

POLS 1110-002: American Politics
Fall 2020
Online Format

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Virtual Office Hours: Tues & Thurs 2-3 pm & by appointment

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Chloe's virtual office hours:
Mon 10-11 am
Wed 2-2:30 pm

Course Description

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, 9th 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

Because this course is 100% 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 (POLS 1110) 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.” Please let me know how you would like to be addressed when I respond to your email and I will be happy to do so.

Please email me rather than contacting me via canvas. I can reply to email messages from my phone, but I have to be on my computer to reply to canvas messages. Therefore, I'm much faster at responding to email.

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 my video lectures, by email notice or by changes to this syllabus posted on Canvas.

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.

Ownership of Course Materials

My lectures and course materials, including presentations, tests, exams, quizzes, slides, and similar materials, are protected by copyright. I am the exclusive owner of copyright in those materials I create. I encourage you to take notes and make copies of course materials for your own educational use. However, you may not, nor may you knowingly allow others to reproduce or distribute lecture notes, lecture recordings, quizzes or other course materials publicly without my express written consent. This includes providing materials to commercial course material suppliers such as CourseHero and other similar services. Students who publicly distribute or display or help others publicly

distribute or display copies or modified copies of an instructor's course materials may be in violation of University Policy 406, The Code of Student Responsibility. Similarly, you own copyright in your original papers and exam essays. If I am interested in posting your answers or papers on the course web site, I will request your written permission.

Electronic video, image capture, and/or audio recording is not permitted during class, whether conducted in person or online, unless the student obtains permission from the instructor. If permission is granted, any distribution of the recording is prohibited. Students with specific electronic recording accommodations authorized by the Office of Disability Services do not require instructor permission; however, the instructor must be notified of any such accommodation prior to recording. Any distribution of such recordings is prohibited.

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.

Technical Problems

All students enrolled in this course are expected to have access to a computer and an internet connection. Canvas does not always work well on phones and other mobile devices. I strongly caution you against completing graded assignments, quizzes, and exams on a mobile device.

Canvas has a build-in "help" feature that allows you to message with a technician, should you need tech support. This is a wonderful feature—please use it if you experience problems with canvas!

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

If you experience a problem with canvas that their technicians cannot resolve for you in a timely manner, please contact me ASAP.

If you experience a technical problem in the middle of a timed assignment, please take a screenshot (if you are able) and send it to me along with a note explaining the technical problem and the assignment affected.

Please be aware that canvas creates a log of your activity on the site. It allows me to see what files and activities you have accessed and how you have progressed through them. If you report to me that you were unable to access an assignment or a portion of an assignment, it is easy for me to verify this information.

Late Work

It is the responsibility of each student to make sure he or she keeps up with the requirements for this course, including reading, online quizzes, activities and tests, and meets all posted deadlines. You should allow yourself enough time to complete all graded activities so that any technical issues (like a disruption in your network connect) can be resolved before the deadline. (That means you probably shouldn't start a quiz due at 11:59pm at 11:56 pm ... especially if you know your internet connection can be spotty.)

Please note that I have tried to build in a lot of flexibility with this course. Students will be able to access each unit for at least one week and students can complete their coursework for anywhere with an internet connection. This allows students to self-pace and to work ahead if they wish. My hope is that this flexibility will allow students to complete their work on time.

If you have a scheduled event that you expect will disrupt your coursework during the semester (such as military training, the birth of a child, religious holiday, etc.), please let me know in advance so that we can discuss whether some deadlines will need to be extended. It is always better to check with me **BEFORE** you miss a deadline so that we can work out a plan. I do not grant extensions for unit quizzes or unit activities after students have missed the deadline unless they have documentation of an **emergency** (such as a serious illness, emergency caretaking responsibilities, housing or food insecurity, etc.). However, if you find yourself struggling with the online format of this class and are missing deadlines—**PLEASE REACH OUT TO ME** so we can talk about how to get you back on track.

Students can makeup midterm exams. Students who have documentation of an emergency that prevented them from taking the test can take a makeup exam without penalty, provided that they contact me within one week of the exam deadline. Students who miss a midterm exam but do not have documentation of an emergency can also take a makeup test, but there will be a 20 point penalty. Makeup exams should be completed within one week of the original exam deadline.

