

POLS 2000: Introduction to Political Science
University of Georgia
Spring 2020

Instructor:
Dr. Brittany Bramlett
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Office meeting times:
Before/after class
Or by appointment

Class meets:
Tuesdays & Thursdays, 8:00am to 9:55am, Baldwin Hall, 0301

Course description

The aim of this course is to get excited about political science! This means introducing students to the research questions that political scientists ask and the ways they go about answering those questions. This process gives us something informative to say about politics. Students will familiarize themselves with the discipline and the research process 1) by learning about the different, but overlapping subfields within the political science discipline, and 2) by comprehending and practicing the research designs and methods used in the discipline.

Course objectives

Students will:

- Develop a working knowledge of the questions studied by political scientists
- Formulate research questions with their peers and individually
- Learn about the analytical tools and data used by political scientists
- Learn the course material by working independently and with a group
- Improve critical thinking and communication skills by considering the breadth of scholarship produced by political scientists and the research approaches they use

Course texts

You are required to gain access to the two books listed below. They are available at the campus bookstore.

- 1) Van Belle, Douglas A. 2018. *A Novel Approach to Politics*. 5th Edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.
- 2) Baglione, Lisa. 2016. *Writing a Research Paper in Political Science: A Practical Guide to Inquiry, Structure, and Methods*. 3rd Edition. Washington DC: CQ Press.

Other assigned readings can be located via ELearning Commons or with links provided in the syllabus.

¹ Instructor reserves the right to modify the syllabus as needed.

Assignments and grading

Exams 1 & 2 (30% total, 15% each)

Anything from the assigned readings and discussed during class is considered fair game to show up on the exam.

Research design assignments (30% total, 10% each)

You will work in groups of two or three students on three research assignments. I will assign students to groups during the first few weeks of the semester. You'll receive feedback from peers and the professor at each stage. These assignments will require a substantial amount of brainstorming and a relatively small amount of concise, clear writing. Each group will submit one paper, per assignment. Additional details will be available via eLearning Commons and provided by the professor throughout the short semester.

Assignment 1: Research question and concepts

Assignment 2: Annotated bibliography and hypothesis

Assignment 3: Research design

Participation & attendance (10%)

Students are expected to attend class and participate in class discussions, large and small. There will be a lot of opportunities to do this. This is a great way to get to know students in the class / major in addition to learning the material in a different way. I take attendance every day for a couple of reasons: 1) I want to learn student names, and 2) if you're not present, you cannot participate. When calculating attendance and participation at the end of the semester, I typically allow for two unexcused absences that will not count against your grade. Be sure to provide documentation for any absences wished to be excused.

Literature review conference (5%)

Each student will be required to meet with the professor during the second half of the semester to discuss preparation for the final literature review paper assignment. Students should attend this meeting with a written topic and proposed bibliography.

Literature review (15%):

Students will complete a literature review of a topic in political science. This assignment allows students to explore a research question in some depth, discovering past and current work and remaining puzzles. Students may write their literature review based on questions developed through their group work, but each student must complete their own literature review independently at the end of the semester. Additional details will be available via eLearning Commons and provided by the professor throughout the short semester.

Political scientists group presentation (10%)

We will spend time learning about the discipline of political science by learning about the research of contemporary political scientists and how it relates to our studies and our lives. Presentations will take place throughout the semester, and students will sign up with their group during the second week of class. Each group will give a presentation on a political scientist (chosen from a list provided by the professor) and their research. Additional assignment details will be provided and available on eLearning Commons.

Administrative Items

ELearning

You will submit writing assignments and locate additional reading assignments for our class via the ELearning Commons (<https://uga.view.usg.edu/>). You should sign into the ELearning Commons using your UGA MyId and password. If you are registered for the class, the course link should show up on your ELearning Commons homepage. I may post additional documents useful for your class, so you will want to check in throughout the semester.

