

Political Science 358: Political Strategy

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Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 1-2 and by appointment

**Description**

The objective of this course is to provide a general overview of strategic behavior in politics. In one sense, this is a “how-to” course that covers a broad range of political activities, but the primary objective is to link practical issues with theories of politics in order to help you understand why events happen the way they do. The focus of the course will be on strategy in American politics, but the general concepts and methods will be applicable to a wide range of situations. Also note that the approach of this course is completely divorced from all normative concerns: for the purposes of this course, “good” and “evil” do not exist-- only success or failure. Readings will range from classics like Machiavelli’s The Prince to modern studies of Congress, the Presidency and interest groups.

**Requirements**

This course will cover one book per week. Most of these books use a series of narratives in order to make their points, but a few are long, and a few are difficult. However, at the end of each topic, I will give you some direction about the next week’s discussion in order to guide your reading, which should improve the quality of our discussions and make your lives a bit easier. I expect you to do the readings, and 25% of your course grade will be based on participation in class discussions.

This is a seminar. I expect everybody to participate. When students are conspicuously silent, I will call on them to discuss the readings. When discussion falters at other times, I may roll a die to select a student to revive the proceedings.

Friday sessions will be based around student presentations. Beginning on 2/3, Friday sessions will proceed as follows. First, at least one student will make a roughly 10 minute presentation. Consider the following suggestions for the direction your presentations may take: 1) Provide additional comments supporting an important claim from the week’s course materials. 2) Provide a *counterargument* to an important claim from the week’s course materials. 3) Provide either modern or historical context to understand some aspect of the week’s materials. These are merely broad suggestions, though, and as long as a presentation is directly related to the topic of the week and makes a coherent point, that will be fine. Please look over the syllabus and decide which topics are of most interest to you. Each student will make 3 presentations throughout the semester, and students will sign up for dates in advance. Presentations will be factored into course participation grades.

The remaining 75% will be based on a series of three papers (25% each). Each paper will be a critique of a political figure’s behavior in a specific instance *within the previous month*. Each paper will have two sections: (1) a brief summary of what the political figure did, and (2) an

argument about whether or not the figure's tactics were appropriate, and why. At some point in this second section, you must apply concepts from the course. The first section can be as long as is necessary. The second section must be no longer than 1000 words.

These papers will be due on 2/27, 3/31 and 5/1, at the *beginning* of class.

### **Attendance**

Attendance is required. You may miss three sessions. Each absence beyond that will result in a three percentage point deduction from your course grade. Exceptions will only be granted under extraordinary circumstances. To be clear, you do not have three excused absences plus however many doctors' notes you can get. You have three excused absences total, so it would be best to save them for when you are ill. Please contact me as soon as possible if you have an extended bout of serious illness. Attendance and participation are critical.

You are also expected to show up on time. I find it distracting and disrespectful when students walk in after class has begun. You may show up late once during the semester. Each time you show up late beyond that, one percentage point will be deducted from your course grade. The objective is not to punish you for being late. The objective is to get you to show up on time. If you have a class on the other side of campus just before our class, you need to speak with me about it at the beginning of the semester.

### **Classroom rules**

1: Check your ideology at the door. The classroom is not the place to preach. It is a place to keep an open mind.

2: Be respectful. Show up on time, pay attention, participate, and TURN OFF YOUR CELL PHONES/IPHONES/BLACKBERRIES/OTHER GIZMOS. Laptops, however, are welcome, with the caveat that an open laptop may be commandeered by me at any time since its presence indicates an open-ended offer to look up anything I need looked up at any time. If you fall asleep in class, five percentage points will be deducted from your course grade. You don't get any free passes on this. Drinking heavily caffeinated beverages during class is perfectly acceptable. (I can't teach an early class without coffee). If you don't think you can stay awake, it is also acceptable to say you aren't feeling well, and ask to be excused. Doing so will not count against your permitted absences.

### **Guidelines for all written assignments**

Short papers due mid-semester:

Except in the case of hospitalization or similarly severe documentable crises, late papers will not be accepted. If you are dissatisfied with the level of work that you have ready by the deadline, you may hand in what you have, and conclude with the following line: "I can write a better paper than this." The paper you hand in must be at least recognizable as a draft that covers the basic requirements of the assignment. You then have 48 hours to submit an improved version. I will then assign a grade that includes half of the improvement. For example, suppose you have an exam in another class on the same day the paper is due. The exam in the other class is worth 30% of that course grade, and the paper is worth 20% of the grade in this class, so you decide to spend more time studying for the exam. As a result, you can only hand in a half-assed rough

draft deserving of a C. You hand in that draft with the line, “I can write a better paper than this.” Within 48 hours, you hand in an A-level paper once your exam is out of the way. I will record your grade as a B. Using this option requires handing in a recognizable rough draft on time, and obeying the 48 hour subsequent deadline. If you have nothing to hand in by the initial deadline, you may not submit a late paper, except as mentioned in extreme cases such as hospitalization.

Term papers, research papers or other projects due at the end of the semester:  
Late work will not be accepted unless, as above, the reason is something on the order of hospitalization or other documentable crisis that suggests taking an “Incomplete” in the course.

