

Seminar in Political Science – POLS 4990
Spring 2012 GC 409 T 4:00 – 6:30 3 Credit Hours

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 10:00 – 11:30 TR
 or by appointment

Course Objectives

After this course students should be able to:

1. frame a research question using traditional academic methods.
2. conduct a literature review based on the research question.
3. identify and use professional journals and other publications with refereed articles to frame their research and draw conclusions.
4. analyze fundamental statistics and interpret results.

Completion of a substantial capstone paper based upon an in-depth study of a contemporary issue in political science will be required.

Course Requirements

Students are expected to conduct research and write a paper that meets publication standards for professional political science journals. Detailed information and instruction on each of the paper's components will be given in class. Each component as well as the overall paper will be graded. Students will be required to submit components in advance of the due date but cannot submit them afterward. Papers must be a minimum of fifteen pages, and must include a bibliography. Questions of style, particularly citations, must follow APA format. Final course grades will be based on process (outline and rough draft), and the final paper. Class will meet as a group for the first four weeks of the semester and as needed until the final two weeks when presentations will take place.

This course is organized according to the graduate school model of independent work between individual students and the professor. Students will choose a general topic area and address one of the questions listed for that category. Students will also be allowed to create their own subject area, with approval of the professor.

Students will be expected to prepare a 10 minute presentation of their research for the class and facilitate a discussion about it, not to exceed an additional 10 minutes.

Recommended Text

Turabian, Kate. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*. 8th ed. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2009. ISBN# 0226823377

Topic Areas and Questions

I. American Government

Ranking the American Presidents: Make a case for the five greatest, or five worst, American presidents. The student will set the criteria for measurable factors on the subject and create a clear and defensible model for presidential greatness or futility. Note that there are abundant polls by political scientists and historians on this subject, but they should only be used as a starting point.

Reforming American Presidential Elections: The president is elected through an indirect system known as the Electoral College. Suggestions have been made on reforming this system and/or replacing it with another system. The student will suggest such reforms and explain how and why they would be superior to the present system.

Direct Democracy: The American government is accurately described as an indirect democracy, a representative democracy, and a republic. All imply that America is not a direct democracy as understood by the ancient Greeks. The student will analyze the rise of aspects of direct democracy in America, and explain whether these developments should be expanded, curtailed, or somehow modified, and what effect these changes would have on the current system.

II. International Relations

The Post-Cold War World: America's victory in the Cold War also saw an end to bipolarism, a world dominated by two superpowers. There is much uncertainty over how the world and international politics will evolve, and whether these developments will result in more stability or instability. The student will analyze the nature of the emerging world community and whether there will be a place in it for superpowers.

The Bush Doctrine and the Doctrine of Preventive War: Since the time of Napoleon Bonaparte the civilized world community has endeavored to limit the justifications for war in order to limit war itself, effectively limiting just cause to self-defense following an actual attack. The Bush Doctrine of preventive war changed that paradigm. The student will study justifications for war beginning with Just War Doctrine, and analyze whether preventive war is defensible according to international law and custom, and analyze what effects it might have in upcoming years.

III. Political Thought

Political Realism and Political Idealism: Comparing Bush and Obama Foreign Policy - Foreign policy has long been a battleground between political realism and political idealism. The student will analyze foreign policy as practiced by the Bush and Obama Administrations with an eye toward these two dominant schools of thought.

Just War Doctrine and the Modern World: The concept of a “just war” has existed since at least since the time of St. Augustine. The student will analyze the roots of the “just war” doctrine, trace its development, and offer observations on its continued applicability in the modern world.

IV. Law and Policy

Poverty/Homelessness in America: Students will choose one of the two topics, either poverty or homelessness. Despite efforts to combat these problems which have involved spending trillions of dollars, these problems continue to exist. The student will analyze the causes of poverty/homelessness, analyze efforts to combat poverty/homelessness, and suggest remedies that might be more effective than those that have come before.

Health Care in America: Students will study the present state of health care in America and make recommendations for changes. Students will be expected to provide some statistical analysis, and may compare American health care with that of other countries.

V. Comparative Politics

Democratization in the Developing World: Since the end of WWII, there has been a tendency in the world toward democratic forms of government and away from authoritarian forms of government. The student will study this trend, focusing closely on three developing countries. The student will also offer observations on the benefits of democratization in the developing world.

Class Deadlines

Tuesday, January 17: All students are required to submit a proposed paper topic and an explanation of the topic of no more than a single page.

Tuesday, January 31: All students are required to have an accepted thesis proposal including a brief outline and a working bibliography, which may be expanded as needed.

Friday, March 9: An acceptable rough draft of the thesis and bibliography must be turned in. The draft will be reviewed by the professor, and necessary revisions will be recommended.

Tuesday, April 10: Theses are due in final revised form.

Tuesday, April 17 and 24: Presentations

These deadlines are extremely important. Any deviation from them must be approved by the professor. Any late assignment not approved will result in a reduction of a half grade for that assignment. Rough drafts not turned in by March 9 **will not be accepted** and an “F” will be recorded for the course. Students who do not work with their professor and then turn in a paper at the last minute will not receive a passing grade. Students are required to pass this course with a B-minus or better.

Statement on Plagiarism

Plagiarism is defined as taking from sources without giving due credit to them. It is stealing other people's thoughts, and it will not be tolerated. Credit must be given where it is due. Passing off someone else's work as your own, or the failure to cite sources properly can be construed as plagiarism. Plagiarism is the greatest of academic sins, and can result in a failing grade for a paper, of a course, and even expulsion from Southern Utah University. DON'T DO IT.



STATEMENTS REQUIRED IN COURSE SYLLABI

[Per SUU Policy 6.36](#)

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: Scholastic dishonesty will not be tolerated and will be prosecuted to the fullest extent. You are expected to have read and understood the current issue of the student handbook (published by Student Services) regarding student responsibilities and rights, and the intellectual property policy, for information about procedures and about what constitutes acceptable on-campus behavior.

ADA STATEMENT: Students with medical, psychological, learning or other disabilities desiring academic adjustments, accommodations or auxiliary aids will need to contact the Southern Utah University Coordinator of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD), in Room 206F of the Sharwan Smith Center or phone (435) 865-8022. SSD determines eligibility for and authorizes the provision of services.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT STATEMENT: In case of emergency, the University's Emergency Notification System (ENS) will be activated. Students are encouraged to maintain updated contact information using the link on the homepage of the *mySUU* portal. In addition, students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the Emergency Response Protocols posted in each classroom. Detailed information about the University's emergency management plan can be found at <http://www.suu.edu/ad/facilities/emergency-procedures.html>

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