

Class Policies and Information

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This document contains important information you will need for this semester in my class(es). It is to be considered part of your official course syllabus, and unless otherwise announced in class, all rules noted below are applicable to all students. Please read it carefully. If you have any questions or comments, please raise them ASAP.

1. Academic Honesty/The Honor Code

All students in my classes at this institution are expected to abide by its Code of Student Conduct and/or Honor Code at all times. In summary, this means that you are expected to conduct yourself so that you avoid committing any form of academic dishonesty, and preferably not getting into a situation that so much as suggests you might be complicit in academic dishonesty.

Perhaps the most common forms of academic dishonesty I've come across in past years are *plagiarism* and *unauthorized collaboration*. Let me clarify both, so that you do not unwittingly go astray. **Plagiarism** is the appropriation of the words, works, comments, ideas or other intellectual property of a third party without giving credit to that party. It most often occurs in term papers and other written assignments. Plagiarism does not have to be a word-for-word "copying" of someone else's writing; most cases, in fact, involve the use of a third party's idea in the writer's own words, where an effort has been made to make the reader believe that the idea originated with the writer him or herself. There are two important rules to remember in order to avoid plagiarism: (1) only "common knowledge" statements need not be cited in your written work (Washington was the first president, the Civil War ended in 1865, the FBI is in the Justice Department, etc.), and (2) if in doubt as to whether to cite a source in a specific circumstance, better safe than sorry-- ***cite it!*** If you have any further questions about plagiarism, please ask me immediately as the questions occur to you.

As for collaboration on assignments, keep the following rules in mind: (1) unless specifically authorized by me, you are not to seek, provide or in any way accept outside assistance from a third party in preparing graded assignments in my classes. This rule does not apply to studying for objective in-class exams, which you may do in groups; it is also not to be construed to deny you the assistance of library staff in finding research materials in the library (finding, not reading or interpreting, which you must do on your own!). (2) You may not turn in any work for grading in this class that is wholly or substantially the product of work submitted for a grade in another class, nor may you turn in such work in another class that is the product of work for this class without prior permission from me and the other instructor(s) involved. (3) At no time during exams or other in-class assignments to be submitted for a grade are you allowed to use notes or other outside materials for completion of these assignments unless specifically authorized to do so by me in advance. (4) You must take exams and other assigned in-class work with a vow of confidentiality-- you will not at any time discuss or divulge the material contained on such assignments with any other person for any reason until such time as grades are posted for the assignment. (5) When preparing work to turn in for a grade using a computer (such as for a term paper or data collection assignment), you must take care not to allow any other member of the class to "look over your shoulder" or in any other way to benefit from your efforts-- this includes ensuring that upon completion of your work, you remove the file from the computer's hard drive (although it's recommended you save it to removable media for your own records) and completely remove your work from the computer's memory before releasing the machine for another person's use.

Let me be clear about this point— I have a zero-tolerance policy for cheaters, and will ensure that anyone caught engaging in dishonest behavior receives the appropriate punishment and/or reporting to university authorities. In most cases, cheating on one of my class assignments will earn you an automatic "F" in the course at the very least.

2. Due Dates for Assignments, Penalties & Makeup Assignments

Last topic first: I do not give makeup assignments, including exams, except in documentable cases of emergency, illness or authorized campus leave. I reserve the right to compose makeup assignments that cover the scheduled material in *any form*, including (for example) an essay or reading assignment in lieu of an objective exam. Unless you have my prior permission to do so, you will not be allowed to take an exam in another section of the same class (if I teach another section of it this semester)-- this goes doubly for the final. You are to review the final exam schedule as soon as it is announced early in the semester; if you cannot make it due to personal circumstances, drop the class. I will not give permission for you to reschedule the final exam or take it with another section except in cases of dire emergency (which does not include "my family is going to Austria on the 3rd, and our exam is scheduled for the 4th").

