

Political Science 352: Current Political Events

Online Course, Fall 2018, August 27th – December 20th

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Course Description

How can we make sense of today's political climate? Living in such an interesting and information-rich era can be overwhelming—this class seeks to make sense of current events, including attitudes among the public and political behavior among both the public and elites. By structuring readings and discussions around scholarly work and journal articles, I hope to guide you through the politics du jour. I hope you find it as interesting as I do!

Learning Objectives

This course applies well-established research in political science to current events. Its goal is to help illuminate the politics of the day, utilizing a broad array of research in political science and political psychology. Course requirements involve reading, writing, and online discussions, with the expectation that students apply readings to today's political climate and can discuss this with an open and eager mind.

Required Texts

Klar and Krupnikov (2016)

Mason (2017)

*Everything else will be posted on Blackboard or linked to a site in the syllabus

Grading

The setup for this course is likely different from what you typically experience in a political science course. This is for two reasons: 1) it is an online class, and 2) it is heavily focused on current events. In light of these unique circumstances, I attempted to design this course to be just as unique. The class is essentially made up of four parts: 1) **reading** of relevant articles; 2) weekly **quizzes** (to make sure you have read); 3) 1 posted **essay** (250-500 words); and 4) at least 4 discussion **comments** a week (but more will improve your grade).

For each session, I have designated a topic and relevant readings. The readings aim to improve your critical thinking (for both life and the discussion), and so these are to be read *before* writing your essay or commenting on others' essays. For that reason, I give you 3 days each week to do the readings and take the quiz—**after that**, the posted essays and discussion begin.

These essays are meant to integrate the readings and evoke a thoughtful discussion. For that reason, in your essay you must reference the specific articles as well as the current political climate—the more references to these concrete items, the better. **If even one of these is missing (e.g., you talk about the current political climate with no reference to the week's readings), the essay will be graded as zero.**

These essays must be between 250 and 500 words. This is because the class' success (as well as your success in the class) is dependent on dense discussion—and this will be curtailed by long or

rambling thoughts. This exercise—of translating your ideas into clear and succinct pieces—is also helpful for your general success in life. The ability to translate your own ideas into clear and interesting thoughts on paper (or in person) is vital in today’s complex and busy world. Learning to be efficient, clear, and thought-provoking with your words, as well as to keep an open mind to alternative perspectives, is an immensely desirable ability.

For these reasons, the required essay comments also have a very strict 50-word limit. Again, this is not only to help keep your ideas clear and succinct, but also to aid in discussion. Lengthy posts with lengthy comments discourage a fruitful discussion, and that would undermine the course’s objectives.

In sum, each session you are required to: read, answer the weekly quiz (by the date noted), if you are one of the essay writers of the week—post your essay (by the date noted), and comment at least 4 comments in the essay posts. The more comments in a variety of discussion posts the better—simply meeting the minimum will not help your grade). The goal of these posts is to *think* and *discuss*, not to argue. **If I sense animosity or an unfruitful discussion, I will redirect the topic and require all current discussion ceased.** The more I see you integrating readings and others’ comments, the better your grade will be, so please put great thought into your essays and comments (simply writing something is worth very little—it needs to be interesting and thoughtful).

That said, the grade will be comprised of: **48% for quizzes** (3% a quiz), **20% for essay**, and **32% for comments** (2% a week).

Final Grading Scheme:

93.5 – 100%	A
89.5 – 93.4	A-
86.5 – 89.4	B+
83.5 – 86.4	B
79.5 – 83.4	B-
76.5 – 79.4	C+
73.5 – 76.4	C
69.5 – 73.4	C-
66.5 – 69.4	D+
59.5 – 66.4	D
0 - 59.4	F

Course Requirements

This is an online course and therefore there will be no face-to-face class sessions. All assignments and course interactions will utilize internet technologies. Therefore, this course requires you to have access to a computer that can access the internet. You are responsible for having both a reliable computer and reliable internet connection throughout the course. You will need to have access to, and be able to use, the following software packages:

- A web browser (e.g., Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox, Safari)
- Adobe Acrobat Reader (free)

Email and Internet

You also must have an active Stony Brook University email account. *All instructor correspondence will be sent to your SBU email account.* Please plan on checking your SBU email account regularly for course related messages. This course also uses Blackboard for the facilitation of communications between faculty and students, submission of assignments, and posting of grades. The Blackboard course site can be accessed at <https://blackboard.stonybrook.edu>.

Campus Network or Blackboard Outage

When access to Blackboard is not available for an extended period of time (greater than one entire evening—6pm until 11pm) you can reasonably expect that the due date for assignments will be changed to the next day (with the assignments still due at midnight).

Attendance/Participation

Preparation for class means reading the assigned readings and reviewing all information required for each class session. Attendance in an online course means logging into Blackboard on a regular basis and participating in all discussion sessions.

