

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

Instructor:

Dr. Brittany Bramlett¹
bbram@uga.edu

Class meets:

Our assigned room can safely include 8 to 10 people at a time. This means that 2 groups of students (each with 8 to 10 people) will meet rotating Mondays & Wednesdays at 12:40pm to 1:30pm in Baldwin Hall, 0302 (or outside when possible). Fridays will be strictly digital.

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

- 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

- 1) Van Belle, Douglas A. 2020. *A Novel Approach to Politics*. 6th Edition. Sage Publishing.
- 2) Baglione, Lisa. 2020. *Writing a Research Paper in Political Science: A Practical Guide to Inquiry, Structure, and Methods*. 4th Edition. Sage Publishing.

***Older versions of both textbooks work fine!

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

Participation (10%)

Throughout the semester, there will be 12 online discussion posts (and one extra online discussion post for bonus points) in response to class discussion and reflection slides. To receive full participation points for the assignment, the student should:

- Respond to the discussion prompt with a new thread
- Respond to another classmate's thread with a comment and question

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

Anything from the assigned readings and the eLC modules is considered fair game to show up on the online exams.

Political scientist project (10%)

Students will spend time learning about the discipline of political science through learning about the research of contemporary political scientists and how it relates to our studies and our lives. Each student will choose a political scientist to research and present online. Students will sign up for due dates, which will be available throughout the semester. Additional assignment details will be provided and available on eLC.

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.

There will be time set aside for group work in-class (Mondays or Wednesdays, outside if possible). These meeting times are optional, but they are there for you to meet as a group or ask me questions. I will not take attendance. If you want to meet in digital spaces, that's fine.

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 eLC 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

Literature review conference (5%)

Each student will be required to meet with the professor (in-person or via email) during the second half of the semester to discuss preparation for the final literature review paper assignment. Students should attend this meeting with a topic, proposed bibliography, and at least 2 questions about the assignment for Dr. Bramlett.

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 eLC and provided by the professor throughout the short semester.

Administrative Items

ELearning

Students must become acquainted with eLearning Commons for this class (<https://uga.view.usg.edu/>). Sign into eLC using your UGA MyId and password. If registered for the class, the course link should show up on the student's eLC homepage.

All content will be available via eLC.
Students must check in to eLC multiple times a week.
Students will submit all assignments via eLC.

Missed deadlines

A student who has a conflict with a due date should let the professor know ASAP. If done this way, typically things can be worked out, so the student's grade will not suffer. We are living during a pandemic. Flexibility is key, but communication also helps.

Classroom safety

Students should wear masks inside Baldwin Hall and abide by social distancing guidelines. We'll hold class outside when possible.

Disability resource center

If the student anticipates needing classroom or exam accommodations due to the impact of a disability or medical condition, they 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. Students and faculty are responsible for knowing and complying with the policy and procedures. Academic dishonesty includes plagiarism, cheating and much more. It's in the student's 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>

Mental Health and Wellness Resources:

If you or someone you know needs assistance, you are encouraged to contact Student Care and Outreach in the Division of Student Affairs at 706-542-7774 or visit <https://sco.uga.edu>. They will help you navigate any difficult circumstances you may be facing by connecting you with the appropriate resources or services.

UGA has several resources for a student seeking mental health services (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga>) or crisis support (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/info/emergencies>).

If you need help managing stress anxiety, relationships, etc., please visit BeWellUGA (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga>) for a list of FREE workshops, classes, mentoring, and health coaching led by licensed clinicians and health educators in the University Health Center. Additional resources can be accessed through the UGA App.

Tentative Course Outline

Course intro. August 21

eLC intro module:

- Welcome video
- Course syllabus
- Student survey

Week 1. August 24 – 28

eLC module 1:

- 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.

In-class project planning/questions (OPTIONAL):

- Group 1 – Monday, August 24
- Group 2 – Wednesday, August 26

Due: Friday, August 28

- Discussion 1

Week 2. August 31 – September 4

eLC module 2:

- 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.
- Baglione Chapter 1
- Group introductions

In-class project planning/questions (OPTIONAL):

- Group 1 – Monday, August 31
- Group 2 – Wednesday, September 2

Due: Friday, September 4

- Discussion 2

Week 3. September 9 – 11 (Labor Day, holiday: Monday, September 7)

eLC module 3:

- 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)

In-class project planning/questions (OPTIONAL):

- No groups – Monday, September 7 (Labor Day, holiday)
- Group 1 – Wednesday, September 9

Due: Friday, September 11

- Discussion 3
- Political Scientist projects round 1

Week 4. September 14 – 18

eLC module 4:

- Van Belle Chapter 3
- “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

In-class project planning/questions (OPTIONAL):

- Group 2 – Monday, September 14
- No groups – Wednesday, September 16

Due: Friday, September 18

- Discussion 4

Week 5. September 21 – 25

eLC module 5:

