

POLS 2000: Introduction to Political Science

Political Science 2000

Fall 2015

T TR 8:00-9:15am

Park Hall 250

Instructor: Anthony Madonna

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Course Description:

This course is intended to provide students with a basic understanding of political science. Throughout the semester we will examine different topics of political science research as well as different approaches taken towards understanding those topics. The course involves an in-depth analysis of political actors and institutions. Common modes of scientific analysis in political science will be examined with an emphasis on research design, strategic behavior, rational choice theory and basic statistical techniques. A basic understanding of high school math is assumed.

Course Goals:

The primary goals of this course are two-fold. First, students should be provided with a conceptual background and toolset that they can use to critically analyze what is written in the newspaper or said in the news today, tomorrow, and in the more distant future. Second, it is expected that upon completion of this course students will be able to both understand and conduct scholarly research.

Required Books and Readings:

The following book is required and available at the Campus Bookstore:

Van Belle, Douglas. 2015. *A Novel Approach to Politics*. 4th Ed. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Students will not only be expected to have done the reading assignments, but should also be aware of relevant news stories. As such, I recommend reading a daily newspaper – such as the New York Times and/or the Washington Post – or at least checking cnn.com. Other political blogs and news sources that students may find useful include FiveThirtyEight, Political Wire, The Monkey Cage, Politico, Roll Call, The Upshot, Vox.com and the Drudge Report.

Additional readings will be posted on the course website. Many of these readings will be highly technical in nature. As such, students are not expected to understand all aspects of each paper. However, they will be held accountable for a basic understanding of the paper's theory and applications.

Course Grading:

Your grade in this class will be assigned according to the following:

1. **Class Attendance/Participation (10% of final grade):** One of the goals for this class is for students to become comfortable discussing political institutions, issues, events and research. Hence, they will be encouraged to attend and participate in course discussions. More than three absences will result in a lowering of a student's participation grade. A student's participation grade may also include several small quizzes or assignments.
2. **Midterm Exams (40% of final grade):** Two midterm examinations (worth 20% each) will be given during the course. The dates are listed on the syllabus as Thursday, **September 24th** and Thursday, **November 5th**. These exams will consist of multiple choice and short essay questions. They may also feature several exercises where students will apply techniques discussed in class. The midterm examination will be non-cumulative. If a student is unable to take one of the exams on the scheduled date, they should contact the course instructor beforehand. Missed exams will only be excused for a documented illness (documentation must be provided by a physician) or a death in the family. If a student is excused from an exam, their final exam will be weighted accordingly.
3. **Research Paper (30% of final grade):** Students will be expected to complete a research design proposal. The paper should be a maximum of 12 pages in length (typed, double-spaced, one inch margins, Times New Roman, 12 point font, Chicago style citations). Students will be allowed to choose the topic of their paper, provided it is related to political science. The instructor will be available during office hours and through e-mail for consultation. The paper should feature a review of the relevant scholarly literature, a well developed theory, and a detailed discussion of a potential test of that theory. The paper is due Thursday, **December 3rd** at 5:00pm. *E-mailed papers will not be accepted.* Papers will be docked a full letter grade for each day they are late. A more detailed discussion of the paper project can be found here.
4. **Final Exam (20% of final grade):** The final exam is scheduled for Thursday, **December 10th** from 8:00 to 11:00am in the regular classroom, Park Hall 250. Like the midterms, it will feature a mix of multiple choice and short essay questions. It may also feature several exercises where students will apply techniques discussed in class. The final exam will be non-cumulative.

Final course grades will be assigned as follows: 100-93 = A, 90-92 = A-, 87-89 = B+, 83-86 = B, 80-82 = B-, 77-79 = C+, 73-76 = C, 70-72 = C-, 60-69 = D, and 60-0. **Extra credit will not be given in this course.** A grade of a C or higher is necessary in order to be admitted as a Political Science major. The withdrawal date for this semester is Thursday, **October 22nd**.

Disabilities:

Students with disabilities of any kind are strongly encouraged to notify the instructor and the Office for Disability Services at the beginning of the semester, so appropriate accommodations can be made.

Instructor Availability:

Students seeking to contact the instructor are encouraged to stop by during scheduled office hours. Students who are unable to attend office hours should e-mail ahead of time to ensure instructor availability.

Classroom Behavior:

Students should behave professionally throughout the course. Due to the large size of the course, disruptive behavior of any kind will not be tolerated. This includes cell phone usage, excessive talking and derogatory or offensive comments made during discussion. Lecture attendance is not mandatory, but students will be held responsible for all material discussed or assigned.

Cheating and Plagiarism:

Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated in this course. Students caught cheating or plagiarizing will have their names forwarded to the University. It is each student's responsibility to know what constitutes plagiarism. Further information regarding academic honesty can be found at <http://www.uga.edu/honesty/>.

Tentative Lecture Outline/Readings Schedule:

Date	Topic	Reading
August 18	Course Overview/Syllabus	
August 20	No Class	
August 25	Introduction	Van Belle Ch. 1
August 27	Why Government?	Van Belle Ch. 2
September 1	Political Science and Politics	
September 3	Governing Society	Van Belle Ch. 3
September 8	Government's Role in the Economy	Van Belle Ch. 4
September 10	Government's Role in the Economy (<i>cont</i>) Scaling	Van Belle Ch. 4
September 15	Bill Becomes a Law	Living Hell
September 17	Structures and Institutions	Van Belle Ch. 5
September 22	Structures and Institutions (<i>cont</i>) Review	Van Belle Ch. 5
September 24	Midterm 1	
September 29	How to Write a Research Paper	
October 1	The Vice President in the Senate Academic Publishing	Vice President Reviews
October 6	Rational Choice Theory Marbury v. Madison	Marbury Game Theory
October 8	Path Dependency	Pierson Path Dependency
October 13	Introduction to Statistics Candidate Quality	Agresti and Finlay Ch. 3 Carson et al.

Tentative Lecture Outline/Readings Schedule:

Date	Topic	Reading
October 15	Ordinary Least Squares	Agresti and Finlay Ch. 9
October 20	Spatial Modeling	Shepsle and Bonchek Ch. 5
October 22	Spatial Modeling (<i>cont</i>)	
October 27	Applied Spatial Modeling	Supreme Court Appointments
October 29	Voting Methods	Shepsle and Bonchek Ch. 7
November 3	Voting Methods (<i>cont</i>) Review	
November 5	<i>Midterm 2</i>	
November 10	Parties in Congress	Krehbiel Binder et al.
November 12	Elections Campaign Spending	Jacobson Green and Krasno Why Money Still Matters
November 17	Current Events and Political Science	
November 19	Current Events and Political Science	
November 24	Current Events and Political Science	
November 26	<i>No Class</i>	
December 1	<i>No Class</i>	
December 3	Review <i>Paper Due!</i>	
December 10	<i>Final Exam</i>	

Readings not from Van Belle are either linked on the syllabus or will be provided via e-mail.