Studying and Preparation Time

This course requires you to spend time preparing and completing assignments. A three-credit course typically requires 135 hours of student work. While this exact number of hours might not be necessary for everyone, you should expect to spend a significant amount of time working on the material and actively participating throughout the course.

Submitting Assignments

All assignments **MUST** be submitted via Blackboard. Each assignment will have a designated place to submit the assignment.

Drop and Add Dates

If you feel it is necessary to withdraw from the course, please see <http://www.stonybrook.edu/registrar/calendar-academic.shtml> for full details.

Subject to Change Notice

All material, assignments, and due dates are subject to change (with prior notice of course). It is your responsibility to review the course site regularly to stay up to date on any potential changes.

Disability Support Services (DSS) Statement

If you have a physical, psychological, medical, or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact Disability Support Services (631) 632-6748 or <http://studentaffairs.stonybrook.edu/dss/>. They will determine with you what accommodations are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential. Students who require assistance during emergency evacuation are encouraged to discuss their needs with their professors and Disability Support Services. For procedures and information go to the following website: <http://www.stonybrook.edu/ehs/fire/disabilities/asp>.

Academic Integrity Statement

Each student must pursue his or her academic goals honestly and be personally accountable for all submitted work. Representing another person's work as your own is always wrong. Faculty are required to report any suspected instance of academic dishonesty to the Academic Judiciary. For more comprehensive information on academic integrity, including categories of academic dishonesty, please refer to the academic judiciary website at <http://www.stonybrook.edu/uaa/academicjudiciary/>

Critical Incident Statement

Stony Brook University expects students to respect the rights, privileges, and property of other people. Faculty are required to report to the Office of Judicial Affairs any disruptive behavior that interrupts their ability to teach, compromises the safety of the learning environment, and/or inhibits students' ability to learn.

Schedule

Session 1: August 27th – September 2nd

Ideology, Authoritarianism, & Populism

1. Wolfe (2005). “‘The Authoritarian Personality’ Revisited.” *Chronicle of Higher Education*.
2. Taub (2016). “The Rise of American Authoritarianism.” *Vox*.
3. Oliver and Rahn (2016).
4. Conover and Feldman (1981), *skim*

August 27th: Read & Quiz (due by 8am August 30th)

August 30th: Essays by Brohan, Yu, Strominger

August 30th– September 2nd: Discussion Comments

Session 2: September 5th – September 9th

The Political Brain, Emotions, & Genes I

1. Mooney (2012). “Inside the Political Brain.” *The Atlantic*.
2. Bartels (2013). “Your Genes Influence Your Political Views. So What?” *Washington Post*.
3. Jost et al. (2003), *skim*
4. Marcus and MacKuen (1993), *skim*

September 3rd: Read & Quiz (due by 8am September 6th)

September 6th: Essays by Delaney, Corcione, Kobrin

September 6th– 9th: Discussion Comments

Session 3: September 10th – September 16th

The Political Brain, Emotions, & Genes II

1. Mooney (2011). “The Science of Why We Don't Believe Science.” *Mother Jones*.
2. Anson (2016). “Why Republicans and Democrats Can't Agree on Basic Economic Facts.” *New Republic*.
3. Taub (2017). “Why Americans Vote 'Against Their Interest': Partisanship.” *New York Times*.
4. Brader (2005), *skim*

September 10th: Read & Quiz (due by 8am September 13th)

September 13th: Essays by Burford, Siegler, Dovi

September 13th– 16th: Discussion Comments

Session 4: September 17th – September 23rd

Implicit Bias in Politics

1. Saletan (2016). “Implicit Bias Is Real. Don't Be So Defensive.” *Slate*.
2. Taber and Lodge (2006), *skim*
3. Nyhan and Reifler (2010), *skim*
4. Flynn et al. (2017), *skim*

September 17th: Read & Quiz (due by 8am September 20th)

September 20th: Essays by Gonzalez, Carbone, Ka

September 20th– 23rd: Discussion Comments

Session 5: September 24th – September 30th

Political Knowledge (or lack thereof)

1. Gass (2015). “Americans Bomb Pew Test of Basic Political Knowledge.” *Politico*.

2. Lupia (1994), *skim*
3. Kuklinski et al. (2000), *skim*
4. Mondak and Anderson (2004), *skim*

September 24th: Read & Quiz (due by 8am September 27th)

September 27th: Essays by Swezey, Han, Erickson

September 27th – 30th: Discussion Comments

Session 6: October 1st – October 7th

Political Polarization I

1. Roberts (2016). “Partisan Polarization on Climate Change is Worse Than Ever.” *Vox*.
2. Lazaro (2016). “Urban and Rural America Are Becoming Increasingly Polarized.” *Washington Post*.
3. Huddy et al. (2015), *skim*
4. Iyengar and Westwood (2015), *skim*

