

POLS 4510: Electoral Behavior

Weekdays from 11.00am to 1.15pm in Baldwin 102.

Instructor: Simon Williamson

Email: sjw48916@uga.edu (this is the best way to contact me)

Office location: TBD

Office Hours: after class every day, or email me to make an alternative arrangement

Course Description

This seminar course is intended to give students a broad overview of the literature and research into the effects that elections have on American politics. By the end of this course you should have a well-rounded view of congressional elections and be able to critically discuss and explain elements of the political science literature, especially on the topics of the electoral connection, representation, the legislative process, how elections affect the public, and competing influences for the attention and decision-making of Congress. This course will enable students to further their studies into American political institutions and American political behavior.

You may notice in the schedule outlines below that there are no specific weeks on race, gender, sexual orientation and so on. This is because they are all involved in every aspect of the electoral connection and Congress, and we will treat them as such.

How Class Time Will Work

This will be a reading- and discussion-heavy class. But since this is an intensive summer course **we will do the assigned readings IN CLASS**. I will give you reading time during our lessons. You do not need to read the whole paper but for every paper you should be able to answer the following questions:

- 1) What is the current common wisdom
- 2) What question is the paper trying to answer?
- 3) What is/are the hypothesis/hypotheses?
- 4) How are the variables measured?
- 5) Do you think the conclusion is supported? Why, or why not?

On the rare occasion I assign a book chapter, you will have to be able to summarize and discuss it.

Since this is a small class it will be **discussion-based**. Please maintain good manners during class discussions – I will endeavor to do the same – and note that it is a DISCUSSION. It is fine to be challenged in your points as we all learn through this format. I have learned an immense amount from my students' discussions before, and I suspect that if I can then you can too.

As you can see in fuller detail below we do not have a final exam for this class but we will have weekly assignments.

Covid information

You are welcome to observe any Covid protections that you see fit for yourself.

PLEASE DO NOT COME TO CLASS IF YOU ARE SICK.

The University of Georgia is opening back up as if the pandemic is over. This class will be conducted in person and there will be no hybrid option as it is very difficult to pedagogically run what is essentially two classes at the same time. Since we are in a room that can hold 45 students and there are currently (as of June 9th) 9 signed up, we are able to maintain any Covid preferences you prefer. I have been vaccinated and have chosen to not wear a mask. I am South African and have a guttural accent that is muffled even further by a mask. Even if you are vaccinated, which I recommend you do, you are welcome to wear a mask, and to social distance in the classroom. No one who observes masks or social distancing should have their course affected in any way. Office hours (my office location is TBD) will have the same rules. You are welcome to protect yourself in any way you see fit. Please don't hesitate to email me with any questions about any Covid-related issue.

General expectations.

Students are expected to behave professionally in class at all times. This means coming to class on time with readings (or access to them (I will provide them on eLC), and participating in discussions. This syllabus acts as your official notification of deadlines, exams and expected readings. It is your responsibility to do all the readings and attend classes and ensure you are prepared for exams and that your assignments are completed on time. Please remember your manners and do not use your cellphones during class. I will also abide by my own rules for professionalism and have my phone on silent and out of the way. If there are extenuating circumstances under which you will need your phone on, please see me before the class begins.

Attendance

I completely understand that sometimes your attendance in class is compromised by circumstances outside your control. Please DO NOT come to class if you are sick. We have 39 scheduled meetings over the course of the summer semester, and you have an excused absence for 3 of them. You will need a university approved excuse to miss any more than that, and, after consultation with the person involved, I will consider withdrawing any students who I think have fallen too far behind to be able to catch up.

Because it is summer we will also take every second Monday off, which means no class on the following dates:

- Monday June 21st
- Monday July 5th (this is a public holiday anyway; happy birthday to the United States)
- Monday July 19th

- Monday August 2nd

Withdrawals

The end of Drop/Add is **June 17th** and the withdrawal deadline is **July 8th**. If a student withdraws before the semester's withdrawal deadline, the student will receive a grade of W. An instructor may withdraw a student from a course due to excessive absences as defined in the course syllabus, and the student will receive a grade of W. You can find more details here: <http://bulletin.uga.edu/bulletin/ind/attendance.html>.

Sexual Assault, Harassment and Violence Resources

All students have the right to work in a safe environment free of harassment and discrimination. Should you be subject to harassment or discrimination or any other Title IX violation, please contact the Equal Opportunity Office (<https://eoo.uga.edu/>). There are numerous resources to help students who are confronting sexual assault, sexual harassment and any other kind of sexual violence. The University Health Center's Relationship And Sexual Violence Prevention (RSVP) can be contacted 24 hours per day on 706-542-SAFE (7233), and provides emotional support, safety planning, medical services coordination, and legal advocacy. Should you wish to file a report or complaint, RSVP can also accompany you to the police, or Equal Opportunity Office. The UGA Health Center's Counselling And Psychiatric Services provides confidential services and can be contacted on 706-542-2273. Please find more information provided from the Equal Opportunity Office here: https://eoo.uga.edu/sites/default/files/sar_resources_chart_1.pdf.