As for due dates and times, the rule is similarly simple-- when due dates are given in class, the assignment is due on that date, no later than the ending time for that class. If you're so much as one minute late with it, it will be considered a day late. Then, for each 24-hour period after that time, additional day-late penalties apply. The standard penalty for late assignments is 10 points per day late, up to a maximum of 3 days (30 points). I reserve the right to refuse any assignment turned in more than three days late. In extraordinary cases, I also reserve the right to waive all or part of the late penalty to be assessed against any given submission. Point penalties may be assessed against any assignment which is submitted with technical errors-- including, but not limited to, lack of required information (your name/ID number), failure to follow assignment directions, failure to follow appropriate format, and so forth. Generally, these penalties are assessed at the rate of three points per infraction, but may be greater or less, depending on the nature of the infraction. One other policy of which you should take note: any student who has not taken ALL major exams and (where applicable) turned in the class' major writing assignment (term paper) for a grade by the end of the semester will AUTOMATICALLY RECEIVE A GRADE OF "F" for the course, regardless of the numerical average of his or her other assignment scores. You MUST COMPLETE all major assignments in the course and have a score recorded by the instructor for them. If you have any questions about what constitutes the "major assignments" in the course you are currently taking, please ask me at your earliest convenience.

3. Your Class ID Number

You have been assigned, by university authorities, a student identification number which should be random and confidential; it is NOT your Social Security number. Please ensure that you commit this number to memory and/or have your ID card available to reference when you turn in subjective-matter assignments (e.g. virtually anything you've written, as opposed to multiple-choice tests and other matter where an answer is clearly right or wrong without any interpretation or intensive reading needed). As a matter of course policy, I regularly require that on subjective assignments, ONLY your ID number appear on the cover (that is, without your name) and then that it appear again along with your name on the inside back cover of your paper, report or other submission. This is designed to protect your anonymity during the grading process, and as an extra bit of protection to ensure you that your work is being graded solely on the merit of your labor.

4. Getting Help

The university is blessed with some remarkable resources for assisting students, including writing tutoring, subject tutoring, library reference support and so forth. I recommend you make an effort to familiarize yourself with these resources early in the semester if you haven't already done so. Please consider me, as your professor, the linchpin in that chain of assistance however; if you need to talk to me in depth about the course subject matter or another issue for which you believe I could be of assistance, drop by my office during office hours or make an appointment to see me outside of them if they're not convenient for you. You may also call my office phone at any time, keeping in mind that I may not be in when you call or I

may not be able to speak to you if someone's in the office with me at that time. "In person" trumps "on the phone" in my visitation priorities! Please also note that because I have a large number of students with which to keep up, I cannot guarantee to return telephone messages in a particularly timely manner. If the purpose of your call is anything other than an absolute emergency, it's probably best to email me instead. I try to reply to all student email within 8-12 hours where possible.

Don't be shy about coming by the office or emailing me with any issue (course-related or not) that may be picking at your brain, however; I think many students are often worried that they'll get their head bitten off if they drop by or email to ask a question not related to class, or to request a letter of recommendation, or just to check in to say "hi." Trust me— that's perfectly OK in my book!!!

5. Written Assignments

Learning an appropriate and accepted technical style for writing formal papers is part of the experience of becoming an educated person. All papers submitted to me for a grade, unless specifically authorized to the contrary, must follow the rules of citation, content and form provided in the American Political Science Association's **Style Manual for Political Science**. Copies of this guide are available through the APSA; an even cheaper way to learn this style (here's an ole graduate school trick) is to read through copies of leading journals like the **American Political Science Review** or the **Journal of Politics** and see how published scholars in political science format and cite sources in their own papers! I know that many undergraduate students have not been exposed to APSA style before; as such, if you have a question about how to handle something you want to do in your written assignments, please ask me well ahead of the due date for tips on how to do it properly. It is very similar in form to Turabian's Style Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations, however, so if you know Turabian, you're in clear waters.

Here are some special rules to keep in mind: (a) Papers must be typed in a 12-point font and double-spaced, with pages properly numbered in the upper right hand corner. (b) You do not need to include an abstract of any paper submitted, but you should title it, provide a section identifier and provide your class ID number only (no names) on the cover page. On the inside back cover of your submission, you should write your ID number again, followed by your first and last names. (c) Your paper **must be stapled or paper-clipped** (and boy, if you want to see me go into low earth orbit, I **dare** you to bring an unfastened paper up to me and ask "got a staple?"); failure to fasten your paper properly results in an automatic 5 point penalty. Save yourself some cash and don't worry about putting it in a fancy bookstore binder of any sort-- they get in the way of grading, and there's no guarantee you'll get it back if I strip it off to read your work. (d) Pages in your paper should have a 1 inch margin on all sides, except for the first page, which should have a 1.5 inch top margin. (e) You should not use full justification when typing your paper, only left-margin justification; in other words, leave the right margin "jagged." Please do not hyphenate words at the end of lines; use word wrap on your word processor instead.

