

# POL 398: Political Participation and Civic Engagement

## Fall 2016

### **Basic Information**

Class meets: Tuesday and Thursday, 9:30-10:45, Coulter 204

Instructor: Professor Ondercin

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Office Phone: 915-7218

Office hours: Tuesday and Thursday 2:30-4:00.

You are welcome to meet with me about the class or your professional development at any point during the semester. To facilitate meeting with me, please go to <https://ondercin.youcanbook.me/> and select an available time. You must do this at least 24 hours before you wish to meet with me.

### **Course Description**

The last line of Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg address states "this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom – and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth." Individuals are fundamentally entwined with the U.S. political system. While we commonly focus on voting and elections, there are a variety of ways individuals can be politically engaged. This class will examine the interaction between individuals and government beyond the voting booth.

We will start by questioning what we expect of citizens in the United States and the implications of these expectations for our government. We then will examine the levels of participation before focusing on factors that influence levels of political participation, from one's socio-economic status to the homes where we grew up. We will also examine how levels of political participation are unequally distributed across the population in the United States. We extend our discussion of the foundations of political participation by studying two key components of civic society: trust and tolerance. Finally, we will examine how policies and what government does shapes our engagement in politics.

### **Course Objectives**

- Through classroom learning and discussions, assigned readings, writing assignments, and exams students will analyze the role political participation plays in the U.S. political system.
- Through classroom learning and discussions, assigned readings, writing assignments, and exams students will think critically about why individuals engage (or fail to engage) in politics in the United States.

- Through classroom learning and discussions, assigned readings, writing assignments, and exams students will analyze contemporary research in political science and other social sciences to develop a deeper understanding of political participation.

### **What You Can Expect of the Course and What I Expect of You**

The class meets twice a week. I expect you to be there at **all times**. We will take attendance in the class daily using the scanners. You must bring your id to class, failure to bring your id will result in an absence. Results will be reported on midterm and final grades. A large portion of your grade is based on participation in class discussion and you are not able to participate if you are not in class. Material not covered in the readings will be covered in class. There is no other place to gain this information other than being in class.

Attendance will be taken daily using the attendance scanners in the classrooms. Students should scan their student id card before class. The scanners will not record your attendance after the class has started, thus you will not be counted as present if you are late for class. You must bring your student id with you, there will be no alternative method for recording your attendance. Scanning any student id other than your own student id is an act of academic dishonesty. Additionally, scanning your id before class and leaving class is also an act of academic dishonesty. All cases of academic dishonesty will be reported to the university.

The university requires us to verify your attendance at least once during the first two weeks of the semester for financial aid and other administrative purposes. Students whose attendance is not verified after a certain period will be dropped from the class. If attendance is not verified, then a student will be dropped from the course and any financial aid will be adjusted accordingly. Please see <http://olemiss.edu/gotoclass> for more information.

You can expect a mixture of lecture, class discussion, small group projects, and individual projects. At all times, my aim will be to help you achieve a deep understanding of the material. Since so much of what I want you to learn will be dealt with only in class, it is important that you attend. Two things are very important to the success of this class: 1) your participation in every class; and 2) that you have completed the readings **before** the class in which we will discuss them. You cannot learn from each other, and I cannot learn from you, if you are not prepared for class. I encourage you to ask questions you may have about lectures, class discussions, readings, and things you see in the news. Do not be passive; class will be much more interesting and you will learn the material better if you are an active participant.

I expect you to observe common courtesy when you are in class. Please come on time: lateness is very rude! Please turn off cell phones and pagers. Please leave the newspaper, crossword puzzles, and other work at home. **NO LAPTOPS ALLOWED.** I do not teach in your bedroom; therefore, please do not sleep in my classroom. I expect you to be mentally present as well as physically present in class; this is the best way to ensure that you learn the

course material. If I see you using electronic devices or engaging in inappropriate classroom behavior you will lose 1% of your participation grade. If this happens more than 3 times you will receive a 0 for participation.

