10: Electoral College Video, Federalism Crash Course (video)	9/12: Ch 3 Reading Quiz
Logic Ch 4: Civil Rights	
9/17: Makers Video & Wrk Sheet	9/19: Ch 4 Reading Quiz
Logic Ch 5: Civil Liberties	
9/24: Civil Liberties Video & Quiz	9/26: Ch 5 Reading Quiz, ***Exam Review in Class***
First Exam	
10/1: Exam One	
Logic Ch 10: Public Opinion	
10/9: Reading The Polls Activity, Money & Campaigns Activity	10/3: Ch 10 Reading Quiz
Logic Ch 11: Voting, Campaigns & Elections	
	10/10: Ch 11 Quiz
Interest Groups (Reading on Canvas)	
10/15: Interest Groups Work Sheet Online Exam Review	10/17: Interest Groups Reading Quiz
Logic Ch 14: The News Media	
10/22: Watch "All The President's Men"	10/24: Ch 14 Quiz

Tuesday	Thursday
	Exam 2
10/29: Exam 2	Social Science Research (On Canvas)
	10/31: Social Science Research (Reading on Canvas), SONA participant sign-up
	Ch 6: Congress
11/5: Who Serves in Congress Video, The Dynamic Legislative Process Activity	11/7: Ch 6 Quiz
	The Executive Branch
11/12: Presidency Activity, How a Member Decides to Vote	11/14: The Bureaucracy Quiz (Reading on Canvas)
	The Federal Budget
11/19: Debt Ceiling Video, Budget Simulation	11/21: Budget Reading and Quiz (Reading on Canvas)
	11/28: No Class–Happy Thanksgiving!
12/3: Final Exam Review Comprehensive Quiz	
	Final Exam December 12, 8 am