

# **POLS 220: Introduction to American Politics**

Instructor: Dr. Giovanni D. Pleites-Hernandez (he/him) Semester: Fall 2021  
Office: Zageir 204 Phone: (828) 251-6634  
Office Hours: MW 9-10 a.m., Th 12-1 p.m. Class: Tu/Th 9:55 – 11:35 a.m.  
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## **Course Description**

This course will introduce students to American politics through an exploration of the foundational, institutional, and behavioral aspects of the American national government. In doing so, students will be exposed to the dynamic relationships between the institutions, political actors, and the American electorate. In addition, the course will help students gain a better understanding of the relationship between the citizenry and the government through the presentation, and subsequent discussions, of the various ways in which the two interact. Students will be exposed to an array of both historical and current events in the exploration of the American government.

## **Course-Specific Learning Objectives**

After this class, students should be able to:

1. Describe the American founding and its impact on the construction and development of the Constitution.
2. Explain how the individual branches of government have changed over time, and how that has impacted their relationship with one another.
3. Discuss how citizens interact with government and the different factors that influence their attitudes and behavior.
4. Critically engage historical and contemporary readings on American government and politics.
5. Demonstrate an awareness of current events (and public policy) and how they relate to the study of American politics.

## **Political Science (POLS) Student Learning Outcomes**

POLS Outcome No. 1: Knowledge of the Field – Concepts and Theories

- Students learn the defining concepts and theories political scientists use to study and explain political phenomena in the discipline.

POLS Outcome No. 2: Writing – Academic Writing and Information Literacy

- Students learn to effectively use argument to communicate claims to know in academic writing appropriate for the discipline.

## **Departmental and University Requirements Met**

POLS 220 can fulfill the prerequisite requirement for POLS 290 (other courses that can also fulfill this requirement are POLS 235, 240, 261, or 281). POLS 220 contributes to the required 34 hours in the political science major. This course also contributes to the required 120 semester hours of credit required for receiving a baccalaureate degree.

### Materials\*

1. *The Logic of American Politics*. 10<sup>th</sup> Edition. Samuel Kernell, Gary Jacobson, Thad Kousser, Lynn Vavreck, and Timothy Johnson. 2021. CQ Press. ISBN: 978-1071815977.
2. New York Times online subscription (complimentary access through the university can be accessed by going to [accessnytimes.com](https://accessnytimes.com) and typing “Asheville.” In order to receive free access, an official unca.edu email needs to be used for registration).

\* Additional materials will be distributed in class, via e-mail, or posted on Moodle (<https://learnonline.unca.edu/>).

### Student Assessment and Evaluation Methods

#### Attendance and Participation

Students are expected to: attend all class meetings, complete the assigned readings before class, and participate in class discussions. Together, **attendance (10%) and participation (15%)** will make up 25% of your overall course grade. *Individuals with more than 5 absences, unless cleared by the instructor, will receive a zero for attendance. Any individual with more than 9 (or more) absences, unless cleared by the instructor, will receive an F for the course.*

In addition to the assigned class readings, students are expected to read the news daily and be up to date on current events, as doing so will directly impact their course grade. Simply showing up to class will not suffice. Students are expected to critically engage with the material and share their insights and opinions with the class. Since there will be some material covered in class that does not come from the text, students are encouraged to take good notes in preparation for the examinations. Also, in the event of an absence, students are responsible for obtaining any missed notes and must do so independently of the professor.

#### Quizzes and Additional Assignments

There will be in-class pop quizzes based on the current events and/or the reading material for the week. In addition to the in-class pop quizzes, there are also online reading quizzes on Moodle based on the textbook chapter(s) assigned for any given week. These online quizzes are open book and untimed, so there will be no retakes. **All online chapter quizzes are due by 9:30 a.m. EST on the day of the corresponding in-class exam, no exceptions.** There are no make-ups for missed in-class quizzes unless students have an excused absence. However, the lowest two quiz grades (in-class or online) will be dropped before final grades are calculated, so students have the flexibility to make the decision on whether to make-up a quiz or count it as a drop.

Of the 13 chapters from the assigned course textbook, students will be responsible for completing the corresponding online quizzes for **8 of those chapters**. These quizzes for *The Logic of American Politics* textbook can be accessed via the following link: <https://edge.sagepub.com/kernell10e/student-resources> – all you have to do is click on the appropriate chapter and the corresponding link. Once completed, you are expected to turn in a screenshot (or pdf) of the quiz. We will go over this in more detail in class.