Infographic assignments will be accepted late but students will lose half a letter grade for each day the assignment is overdue.

Course Requirements

Chapter Infographic: 5%

Debate Infographic: 5%

Chapter Quizzes: 15%

Chapter Activities: 15%

Exam One: 20%

Exam Two: 20%

Exam Three: 20%

Chapter Quizzes

Each chapter we will read this semester has its own “module” on canvas. The module contains a video lecture for the chapter and quiz designed to ensure that you are keeping up with the reading and lectures. Each module is labeled with a start and end date. Quizzes are due on the last day of the module at 11:59 pm.

The chapter quizzes count for 15% of your overall grade in the course. Because we all occasionally have a bad day, I will drop your lowest quiz grade at the end of the semester.

Chapter Activities

In addition to reading and lectures, each module will require students to complete between two and three online activities (sometimes more if the individual activities are very short). These are designed to dive deeper into a topic raised in the reading, to connect the reading to current events, or to clarify difficult concepts. Activities include tasks such as watching and responding to videos, podcasts and news casts, completing online simulations, responding to discussion prompts, etc. The time needed to view or listen to videos and podcasts are displayed with them so that you can plan ahead.

Some of these activities will have an interactive component—such as a quiz to complete after viewing a video. These graded activities will makeup 15% of your overall grade in the course and I will drop your lowest grade at the end of the semester. Other activities will simply ask you to watch or listen. In the latter case, the videos are designed to help you better understand a concept that will be covered on an exam.

As with chapter quizzes, it is the responsibility of each student to make sure he or she keeps up with the unit activities and meets all posted deadlines. You should allow yourself enough time to complete the activities so that any technical issues (like a disruption in your network connect) can be resolved before the deadline.

If you’ve read this far in the syllabus, great job. Thanks for reading thoroughly. Email a photo of your favorite G-rated cat meme to the preceptor by September 15 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.

Infographics

Over the course of the semester, you will create two infographics—a single page visual aid that presents information clearly and quickly. One of your infographics will summarize a chapter from your textbook and the other will outline key moments from one of the presidential or vice presidential debates. Each infographic is worth 5% of your overall grade in the course.

These assignments require students to synthesize, summarize and organize complex information—all important skills for a range of professions. The debate assignment will also help you stay up-to-date on an important current event—the countdown to the 2020 elections. Finally, knowing how to make an infographic is a marketable skill that you can highlight on applications for internships and jobs. You can even turn your resume into an infographic!

The presidential debates are scheduled to be held on Sept 29, Oct 15, and Oct 22. The vice presidential debate is scheduled for Oct 7.

You will find a “module” on canvas devoted to the creation of your infographic. It includes additional instructions, a short video tutorial, and links to different *free* websites that you can use to build your infographic. This module also provides a place to upload your completed infographics.

Exams

Three timed, open-note 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.

Make-up exams should typically be completed within one week of the exam date.

We will follow the university exam schedule for final exams. 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.”

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. 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. 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 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 missing grades.

F: 59 and Below

Does not understand the basic course material and key concepts. Has several missing grades.

Tentative Course Timeline

The readings and titles listed here correspond to canvas “modules.” Each module includes chapter activities and a chapter quiz that accompanies the listed reading.

Welcome (Sept 7-9)

Logic, Ch 1: Introduction (Sept 10-16)

Logic, Ch 2: The Constitution (Sept 17-23)

Federalism (Reading on Canvas) (Sept 24 - 30)

Logic, Ch 4: Civil Rights (Oct 1-Oct 7)

Logic, Ch 5: Civil Liberties (Oct 8 - 14)

Exam 1 (Oct 15-18)

Logic, Ch 11: Voting and Elections (Oct 19-25)

Logic, Ch 12: Political Parties (Oct 26-Nov1)

Logic, Ch 10: Public Opinion and Social Science Research (Nov 2-8)

Logic, Ch 13: Interest Groups (Nov 9-15)

Exam 2 (Nov 16-18)

Logic, Ch 14: Media and Politics (Nov 18-25)

Happy Thanksgiving! (Nov 26)

Logic, Ch 6: Congress (Nov 27-Dec 4)

The Executive Branch (“Bureaucracy” reading posted on Canvas) (Dec 5-11)

The Federal Budget (Reading on Canvas) (Dec 12-15)

Final Exam (TBD)