- Van Belle Chapter 4
- Van Belle Chapter 5
- *Planet Money*, “Episode 640: The Bottom of the Well”
(<https://www.npr.org/templates/transcript/transcript.php?storyId=425392169>)

In-class project planning/questions (OPTIONAL):

- Group 1 – Monday, September 21
- Group 2 – Wednesday, September 23

Due: Friday, September 25

- Discussion 5
- Research assignment 1

Week 6. September 28 – October 2

eLC module 6:

- Van Belle Chapter 6
- Baglione Chapter 3

In-class project planning/questions (OPTIONAL):

- Group 1 – Monday, September 28
- Group 2 – Wednesday, September 30

Due: Friday, October 2

- Discussion 6
- Political Scientist projects round 2

Week 7. October 5 – 9

eLC module 7:

- “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

In-class project planning/questions (OPTIONAL):

- Group 1 – Monday, October 5
- Group 2 – Wednesday, October 7

Due: Friday, October 9

- Exam 1
- Discussion 7

Week 8. October 12 – 16

eLC module 8:

- Literature review conferencing

In-class project planning/questions (OPTIONAL):

- Group 1 – Monday, October 12
- Group 2 – Wednesday, October 14

Week 9. October 19 – 23

eLC module 9:

- 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)
- 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.

In-class project planning/questions (OPTIONAL):

- Group 1 – Monday, October 19
- Group 2 – Wednesday, October 21

Due: Friday, October 23

- Discussion 8
- Research assignment 2

Week 10. October 26 – 28

eLC module 10:

- 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>)
- Baglione Chapter 6

In-class project planning/questions (OPTIONAL):

- Group 1 – Monday, October 26
- Group 2 – Wednesday, October 28

Due: Wednesday, October 28

- Discussion 9
- Political Scientist projects round 3

Week 11. November 2 – 6

eLC module 11:

- 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/>)
- Van Belle Chapter 10

In-class project planning/questions (OPTIONAL):

- Group 1 – Monday, November 2
- Group 2 – Wednesday, November 4

Due: Friday, November 6

- Discussion 10

Week 12. November 9 – 13

eLC module 12:

- Baglione Chapter 7
- Baglione Chapter 8

In-class project planning/questions (OPTIONAL):

- Group 1 – Monday, November 9
- Group 2 – Wednesday, November 11

Week 13. November 16 – 20

eLC module 13:

- Van Belle Chapter 11
- <http://www.npr.org/2016/12/11/505154631/a-finders-guide-to-facts>
- <https://www.allsides.com/>
- <http://graphics.wsj.com/blue-feed-red-feed/>

In-class project planning/questions (OPTIONAL):

- FINAL Group 1 - Monday, November 16
- FINAL Group 2 – Wednesday, November 18

Due: Friday, November 20

- Research assignment 3
- Discussion 11

Week 14. November 23 (Thanksgiving break, holiday: November 25 & 27)

eLC module 14:

- Van Belle Chapter 12

Due: Monday, November 23

- Political Scientist projects round 4

*****All remaining classes take place online after Thanksgiving break*****

Week 15. November 30 – December 4

eLC module 15:

- 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>)

Due: Friday, December 4

- Discussion 12
- Exam 2

Week 16. December 7 – December 9

eLC module 16:

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

Due: Wednesday, December 9

- Discussion (Bonus)
- Literature review

Finals period, Friday, December 11 – Thursday, December 17

List of Due Dates

Exam 1 – Friday, October 9

Exam 2 – Friday, December 4

Political Scientist projects round 1 – Friday, September 11

Political Scientist projects round 2 – Friday, October 2

Political Scientist projects round 3 – Wednesday, October 28

Political Scientist projects round 4 – Monday, November 23

Literature review – Friday, December 4

Discussion 1 – Friday, August 28

Discussion 2 – Friday, September 4

Discussion 3 – Friday, September 11

Discussion 4 – Friday, September 18

Discussion 5 – Friday, September 25

Discussion 6 – Friday, October 2

Discussion 7 – Friday, October 9

Discussion 8 – Friday, October 23

Discussion 9 – Wednesday, October 28

Discussion 10 – Friday, November 6

Discussion 11 – Friday, November 20

Discussion 12 – Friday December 4

Discussion & reflection bonus – Wednesday, December 9

Research assignment 1 – Friday, September 25

Research assignment 2 – Friday, October 23

Research assignment 3 – Friday, November 20

OPTIONAL in-class project planning/questions dates:

Group 1
Monday, August 24
Monday, August 31
Wednesday, September 9
Monday, September 21
Monday, September 28
Monday, October 5
Monday, October 12
Monday, October 19
Monday, October 26
Monday, November 2
Monday, November 9
Monday, November 16

Group 2
Wednesday, August 26
Wednesday, September 2
Monday, September 14
Wednesday, September 23
Wednesday, September 30
Wednesday, October 7
Wednesday, October 14
Wednesday, October 21
Wednesday, October 28
Wednesday, November 4
Wednesday, November 11
Wednesday, November 18