Regarding computer problems, follow this simple trick: every time you take a break (I do so about once per hour when in heavy writing mode), email a current copy of your assignment to yourself. If you send an email from your Case account to your Case account, the email won't show up in your inbox, but will be saved as a sent message. Personally, I email documents from my Case account to an old Yahoo account, thus saving two extra copies of the document every time I take a break. I cannot lose more than an hour's worth of work, and no computer problem short of an EMP will ever cause me to miss a deadline. You can do the same, and it is your responsibility to do so.

All assignments must be printed out and stapled. There must be a cover page, and while your name should appear on the cover page, it should not appear on any other page. This will facilitate blind grading. Any assignment that does not meet these guidelines will not be accepted. If you are worried about the consequences a last minute printer glitch at the computer lab, or an inability to find a stapler at the last minute etc., then my advice is simple. Don't wait until the last minute.

All academic honesty requirements apply. Any act of plagiarism or other form of academic dishonesty will be reported to the academic integrity board. You must provide proper attribution any time you draw on anyone else's work, and that includes both written work and presentations. Please mimic the citation style in the academic journal articles on the syllabus.

*Pursuant that, for all written work, you must email me a .rtf electronic version of your paper to be uploaded to a plagiarism-checker. I am sorry, and I wish I didn't have to do this, but, well...*

Unless otherwise stated, though, you may not cite any URL. The internet is a cesspool of nonsensical garbage written by cranks and charlatans still living in their parents' basements. You may reference articles by scholars in peer-reviewed journals, books published by peer-reviewed university presses and respected trade presses, and newspaper/magazine articles from outlets that include a print addition and follow standard fact-checking procedures. If you find a newspaper article, journal article, etc. on the internet, cite the publication itself, not a URL. As a simple rule, if the only thing you *could* cite is a URL, you may not use it as a source. See previous comment about cranks and charlatans in their parents' basements. I know which internet sources are useful, and which aren't. You don't, so don't just Google shit and hope to find something you can cite. Do proper research.

Every URL or internet-only citation in every paper will be subject to a grade penalty as follows: the use of an internet-only citation on the first assignment will result in a 1/3 of a letter grade penalty. The second assignment using prohibited sources will be subject to a 2/3 of a letter grade penalty, and so on.

Google is not a research tool, so stop treating it as such.

## **I: Broad Theories**

In this section of the class, we will read some classics. These books address broad concepts and general types of strategies that will guide our analysis throughout the rest of the course.

1/18-1/20	INTRODUCTION
1/23-1/25	The Nature of Political Conflict Schattschneider, "The Contagiousness of Conflict," Chapter 1 from <i>A Semisovereign People</i> On Blackboard
1/27	NO CLASS (probably...)
1/30-2/3	The Classic... Machiavelli, <u>The Prince</u>
2/6-2/10	Heresthetics-- strategic behavior in the modern era Riker, <u>The Art of Political Manipulation</u>
2/13-2/17	Strategy and the nature of threats. Also, nukes. Schelling, <u>The Strategy of Conflict</u>
2/20-2/24	Gridlock! Gilmour, <u>Strategic Disagreement</u>

## **II: Elections?**

Whether you want to run for office at some point (I know that describes some of you), become a political consultant, or just impress your friends with your punditry, this section will cover the fine art of gaming the system.

2/27-3/3	Is this even the way to go? Ginsberg & Shefter, <u>Politics by Other Means</u>
3/6-3/10	Congressional Elections Kernell and Jacobson, <u>Strategy and Choice in Congressional Elections</u> On Blackboard
3/13-3/17	SPRING BREAK

### **III: How to get what you want once in office**

In this section, we will discuss the fine art of lying, cheating, and otherwise manipulating people into doing what you want in order to pass legislation. Since one's optimal strategy is dependent on position, we will discuss strategies for presidents, then strategies for members of Congress. We will discuss how the rules and structure of government may be manipulated, how those rules may be changed for strategic purposes, and how the trade-off between short-term and long-term success can shape strategy.

- 3/20-3/24      Presidential policy-making I-- the traditional view  
   Neustadt, Presidential Power
- 3/27-3/31      Presidential policy-making II-- a brave, new world  
   Kernell, Going Public
- 4/3              Presidential policy-making III-- limitations  
   Edwards, On Deaf Ears
- 4/5-4/7        NO CLASS— PROFESSOR AT CONFERENCE
- 4/10-4/14      Congressional policy-making-- the new rules of the game  
   Sinclair, Unorthodox Lawmaking

### **IV: How to manipulate officials-- circumventing democracy and other fun games**

In this section, we will explore the strategies interest groups use in order to affect policy. Influence for interest groups has two components: getting one's foot in the door, and then convincing office-holders to behave a certain way. Both of those components rely on the strategic use of information, and the book in this section presents one of the most prominent theories on the use of information by interest groups. Most people have extremely distorted views about the actual influence that interest groups have, and the way that they exert influence. We will approach this topic with an emphasis on what political scientists say about what really happens.

- 4/17-4/21      Information, Part I  
   Hansen, Gaining Access
- 4/24-4/28      Information, Part II  
   Wright, Interest Groups and Congress

### **V: Wrap-up**

- 5/1              Concluding comments