

POLS 2000: Introduction to Political Science
University of Georgia
Fall 2021

Instructor:

Dr. Brittany Bramlett¹
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Class meets:

Monday, Wednesday, & Friday at 10:20am, Baldwin 0104

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

Attendance and participation (20%)

Attendance: I take attendance every class mostly so I learn students names but also to have a record of absences. It's important to attend class for your own benefit. Additionally, your peers and instructor value your presence as well. However, I will not take attendance for points this semester. AND, if you are unwell, please do not come to class.

Participation: Throughout the semester, there will be days set aside for class discussions where most of our time is spent talking to each other about particular topics and how they relate to voting. Students will need to attend class to participate.

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

There will be two exams during the span of the semester. Students will complete the exams individually via eLC and outside of class. However, students will take the exam during our normal class time, beginning at 10:20am and lasting 75 minutes on the assigned day. Anything from the class material is considered fair game to show up on the exams, and students may use their books and notes. Each exam is non-cumulative.

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

Students will have the option of working in small groups (2 or 3 students) or on their own for these assignments. There will be time set aside for group work in-class and sometimes out of class. 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 research assignment 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 semester.

Political scientist project (extra credit opportunity, 10 points added to either exam)

Students may 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. Students may choose a political scientist to research and present online. Students can submit the assignment at one of two points during the semester. Additional assignment details will be provided and available on eLC.

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.

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 behavior

Our class may discuss difficult topics, and we will not always agree. But the expectation is that we remain respectful toward each other during our class time.

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

Week 1. August 18 – 24 (Wednesday, August 18 – Friday, August 27)

Wednesday, August 18

- Course syllabus
- Student survey

Friday, August 20

- Van Belle Introduction
- “How Political Scientists Conquered Washington” (<http://www.vox.com/2014/9/2/6088485/how-political-science-conquered-washington>)
- Class discussion 1

Monday, August 23

- “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.

Wednesday, August 25

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

Friday, August 27

- Research assignments introduction
- Class discussion 2

Week 2. August 30 – September 3

Monday, August 30

- Van Belle Chapter 1

Wednesday, September 1

- Baglione Chapter 1

Friday, September 3

- Research assignments workday

Week 3. September 7 – 10 (Labor Day, holiday: Monday, September 6)

Wednesday, September 8

- 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)

Friday, September 10

- Class discussion 3

Week 4. September 13 – 17

Monday, September 13

- Van Belle Chapter 3

Wednesday, September 15

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

Friday, September 17

- Baglione Chapter 2
- Political Scientist projects round 1

Week 5. September 20 – 24

Monday, September 20

- Class discussion 4

Wednesday, September 22

- Van Belle Chapter 4

Friday, September 24

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

Week 6. September 27 – October 1

Monday, September 27

- Class discussion 5

Wednesday, September 29

- Research assignment workday
- Research assignment 1 due by midnight

Friday, October 1

- Van Belle Chapter 6
- Baglione Chapter 3

Week 7. October 4 – 8

Monday, October 4

- Class discussion 6

Wednesday, October 6

- Class discussion 7

Friday, October 8

- Exam 1 via eLC at 10:20am

Week 8. October 11 – 15 (Midterm: October 11)

Monday, October 11

- Baglione Chapter 4/5

Wednesday, October 13

- Literature review conferencing

Friday, October 15

- Literature review conferencing

Week 9. October 18 – 22

Monday, October 18

- Van Bell Chapter 7

Wednesday, October 20

- Class discussion 8

Friday, October 22

- Research assignment workday
- Research assignment 2 due by midnight

Week 10. October 25 – 28 (Withdrawal deadline: October 25; Fall break, holiday: Friday, October 29)

Monday, October 25

- 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.

Wednesday, October 27

- Baglione Chapter 6
- Political Scientist projects round 2

Week 11. November 1 – 5

Monday, November 1

- Van Belle Chapter 8

Wednesday, November 3

- Class discussion 9

Friday, November 5

- Van Belle Chapter 9

Week 12. November 8 – 12

Monday, November 8

- Class discussion 10

Wednesday, November 10

- Baglione Chapter 7

Friday, November 12

- Baglione Chapter 8

Week 13. November 15 – 19

Monday, November 15

- Van Belle Chapter 10

Wednesday, November 17

- Van Belle Chapter 11

Friday, November 19

- Class discussion 11

Week 14. November 22 - 23 (Thanksgiving break, holiday: November 24 – 26)

Monday, November 22

- Research assignment workday
- Research assignment 3 due by midnight

Week 15. November 29 – December 3

Monday, November 29

- Van Belle Chapter 12

Wednesday, December 1

- Van Belle Chapter 14

Friday, December 3

- Class discussion 12
- Complete course evaluation

Week 16. December 6 – 7

Monday, December 6

- Exam 2 via eLC at 10:20am

Tuesday, December 7

- Literature review due by midnight

Finals period, Friday, December 9 – Thursday, December 15

List of Important Dates

Exam 1 – Friday, October 8

Exam 2 – Monday, December 6

Political Scientist projects round 1 – Friday, September 17

Political Scientist projects round 2 – Wednesday, October 27

Literature review – Tuesday, December 7

Research assignment 1 – Wednesday, September 29

Research assignment 2 – Friday, October 22

Research assignment 3 – Monday, November 22