IMPORTANT: The last time I checked, they still expected English to be the official language of instruction in this class. As such-- in *all* written work-- grammar, punctuation, syntax, style and all the other rules of proper written English do count as a component of a properly-written paper, and errors of these types will lower a paper grade to some degree (depending on the nature and frequency of the errors). If you think or know you may have a problem with your English skills, therefore (and here's something else I can't ever urge strongly enough, despite the fact that many students won't heed the advice and will have a nasty wake-up call after their first submitted paper), I advise you to seek the assistance of a writing tutor as early in the semester as possible. I further advise you to take responsibility for improving your writing as long as you believe you need to do so. Please don't gripe about this; keep in mind that you're allegedly here to educate yourself, and I'm allegedly here to help you do so. I can't do my job in this respect unless you're willing to do yours. If you have further questions about style, submission requirements, or how to do your papers properly otherwise, please just ask.

6. The Learning Environment

Take this to heart from the first day we meet as a class-- there is no such thing as a "stupid question " in this class (except, maybe, for asking about the Braves' pennant chances while the rest of us are talking about how a bill becomes a law). Asking questions and raising issues is the way all human beings learn, and I expect us all to act as learning adults who have enough respect for each other to entertain a diversity of questions, comments and points of view. To this extent, the walls of this classroom during our meeting times mark the boundaries of an inviolable intellectual haven-- you should at all times feel safe and comfortable to participate as you see fit in the goings-on of class. If for some reason you do not, you should see me confidentially at your convenience to discuss how we might rectify the problem.

One last thing about getting assistance: Don't be afraid to see me about things that pop up in your mind, and if criticize your work for some reason (as doubtless I will at some point), take it as constructive criticism-- not as a personal attack on your intelligence or honor! Some students hold a bizarre belief that just because they did poorly on an assignment or didn't convince the professor to do so-and-so on such-and-such an assignment, that they are somehow marked for discrimination, or hated by the professor, or the professor and classmates think they're stupid, etc. Doubtless there are some professors in American universities who take such things personally; lucky for both of us, I'm not one of them.

Please maintain proper decorum in class, including the courtesy of being seated and quiet for roll call (where applicable). **All electronic devices, including cell phones, iPods, etc., should be turned off at the beginning of class**; I become a grumpy boy when someone's phone rings in the middle of my lecture! The "electronic devices" policy doesn't include laptop computers, if you prefer to take notes that way; please note however that if you're ever caught with ANYTHING running on it except a word processor during class time, I will ban it for the remainder of the semester and insist that you take pen-and-paper notes instead! **Remember that it is usually highly distracting to the people around you to concentrate on class while you're browsing ESPN.com or checking email during class time.** This is inconsiderate of your peers, and their tuition money is just as green as yours.

A special note about class handouts— if I give you something in class, you are expected to read it, keep it safe and hang on to it for the remainder of the semester! Extra copies may not be available at a later date, and you are to consider all handouts as "testable material" unless otherwise instructed. As for materials you are assigned to retrieve (via the library or online, etc.), you will be given retrieval instructions when the materials are assigned. You will be presumed to have successfully gotten a copy of the materials by the time of the next class meeting, and will be further presumed to be treating it like a standard class handout— *read, keep safe, keep for rest of semester.*

7. Attendance

In classes where the university requires the taking of attendance rolls, rolls will be taken. Usually this will consist of passing a "roll sheet" around for your signature. Please sign it with your full regular name, in your normal handwriting. **Do not sign the roll for anyone else** (and be advised that I used to do handwriting analysis as part of a law enforcement job I had!)—anyone caught doing so will be ejected from the class and/or given an "F" for the semester on grounds of academic dishonesty (see above).