Disabilities and accommodations

All students have the same right to learn at this university regardless of disability or any required special accommodation. Please notify the Disability Resource Center (DRC) if you require any extra accommodation in taking this course, and myself, if you are comfortable doing so. The DRC can be contacted by voice on (706) 542-8719, by email at drc@uga.edu, and is located at Clark Howell Hall, 825 South Lumpkin Street. It is open from 8AM to 5PM Monday to Friday.

We have very little in the way of signage in Baldwin Hall so students requiring mobility accommodations may find the following information useful:

- The only door in Baldwin Hall that opens by pushing a button is the door on the left of the main entrance to the building off S Jackson St.
- Our classroom is on the ground floor, but if you need to get elsewhere in the building the elevator can be reached by entering Baldwin Hall via the main entrance, go under the stairs, across the ground floor corridor, and turn left just before the vending machines (this sounds much more complicated than it is).
- Reception is also located in this area but please bear in mind that whoever chose the door to get into reception selected one that weighs about a thousand pounds. Wendi Finch, our administrative associate, and Baldwin Hall receptionist, will be on the inside

of that door and will assist you in entering. Our classroom door is also heavy and I will be there before class begins to assist anyone in entering.

- Wheelchair accessible restrooms are located on every floor in the center of the building. The wheelchair accessible restrooms on the ground floor are cubicles, but on floors 2 through 4 they are individual bathrooms.

We do not have a dedicated quiet space in Baldwin Hall but if you require one please feel free to let me know and I will try to find one. I am afraid my office is a shared one so we will have to find a quiet space on an ad hoc basis.

Please feel free to share with me any accommodations you feel I can improve on, or talk to the DRC about anything the university can improve on. I will keep all communication about this confidential, or you can communicate such information to me through the DRC.

Every student has the same right to every part of this class.

Lactation Facilities

Baldwin Hall does not have any lactation facilities. The closest are in the Main Library building: Basement Room B99C; First Aid Room B14.

Mandatory Reporting

I am required by the university to report any complaints or knowledge of discrimination or harassment, including sexual misconduct, to the Equal Opportunity Office. If I am concerned about a student I will also use my own judgement in contacting the Office of Student Care and Outreach.

Grades

I will use the traditional UGA grading scale, and all grades will be rounded up to the next full percentage point. Why yes, that means both 86.1 and 86.9 will be rounded up to 87, for example.

100-94: A	86-84: B	76-74: C	66-64: D
93-90: A-	83-80: B-	73-70: C-	63-60: D-
89-87: B+	79-77: C+	69-67: D+	59-0: FF

The **breakdown** for your grades in this class are as follows:

Weekly assignments: 70%

Every Wednesday

(except for the first week) you are required to submit something that summarizes, critiques, suggests further research, or teaches in an effective manner the content we covered the previous week. For example, if we covered the electoral connection in Week 2, the deadline for this assignment is the Wednesday of Week 3.

Participation: 7%

This is a discussion-based class and therefore your participation is a key element. You will be graded on how much you contribute.

End-of-semester teaching: 15%

At the end of the semester you will teach a ten-minute section on one of the topics covered during the semester.

Memes: 8% (one per week)

All students are required to submit one meme per week (more if you have some absolute bangers) relating to the content covered during the week. The deadline will be Friday at 5PM. For example, if we covered the electoral connection in Week 2, the deadline for the meme will be Friday of Week 2. Be creative. You have a lot of freedom here. All I need to see with these is that you have engaged with the material covered during the week.

Required texts

There are no required texts for this class. However, if you can find a cheap version of David Mayhew's *The Electoral Connection* and you have a few dollars lying around, it may end up being useful. It is cited in almost every single paper about this topic.

I will supply all required readings to you via eLC. You will also be able to find most of them via the UGA library.

Schedule

I am yet to finalize the specific readings but this is the weekly breakdown of what we will be covering:

Week 1: Friday June 11th

How we should study Congress

The Electoral Connection

Week 2: Monday 6/14 – Friday 6/18

“Out of Step, Out of Office”

Week 3: Monday 6/21 – Friday 6/25

NO CLASS ON MONDAY

Representation

Week 4: Monday 6/28 – Friday 7/2

Elections and their effects

Week 5: Monday 7/5 to Friday 7/10

NO CLASS ON MONDAY
Other influences on Congress

Week 6: Monday 7/12 – Friday 7/16
Partisanship, groups and participation

Week 7: Monday 7/19 – Friday 7/24
NO CLASS ON MONDAY
Campaigns, messaging and the media

Week 8: Monday 7/26 – Friday 7/30
Legislating

Week 9: Monday 8/2 – Wednesday 8/4
NO CLASS ON MONDAY
Teaching presentations