October 1st: Read & Quiz (due by 8am October 4th)

October 4th: Essays by Gifford, Reitz, Walker, Szegda

October 4th – 7th: Discussion Comments

Session 7: October 8th – October 14th

Political Polarization II

1. ENTIRE BOOK: Mason (2017). *Uncivil Agreement: How Politics Became Our Identity*.

October 8th: Read & Quiz (due by 8am October 11th)

October 11th: Essays by Dove, Levy, Butt, Gerstner

October 11th – 14th: Discussion Comments

Session 8: October 15th – October 21st

Political Withdrawal I

1. Connors, Klar, and Krupnikov (2016). “There May Have Been Shy Trump Supporters After All.” *Washington Post*.
2. Abramson et al. (1995), *skim*
3. Klar (2014), *skim*
4. Klar, Krupnikov, and Ryan (2017), *skim*

October 15th: Read & Quiz (due by 8am October 18th)

October 18th: Essays by Spada, Catalanotto, Masselli, Kucuk

October 18th – 21st: Discussion Comments

Session 9: October 22nd – October 28th

Political Withdrawal II

1. ENTIRE BOOK: Klar and Krupnikov (2016). *Independent Politics: How American Disdain for Parties Leads to Political Inaction*.

October 22nd: Read & Quiz (due by 8am October 25th)

October 25th: Essays by Nardelli, McDuffee, Baker-Porazinski, Quinteros

October 25th – 28th: Discussion Comments

Session 10: October 29th – November 4th

Race & Prejudice in Politics

1. Enders and Smallpage (2016). "Racial Prejudice, not Populism or Authoritarianism, Predicts Support for Trump over Clinton." *Washington Post*.
2. Sanchez and Barreto (2016). "In Record Numbers, Latinos Voted Overwhelmingly against Trump: We Did the Research." *Washington Post*.
3. Tesler (2016). "Views About Race Mattered More in Electing Trump Than in Electing Obama." *The Washington Post*.
4. Huddy et al. (2005), *skim*

October 29th: Read & Quiz (due by 8am November 1st)

November 1st: Essays by Chan, Chowdhury, Rappold, Kazakov

November 1st – 4th: Discussion Comments

Session 11: November 5th – November 11th

Political Threat & Anxiety

1. Graham (2016). "Unhappiness in America." *Brookings Institute*.
2. Kilibarda and Roithmayr (2016). "The Myth of the Rust Belt Revolt." *Slate*.
3. Cherlin (2016). "The Downwardly Mobile for Trump." *New York Times*.
4. Dunwoody and McFarland (2017), *skim*

November 5th: Read & Quiz (due by 8am November 8th)

November 8th: Essays by Taveras, Sacca, Depalma, Brennan

November 8th – 11th: Discussion Comments

Session 12: November 12th – November 18th

Elites, Political Rhetoric, & the Media

1. Krogstad et al. (2016). "5 Facts about Illegal Immigration in the US." *Pew Research Center*.
2. Chong and Druckman (2007), *skim*
3. Turner (2007), *skim*

November 12th: Read & Quiz (due by 8am November 15th)

November 15th: Essays by Vescio, Palmer, Cabral, Talati

November 15th – 18th: Discussion Comments

Session 13: November 19th – November 25th

No Assignments (Enjoy your Thanksgiving Break!)

Session 14: November 26th – December 2nd

The Media

1. Ladd (2012). *Why Americans Hate the Media and How It Matters* [select chapters].
2. Soroka (2018). Chapter from: *Words that Matter: How the News and Social Media Shaped the 2016 Presidential Campaign*.

November 26th: Read & Quiz (due by 8am November 29th)

November 29th: Essays by Rivas, Rahman, Yanza, Frost

November 29th – December 2nd: Discussion Comments

Session 15: December 3rd – December 9th

Social Influence & Politics

1. Settle (2018). *Frenemies: How Social Media Polarizes America* [select chapters].
2. Connors (working paper), *skim*

December 3rd: Read & Quiz (due by 8am December 6th)

December 6th: Essays by Amendola, Liebegott, Dempsey, Ulrich

December 6th – 9th: Discussion Comments

Session 16: December 10th – December 16th

Fake News

1. Pew Research (2016). “Many Americans Believe Fake News Is Sowing Confusion.”
2. Soll (2016). “The Long and Brutal History of Fake News.” *Politico*.
3. Maheshwari (2016). “How Fake News Goes Viral: A Case Study.” *New York Times*.

December 10th: Read & Quiz (due by 8am December 13th)

December 13th: Essays by Greenseich, Lawrence-Jolly, Bae, Cho

December 13th – 16th: Discussion Comments