This is a class about the study of politics. It is not a class about politics. However, in this class we will engage in discussions about politics and policies. During our discussions I want everyone to feel free to share their opinions. Each of us brings a unique perspective to the class and we can all learn from this diversity. In order to make this possible you need to be respectful of other people's opinions, even if they are the direct opposite of your own beliefs. I will not tolerate personal attacks on one another or the use of disrespectful language. There is no room for an atmosphere of intimidation, and I will not tolerate it in this class. If there are any issues that you feel uncomfortable with please feel free to talk to me.

A note about email communications: Please do not hesitate to email me with any questions or concerns you may have. However, please be professional in your emails. Just like a written letter, be sure to open your email with an appropriate greeting like, "Dear Dr. Ondercin", or "Professor Ondercin." Please make sure to identify who you are and what class you are taking from me in the body of the e-mail. Before sending an email, please make sure you cannot easily get the answer from another source (e.g., from the syllabus or other class documents). In addition, in many cases, I may request you meet with me to discuss your question rather than engage in a series of back-and-forth emails.

I will not discuss or send grades via e-mail. E-mail is not a secure form of communication, meaning anyone can read your messages. In order to protect your privacy I will not e-mail you your grades. However, I am happy to discuss your grades with you in person anytime during office hours or by appointment.

### Required Books

Two books are required for this class and are listed below. Any additional readings can be found on BlackBoard. When a readings is on BlackBoard it is indicated with a **BB** in the course outline.

- *The Good Citizen: How a Younger Generation Is Reshaping American Politics*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. 2015. Russell J. Dalton. CQ Press (ISBN: 978-1506318028)
- *The Submerged State: How Invisible Government Policies Undermine American Democracy* by Suzanne Mettler. 2011. University of Chicago Press (ISBN: 978-0226521657)

## Grading

Grades for the class will be based on participation, writing assignments, and two exams. A total of 100 points are available. Below you will find a description of each of the factors that go into the final grade, the due dates, and the grade distribution.

Table 1: Assignments and Due Dates

	points available	percent of total grade	due dates
Participation	15	15%	continually assessed
Writing Assignments	25	25%	see due dates below
Midterm Exam	30	30%	October 6 <sup>th</sup>
Final Exam	30	30%	December 8 <sup>th</sup> 8:00 AM
	100	100%	

**Participation** Participation is worth 15% of your final grade. You are expected to be engaged in class discussions, ask questions, and contribute to group work. Participation is not simply about quantity or quality. You should participate on a regular basis in a meaningful way. Additionally, there will be short assignments that you are expected to complete in class. Completion and performance of these assignments contribute to your participation grade. You cannot make-up work completed in class if you are absent.

**Writing Assignments.** There are five short writing assignments that are designed to apply what we learn in the classroom to contemporary U.S. politics. For each assignment you will write 3-5 pages, double spaced in 12 point Times New Roman font or equivalent and with standard 1 inch margins. All assignments are due on the date listed in the tentative course schedule. Descriptions of each writing assignment can be found at the end of the syllabus.

You will need to turn in both an electronic copy and hard copy of your writing assignments. The electronic copy of the assignments should be turned in via SafeAssign on Black Board. The file you turn in should be a pdf. The electronic copy is due by 9:30 a.m. on the day that they are due. Assignments turned in late but time stamped after 9:30 a.m. will receive a penalty of a full letter grade for every 10 minutes the assignment is late. For example, if your paper was turned in at 9:40 and the grade on the paper was a 90, because the paper was 10 minutes late your grade will be reduced to an 80. The paper copy of the assignment needs to be turned in at the start of class. Late paper copies will also be penalized one letter grade for every 10 minutes it is late. Failure to turn in a paper copy or submit the electronic copy will result in a zero for the assignment. Paper copies need to be stapled together (not paper clipped or fastened in any other way). Failure to staple the paper copy together will result in a 5 point deduction on your paper grade. I do not accept assignments slipped under my office door or put in my mail box. Assignments turned in after the regularly scheduled class period **will not** be accepted. All assignments are to be typed.

Writing counts. I expect assignments to be clearly written with complete sentences and proper grammar. I highly recommend that you read them over before you turn them in.