Except in extraordinary circumstances, such as prolonged illness for which you have a note from your academic advisor or Dean, please note that you do not have to provide me with excuses for a class that you have missed; there are no "excused" vs. "unexcused" absences in this course. There are simply "absences" and "being present!" Students absent from two weeks or more worth of class for the entire semester (for MWF classes, this means six absences; for T/Th classes, it means four absences) are subject to university and/or departmental discipline for absenteeism. This may include being dropped from the class. I highly recommend, on those days when the "playing hooky bug" might be whispering in your ear, that you err on the side of caution and save your absences for their potential use for a real illness or personal emergency later in the term. That's the way "leave time" works in most of the real world, too!!

8. Philosophy of Grading

This probably sounds a lot deeper than it really is, but it's designed to get you to understand how I approach the task of grading in my classes. In those rare cases where students have come to me with grade appeals on specific assignments, something like this usually happens: they make a 79, they think they deserve 100 (don't we all?), they come and ask "why did I get 21 points taken off this assignment?" My response is "why do you think you started off with 100 points, and they were yours to lose?" Presumably, along their line of reasoning, if the student didn't even turn in the assignment, they would get 100 points on it, having not written anything to "lose" their precious 100.

The old meanings for each of the basic letter grades that we all learned in grade school are the basic categorizations I use when assigning scores (A= excellent, B=above average, C=average, D=below average, F=failure). As a baseline, I use the "average" category, figuring out for any given assignment what constitutes a reasonable expectation and effort for a student at that level of college course in the way of answers. Then, I typically read essay answers or papers with that guideline in mind. If you meet the guideline, you'll probably get something in the 70s, the numerical equivalent of a "C," which in turn is the letter equivalent of "average." Do better than average, and you'll get a score in the 80s or higher; do worse than that, and you'll get something in the 60s or below. There's good news and bad news here: the good news is that in order to prove to me that you deserve to fail an assignment, you really have to go above and beyond the call to screw things up. None of my former students, to my knowledge, have "accidentally" failed; the ones that flunked really worked at it (not turning in assignments, turning in sheer crap written hectically an hour before it was due, etc.). The bad news is that just as I consider an "F" a special category, reserved only for special circumstances, so, too, this is true with an "A." Very few students, to my knowledge, can regularly live up to the high standards required to be called clearly excellent. This doesn't mean it's impossible-- I never have and never will have any sort of quota system for the assignment of grades. It just means that you really have to know your stuff and impress me with it to make it to "A"-land. I have to have a high standard for them so that the people who earn an "A" out of me know that it means something truly special. So I won't stand in your way-- you can earn an A, an F, or anything in between. If you're going to shoot for a specific grade, however, it might be a good idea to go for the A! ! !

A brief description of criteria for each grade is as follows. Please note that these criteria apply only to written assignments, such as term papers, short essays and the like; on objective assignments, the grade you get is wholly dependent (naturally) on how many questions you get right or wrong:

A (excellent, 90-100): few or no technical errors, and student has meticulously followed all rules regarding identification of issues, formatting and presentation of writing. Questions are answered in a straightforward manner with little superfluous commentary, and the student makes an effort to show a "synthesis of ideas or points," flowing smoothly (while showing relevance) from point to point. Sources used to write the work display a superior ability to identify, find and consume important readings available at the library. The reader is left with no question as to what the work was about, how it was executed by the author, or the resolution to which the author came about issues or problems in his or her essay.

B (above average, 80-89): few technical errors, student has followed all or most of the rules regarding ID, formatting and presentation of writing. Questions are answered in a straightforward manner. With perhaps limited and minor exception, the author flows well from point to point in the essay. Sources used show a mature ability to identify, find and consume important library readings. The reader has few, if any, minor questions about the processes or institutions noted in the essay.

C (average, 70-79): the odd technical error may be present, but generally, grammar, syntax and construction are clear and readable. Essay format is mostly correct, and any errors may be fairly attributed to oversight. All of the major points of the question or issue are described adequately, displaying a decent basic knowledge of what's going on, but the author has not made a noticeable attempt to "dig deeper" into the subject matter than what was necessary to complete the assignment at a basic level. The author flows reasonably well from point to point, and leaves the reader with only minor substantive questions. No

question exists as to the author's ability to make some reasonably informed commentary about the subject matter.