Any other additional assignments not specifically listed here in the syllabus will fall into this grade category. Altogether, this category will make up 15% of your overall course grade.

## Writing Assignments

Students will have **two writing assignments**, each worth 7.5% of their total grade. Students will be provided with a prompt for each, where the expectations and guidelines will be outlined. The assignments will be due on **Tuesday, September 21<sup>st</sup> at 11:59 p.m.** and **Thursday, November 11<sup>th</sup> at 11:59 p.m.**, respectively. Assignments turned in after the due date will lose a letter grade by the day – weekend included. For a paper submitted the day after a due date that warrants an A, the student will receive a B, and so forth. These assignments are to be submitted via Moodle.

## Examinations

There will be two examinations: the first on **Tuesday, September 28<sup>th</sup>**, and the final will take place between 8:00 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. **on Tuesday, December 7<sup>th</sup>**. The exams will primarily consist of multiple-choice questions, though others – such as short answer, matching, fill-in-the-blank, and essay format – should be expected. Make-up exams will only be offered under extraordinary circumstances (documentation required). Students have 72 hours from the time when the exam is given to the class to contact the instructor in order to schedule a make-up exam, which needs to be taken within a week of the original (7 calendar days) or forfeit the right to take said exam. The format of the examination is left to the discretion of the instructor.

## Extra Credit

One extra credit opportunity will be made available before the end of the semester. More information will be presented in class and/or Moodle.

## Grading and Course Requirements

Your final grade will be determined by your performance on the abovementioned assignments. See the following grading scale and assignment breakdown:

Grading Scale				Grading Formula	
A	92 – 100	C	72 – 77	Attendance & Participation	25%
A-	90 – 91	C-	70 – 71	Quizzes & Assignments	10%
B+	88 – 89	D+	68 – 69	Writing Assignments	15%
B	82 – 87	D	60 – 67	Midterm Exam	25%
B-	80 – 81	F	Below 60	Final Examination	25%
C+	78 - 79			Total	100%

## Key Dates

**Writing Assignment 1:** Tuesday, September 21<sup>st</sup>

**1<sup>st</sup> Batch of Quizzes:** Tuesday, September 28<sup>th</sup>

**Midterm:** Tuesday, September 28<sup>th</sup>

**Writing Assignment 2:** Thursday, November 11<sup>th</sup>

**2<sup>nd</sup> Batch of Quizzes:** Tuesday, December 7<sup>th</sup>

**Final Exam:** Tuesday, December 7<sup>th</sup> from 8:00 – 10:30 a.m.

### **Office Hours**

You must make an appointment to meet with me by email. I have office hours Mondays and Wednesdays from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. and Thursdays from 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. In addition to these set hours, I am willing to work around your schedule whenever possible.

### **Technology**

Computers and tablets are allowed in the classroom for note-taking and other class-related purposes. You are not allowed to use these devices for browsing the internet, social media, or checking email. Cell phones must be silenced and cannot be used in class at all. Failure to comply with these rules may result in a zero for both attendance and participation for the day. In addition, you may be asked to leave for the day.

### **Communication of Announcements**

Announcements will be sent via e-mail to your official UNCA e-mail address and/or posted on Moodle. You are responsible for monitoring your school e-mail account and the course Moodle site (<https://learnonline.unca.edu/>) daily.

### **E-Mail**

All emails sent to me must include the following: the student's name, course section number (i.e., POLS 220), a proper and formal greeting, a clear subject line about the purpose of the e-mail, and the actual request or question that prompted the email. You should expect a response within 72 hours. If you have not received a response within 72 hours, then please send me another email.

### **The Writing Center**

You are encouraged to visit the University Writing Center (<https://writingcenter.unca.edu/>) on campus for help with assignments for this and other courses. The center supports writers in one-on-one sessions lasting 10 to 45 minutes. Consultants can help writers organize ideas, document sources, and revise prose. If you visit the UWC, bring a copy of your assignment, any writing or notes you may have, and the sources you are working with. Make an appointment by visiting [writingcenter.unca.edu](https://writingcenter.unca.edu) and clicking on "Schedule an Appointment."

### **Academic Integrity**

All rules concerning academic honesty as set out in the current edition of the university's academic catalog (<http://catalog.unca.edu/>) will be enforced. Particular attention should be paid to the policies regarding cheating and plagiarism.