Missed deadlines

If you have a conflict with a due date or will miss class repeatedly, please come talk to me about it as soon as you know about it. This way we can work something out and your grade may not suffer. If you have an emergency conflict (i.e. personal, family or medical emergencies), you should e-mail me within the week of the missed due date to discuss the timely completion of the assignment. Documentation is required for make-up exams. If you miss a deadline for a non-emergency, most assignments can still be completed and will be accepted for up to a week—but they will be penalized a letter grade for every additional day late.

Classroom safety

If the fire alarm sounds, we will exit the building and reassemble across the street (Jackson) to make sure everyone exited the building. If there is a tornado warning, we will move downstairs to shelter and account for everyone. If you have concerns about other emergencies or if you have special circumstances that I need to know about in case of an emergency, please speak to me after class. If you have questions about evacuation locations or shelter locations, contact OEP (Office of Emergency Preparedness).

Disability resource center

If you anticipate needing classroom or exam accommodations due to the impact of a disability or medical condition, you must register for services with the Disability Resource Center. Additional information can be found here: <http://drc.uga.edu/>

Withdrawal policy

Undergraduate students can only withdraw from four courses and receive a withdrawal-passing (WP) grade while enrolled at the University. Students can drop any class without penalty during the drop/add period at the beginning of every semester. Dropped courses during the drop/add period do not qualify as withdrawals. Instructors have the ability to withdraw a student from the class due to excessive absences. Please carefully review the policy in its entirety here: <http://www.reg.uga.edu/policies/withdrawals>

UGA culture of honesty policy

The policy is in place to encourage academic honesty among students, faculty and other members of the university community. You and I are responsible for knowing and complying with the policy and procedures. Academic dishonesty includes plagiarism, cheating and much more. It's in your best interest to understand what constitutes dishonest work, as defined by the University. Students caught cheating or plagiarizing will receive an F for the course, and their names will be forwarded to the University. Please carefully review the policy in its entirety here: <https://ovpi.uga.edu/academic-honesty/academic-honesty-policy>

Tentative Course Outline

Week 1.

Tuesday, January 7

- Course syllabus

Thursday, January 9

- Van Belle Introduction
- “How Political Scientists Conquered Washington”
(<http://www.vox.com/2014/9/2/6088485/how-political-science-conquered-washington>)
- “Why political science is not an election casualty”
(https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2016/11/15/why-political-science-is-not-an-election-casualty/?utm_term=.d9ed0affa035)
- Gelman, Andrew & Julia Azari. 2017. “19 Things We Learned from the 2016 Election.” *Statistics and Public Policy* 4, 1, Issue 1.

Week 2.

Tuesday, January 14

- Van Belle Chapter 15
- Van Belle Chapter 1
- Noel, Hans. 2010. “Ten Things that Political Scientists Know that You Don’t.” *The Forum* 8, 3, Article 12.

Thursday, January 16

- Baglione Chapter 1
- Group introductions

Week 3.

Tuesday, January 21

- Van Belle Chapter 2
- “Well-governed failed states? Not an oxymoron!”
(https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2014/10/01/well-governed-failed-states-not-an-oxymoron/?utm_term=.ca0d885af24a)

Thursday, January 23

- Van Belle Chapter 3
- Political Scientist Presentation 1

Week 4.

Tuesday, January 28

- “The Psychology Behind Why Some Kids Go Unvaccinated” (<http://www.npr.org/2015/02/04/383724467/the-psychology-behind-why-some-kids-go-unvaccinated>)
- Baglione Chapter 2

Thursday, January 30

- Baglione Chapter 2
- Political Scientist Presentation 2

Week 5.

Tuesday, February 4

- Van Belle Chapter 4
- Political Scientist Presentation 3

Thursday, February 6

- Van Belle Chapter 5
- *Planet Money*, “Episode 640: The Bottom of the Well” (<https://www.npr.org/templates/transcript/transcript.php?storyId=425392169>)
- Research assignment 1 due

Week 6.

Tuesday, February 11

- Van Belle Chapter 6
- Baglione Chapter 3

Thursday, February 13

- Baglione Chapter 3
- Political Scientist Presentation 4

Week 7.