D (below average, 60-69): technical errors, whether due to negligence or ignorance of the rules, are relatively common and detract somewhat from the reader's ability to consume the intellectual content of the paper. Format, syntax, spelling, grammar, etc. may be confused and/or improper throughout the work. While some relevant points are made about the subject matter, by and large they are poorly cited or explained, and leave the reader with some major questions that remain unanswered by the author. The essay may have been rushed, and while the author may occasionally show that he or she has learned the odd bit of trivia, no clear evidence exists that a synthesis of ideas or understanding of themes has taken place.

F (failure, 59 or below): technical or formatting errors are the rule throughout the paper rather than the exception; spelling, syntax and grammar are in serious need of immediate attention. The reader is left almost completely in the dark about the significance of any points brought up in the essay. Flow and/or thematic development are extremely choppy; the paper may bounce almost randomly from point to point, desperately flailing for an answer to give to the reader. Few or no outside sources are used; paper may be overly-opinionated or overtly biased in presentation of answers. An "F" means you need to take a long, hard look at your research and writing abilities as soon as you possibly can.

Translation of these standards is relatively easy for final course grading purposes; without artificial curving, my experience is that most ordinary college students wind up as a result of their own commitment to my course in B and C territory. A "C" grade indicates that you have performed adequately in mastering the course material, and have indeed performed at a level that is best described as what the "average college student" should achieve in (or substantively get out of) the class. A "B" grade indicates that you are above average in demonstrating mastery of the material, which is a noteworthy achievement. "A" grades are generally earned by a select few students who have demonstrated nothing short of a remarkable commitment to mastery of the course material and an ability to express that knowledge clearly and powerfully in graded assignments. "D" grades, of course, mean that the student was a little below average expectations in accomplishing this learning, while "F" grades indicate virtually no demonstrably meaningful achievement in acquiring or understanding the major issues presented throughout the semester. Please remember, however, that *I do not curve grades or grade with a "grade quota" at any time*—never have, never will. If everyone in a 40-student course earns A and B marks, I'll be overjoyed (as they will too, I'm sure)!!!

9. Who I Am and What I Do

Just as I would hope you wouldn't let someone without an M.D. perform brain surgery on you, so too the same general idea should hold true with your education. You have a right to know certain biographical information about me, which is contained in this section.

I'm a native of Baton Rouge, Louisiana. I hold a J.D. with Honors from the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Law (2005), a Ph.D. from the University of Georgia (1993, Political Science), an M.A. from Mississippi State University (1987, Political Science) and a B.A. from Louisiana State University (1986, Political Science w/a minor in Philosophy). I have been teaching Political Science at the university level since 1987, primarily in American Government (Governmental Institutions), Southern Politics and Constitutional/Public Law. In previous mini-careers, I was a sheriff's deputy, political consultant, radio personality and state-level bureaucrat. I have been active in animal welfare and rescue efforts for a number of years in the Triangle, and am an avowed "nutty cat person." I operate an internet radio station called *Planet Zeb!* that has become pretty successful, and fiddling with it is my primary source of entertainment in my rare spurts of free time. I grew up in a university environment (both parents worked at LSU), and am overjoyed to be in the classroom with students every chance I get to do so. I have previously been on the faculties of Louisiana State University, Vanderbilt University and The Citadel, and currently teach full-time at NCCU with adjunct responsibilities at NC State. I'm a fencer, as well, though as far as sports-following

goes, college football is the only game that matters (just my luck to wind up in NC, basketball capital of the world). The only teams that should ever win a national championship besides LSU and Georgia are NCCU and NC State (I'm nothing if not loyal! Grin).

10. The Grand Disclaimer

This document is designed to give you in-depth information that will help you in class and direct your attention to compliance with certain rules. The absence of mention of any rule or policy in this document is not to be construed as meaning such rule or policy does not exist. You are expected to apply common sense and a reasonable understanding of traditional student practices at the university level, particularly insofar as what would be the “right,” “honest” or “proper” practice, if and when you must imply or interpret rules that govern any particular situation not covered by course documents. If in doubt about a situation, *please ask me for clarification*. Then, it's just a matter of remembering that the university considers you an engaged, honest, mature learning adult—and therefore you have an interest in ensuring that you act like one at all times!