### **Academic Alerts**

Faculty at UNC Asheville are encouraged to use the university's [Academic Alert](#) (AA) system. The purpose of this system is to communicate with students about their progress in courses. Academic Alerts can reflect that a student's performance is satisfactory at the time the alert is submitted or they can indicate concerns (e.g., academic difficulty, attendance problems, or other concerns). Professors use the AA system because they are invested in student success and want to encourage open conversations about how students can improve their performance. When a faculty member submits an alert that expresses a concern, the student receives an email from Academic Advising notifying them of the alert and subsequent registration hold on their account. To clear the hold, the student must complete an online

Response Form included in the alert e-mail. The student's responses will be shared with the instructor and advising staff. If a student receives three or more alerts, they will need to meet with an advisor by scheduling an appointment using the online appointment service at [advising.unca.edu](https://advising.unca.edu) and select 'Academic Alert Appointment' as the type of appointment. The professor may also request to meet with the student to discuss the alert. It is in the student's best interest to complete the alert process quickly, as students who do so are more likely to earn credit for the course. Failure to complete the alert process means the student won't be able to register for the next semester's classes until they have submitted the required form and completed any requested meeting requirements. Questions about the alert system can be directed to Anne Marie Roberts ([amrober1@unca.edu](mailto:amrober1@unca.edu)) in the [Academic Success Center](#).

### **Student Accommodations**

UNCA values the diversity of our student body as a strength and a critical component of our dynamic community. Students with disabilities or temporary injuries/conditions may require accommodations due to barriers in the structure of facilities, course design, technology used for curricular purposes, or other campus resources.

Students who experience a barrier to full access to this class should let the professor know, and/or make an appointment to meet with the Office of Academic Accessibility as soon as possible. To make an appointment, call 828.232.5050; email [academicaccess@unca.edu](mailto:academicaccess@unca.edu); use this link <https://uncaoaaintake.youcanbook.me/>; or drop by the Academic Accessibility Office, room 005 in the One Stop suite (lower level of Ramsey Library). Learn more about the process of registering, and the services available through the Office of Academic Accessibility here: <https://oaa.unca.edu/>.

While students may disclose disability at any point in the semester, students who receive Letters of Accommodation are strongly encouraged to request, obtain and present these to their professors as early in the semester as possible so that accommodations can be made in a timely manner. It is the student's responsibility to follow this process each semester.

### **Sexual Harassment and Misconduct**

All members of the University community are expected to engage in conduct that contributes to the culture of integrity and honor upon which the University of North Carolina at Asheville is grounded. Acts of sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, dating violence, domestic violence and stalking jeopardize the health and welfare of our campus community and the larger community as a whole and will not be tolerated. The University has established procedures for preventing and investigating allegations of sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, dating violence, domestic violence and stalking that are compliant with Title IX federal regulations. To learn more about these procedures or to report an incident of sexual misconduct, go to <https://titleix.unca.edu/>. Students may also report incidents to an instructor, faculty or staff member, who are required by law to notify the Title IX Office.

### **Health and Wellness**

UNCA offers resources for students who are coping with both physical and mental health issues. If you would benefit from assistance, please contact the Health and Counseling Center. Contact information can be found at <https://healthandcounseling.unca.edu/>.

### **Mask Policy and Social Distancing**

The university has been very clear about how all individuals in our community at UNC Asheville are expected to behave during the semester (see here: <https://coronavirus.unca.edu/return-to-campus/community-expectations/>). I will not belabor those points made by the school here but know that students (and faculty/staff) are expected to wear a face mask and maintain social distancing in our class meetings and other settings on campus. Failure to adhere to these guidelines may result in a student's grade being negatively affected and/or a referral for discipline from the university.

### **Alteration of this Syllabus**

The instructor reserves the right to revise, alter, and/or amend this syllabus as necessary. Students will be notified by email and/or Moodle of any such revisions, alterations, and/or amendments.

### **Key Resources for Students**

Coronavirus Information: <https://coronavirus.unca.edu/>  
Political Science Department Website: <https://politicalscience.unca.edu/>  
Academic Planning: <https://advising.unca.edu/>  
Student Affairs: <https://studentaffairs.unca.edu/>  
University Catalog: <http://catalog.unca.edu/>  
Ramsey Library: <https://library.unca.edu/>  
Career Center: <https://career.unca.edu/>

### **Schedule and Topics\*\***

#### **Week 1: Introduction**

August 17<sup>th</sup> (T): Course Introduction, Current Events News Brief, and Practice Quiz