Tuesday, February 18

- “As A Major Retraction Shows, We’re All Vulnerable To Faked Data” (<http://fivethirtyeight.com/datalab/as-a-major-retraction-shows-were-all-vulnerable-to-faked-data/>)
- “Study Using Gay Canvassers Erred in Methods, Not Results, Author Says” (http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/30/science/michael-lacour-gay-marriage-science-study-retraction.html?_r=0)
- Baglione Chapter 4/5
- Political Scientist Presentation 5

Thursday, February 20

- Exam 1

Week 8.

Tuesday, February 25

- Literature review conferencing

Thursday, February 27

- Baglione Chapter 4/5
- Political Scientist Presentation 6
- Deadline for literature review conferencing

Week 9.

Tuesday, March 3

- Van Bell Chapter 7
- “Yes, Mitch McConnell’s secretive lawmaking is really unusual—in these 4 ways” (https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/06/19/yes-mitch-mcconnells-secretive-lawmaking-is-really-unusual-in-these-4-ways/?utm_term=.ff2b9b3ef358)
- Political Scientist Presentation 7

Thursday, March 5

- Break down the research: Reynolds, Andrew. 2013. “Representation and Rights: The Impact of LGBT Legislators in Comparative Perspective.” *American Political Science Review* 107, 2, pages 259 – 274.
- Research assignment 2 due

Spring break. Monday, March 9 – Friday, March 13

Week 10.

Tuesday, March 17

- Van Belle Chapter 8
- “If a Tech Company Had Built the Federal Health Care Website” (<http://www.npr.org/blogs/alltechconsidered/2013/10/17/235739367/if-a-tech-company-had-built-the-federal-health-care-website>)

Thursday, March 19

- Baglione Chapter 6
- Political Scientist Presentation 8

Week 11.

Tuesday, March 24

- Van Belle Chapter 9
- "How Supreme Court Justices 'benchslapped' each other in the Hobby Lobby Case" (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/07/01/how-supreme-court-justices-benchslapped-each-other-in-the-hobby-lobby-case/>)

Thursday, March 26

- Baglione Chapter 7
- Political Scientist Presentation 9

Week 12.

Tuesday, March 31

- Baglione Chapter 7
- Political Scientist Presentation 10

Thursday, April 2

- Baglione Chapter 8

Week 13.

Tuesday, April 7

- Van Belle Chapter 11
- "Political Polarization in the American Public" (<http://www.people-press.org/2014/06/12/political-polarization-in-the-american-public/>)
- <http://www.npr.org/2016/12/11/505154631/a-finders-guide-to-facts>
- <https://www.allsides.com/>

Thursday, April 9

- Van Belle Chapter 12
- Research assignment 3 due

Week 14.

Tuesday, April 14

- Van Belle Chapter 14
- "How the Trump Era Is Molding the Next Generation of Voters" (<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/01/upshot/trump-era-molding-young-voters.html>)
- Political Scientist Presentation 11

Thursday, April 16

- Van Belle Chapter 15
- Noel, Hans. 2010. "Ten Things that Political Scientists Know that You Don't." *The Forum* 8, 3, Article 12.
- Political Scientist Presentation 12

Week 15.

Tuesday, April 21

- Exam 2

Thursday, April 23

- Literature review due

List of Due Dates

Exam 1 – Thursday, February 20

Exam 2 – Tuesday, April 21

Literature review – Thursday, April 23

Research assignment 1 – Thursday, February 6

Research assignment 2 – Thursday, March 5

Research assignment 3 – Thursday, April 9

Political scientist presentations –

Political scientist presentation 1	Thursday, January 23
Political scientist presentation 2	Thursday, January 30
Political scientist presentation 3	Tuesday, February 4
Political scientist presentation 4	Thursday, February 13
Political scientist presentation 5	Tuesday, February 18
Political scientist presentation 6	Thursday, February 27
Political scientist presentation 7	Tuesday, March 3
Political scientist presentation 8	Thursday, March 19
Political scientist presentation 9	Thursday, March 26
Political scientist presentation 10	Tuesday, March 31
Political scientist presentation 11	Tuesday, April 14
Political scientist presentation 12	Thursday, April 16