Assigned Reading: *Skim* Chapter 1: The Logic of American Politics

August 19<sup>th</sup> (Th): American Political Culture and Citizenship

Assigned Reading: \*Declaration of Independence by Jefferson and The U.S. Constitution

#### **Week 2: The Constitution and Federalism**

August 24<sup>th</sup> (T): The Founding and the Constitution

Assigned Reading: Chapter 2: The Constitution

August 26<sup>th</sup> (Th): Federalism

Assigned Reading: Chapter 3: Federalism

#### **Week 3: Civil Liberties**

August 31<sup>st</sup> (T):

Assigned Reading: Chapter 5: Civil Liberties

September 2<sup>nd</sup> (Th):

Assigned Reading: “[In Defense of Prejudice: Why Incendiary Speech Must Be Protected](#)” by Rauch

**Week 4: Civil Rights**

September 7<sup>th</sup> (T):

Assigned Reading: Chapter 4: Civil Rights

September 9<sup>th</sup> (Th):

Assigned Reading: T.B.D.

**Week 5: Congress**

September 14<sup>th</sup> (T):

Assigned Reading: Chapter 6: Congress

September 16<sup>th</sup> (Th):

Assigned Reading: Chapter 6: Congress (cont.)

**Week 6: The Executive and Executive Branch**

September 21<sup>st</sup> (T): Writing Assignment #1 Due

Assigned Reading: Chapter 7: The Presidency; \*“Does the President Have Unilateral War Powers?” by Miller

September 23<sup>rd</sup> (Th):

Assigned Reading: Chapter 8: The Bureaucracy

**Week 7: Midterm & The Supreme Court**

September 28<sup>th</sup> (T): Midterm Exam

September 30<sup>th</sup> (Th):

Assigned Reading: Chapter 9: The Federal Judiciary

**Week 8: The Supreme Court (cont.)**

October 5<sup>th</sup> (T): No Class (Fall Break)

October 7<sup>th</sup> (Th):

Assigned Reading: T.B.D.

**Week 9: Public Opinion & The Media**

October 12<sup>th</sup> (T):

Assigned Reading: Chapter 10: Public Opinion

October 14<sup>th</sup> (Th):

Assigned Reading: Chapter 14: Media

**Week 10: Voting, Campaigns, and Elections Political Parties**

October 19<sup>th</sup> (T):

Assigned Reading: Chapter 11: Voting, Campaigns, and Elections

October 21<sup>st</sup> (Th):

Assigned Reading: T.B.D.

**Week 11: Political Parties & Interest Groups**

October 26<sup>th</sup> (T):

Assigned Reading: Chapter 12: Political Parties

October 28<sup>th</sup> (Th):

Assigned Reading: Chapter 13: Interest Groups

**Week 12: Economic and Budgetary Policy & The Social Safety Net**

November 2<sup>nd</sup> (T):

Assigned Reading: “Chapter 15: Economic Policy” in *American Politics Today*, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition by Bianco and Canon

November 4<sup>th</sup> (Th):

Assigned Reading: “Chapter 16: Social Policy” in *American Politics Today*, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition by Bianco and Canon

**Week 13: Health Care Policy & Environmental and Energy Policy**

November 9<sup>th</sup> (T):

Assigned Reading: “Ch. 8: Health Care Policy” in *Public Policy*, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition by Kraft and Furlong

November 11<sup>th</sup> (Th): **Writing Assignment #2 Due**

Assigned Reading: “Ch. 11: Environmental and Energy Policy” in *Public Policy*, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition by Kraft and Furlong

**Week 14: Immigration Policy & Foreign Policy**

November 16<sup>th</sup> (T):

Assigned Reading: T.B.D.

November 18<sup>th</sup> (Th):

Assigned Reading: T.B.D.

**Week 15: Thanksgiving Break**

November 23<sup>rd</sup> (T): **No Class (Undergraduate Research Day)**



November 25<sup>th</sup> (Th): No Class (Thanksgiving Break)

**Week 16: Finals**

November 30<sup>th</sup> (T): Review Session (Last Day of Class)

December 2<sup>nd</sup> (Th): Finals Begin

**Week 17: Finals (Cont.)**

December 7<sup>th</sup> (T): Final Exam Period for POLS 220 is 8:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

\*Reading(s) available online

\*\*The topics, as displayed on this syllabus, serve as a general plan for the course. However, since not all classes move at the same pace, the instructor will adjust as is necessary. Irrespective of the changes in the material covered, the dates of exams and any other assignments will remain as they appear on this syllabus.