**Exams.** There will be two exams in the class. The mid-term exam is worth 30% of your final grade. The final exam is worth 30% of your final grade. Exams will be a mixture of short-answer and short-essay questions. You will need to bring a blank blue book to class. While grammar and spelling are not graded in the exam you will be expected to write clear, complete, and legible sentences. Make-up midterm examinations are only authorized for documented reasons involving personal medical or family emergencies. Ideally students need to inform the instructor of such events before the scheduled exam. If advance notification is impossible, then the student must inform the instructor as soon as reasonably possible. If such notification and documentation is provided, it is up to the instructor's discretion to grant a make-up exam. If a make-up exam is approved by the instructor, its content and format may significantly differ from the scheduled exam.

**Grade Appeal.** I will not discuss changes in grades on exams or papers for 24 hours after a paper or exam has been handed back. If you feel that I missed an important point that you made or there is some other problem with your grade, after 24 hours you may submit a grade appeal. Your appeal should be a typed argument for why your grade should be changed. It should be no longer than 1 page. You will need to hand the appeal and the original paper or exam back into me for review. I will then ask you to schedule a time to meet or come in during office hours to discuss the appeal. Appealing the grade does not mean that I will automatically increase your grade.

Table 2: Grade Distribution

A	100 – 93
A–	92–90
B+	89–87
B	86–83
B–	82–80
C+	79–77
C	76–73
C–	72–70
D	69–60
F	59 and below

**Extra Credit.** Extra credit will not be given on an individual basis. Everyone in the class has the opportunity to earn extra credit by completing the extra credit assignment listed on BlackBoard. You can earn up to 3 points of extra credit. Simply completing the extra credit does not guarantee that you will receive a full 3 points.

Please note: Departmental policy is that Political Science majors need to make a C in a class for it to count toward the major.

### Other Important Policies

All students are expected to work independently on all assignments. Group and collaborative work is not permitted unless specific instructions are given. If you are not clear on how to properly give credit to others, please see me before turning in any assignment. I take this issue very seriously and will check all things turned in to me for signs of plagiarism. Remember, if you can find it on the Internet, so can I. Proper citations must be used to acknowledge any ideas, concepts, theories, organizational formats, and writing that is not your own.

Students with disabilities: Reasonable accommodations will be made for any student with a documented disability to ensure that the student is able to participate in class to the best of his or her abilities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation in this course or have questions about physical access, please tell the instructor as soon as possible. Reasonable accommodations will be made for all students with disabilities, but it is the student's responsibility to inform the instructor early in the term. It is also the student's responsibility to register with the disability services office on campus. Do not wait until just before an exam to decide you want to inform the instructor of a learning disability; any accommodations for disabilities must be arranged well in advance.

If you did not attend the first day of class and/or added the class late, all class policies apply equally to you. It is your responsible to find out any information gone over during the class periods you missed. Deadlines **will not** be adjusted on an individual basis.

### Course Outline<sup>1</sup>

#### Week 1: Class Overview

Tuesday, August 23<sup>rd</sup>: Class Overview

Thursday, August 25<sup>th</sup>: Participation and Democracy

- Syllabus.
- Verba, Sidney. 2003. "Would the Dream of Political Equality Turn Out to Be a Nightmare?" *Perspectives on Politics* 1(4):663-680.**BB**

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<sup>1</sup>Any changes to this schedule will be announced verbally in class. It is the student's responsibility to note changes and adhere to the new schedule.

## **Week 2: What Does It Mean to Be a citizen?**

Tuesday, August 30<sup>th</sup>: Introduction.

- Chapter 1 The Good Citizen

Thursday, September 1<sup>st</sup>: Meaning and measurement.

- Chapter 2 The Good Citizen

## **Week 3: Political Participation.**

Tuesday, September 6<sup>th</sup>: What is participation?

- Chapters 2 and 3 Voice and Equality **BB**

Thursday, September 8<sup>th</sup>: How participatory are we?

- Chapter 4 The Good Citizen
- Writing Assignment 1 Due Today!

## **Week 4: What Influences Participation?**

Tuesday, September 13<sup>th</sup>: Variation in political participation?

- Chapter 3 The Good Citizen

Thursday, September 15<sup>th</sup>: Explanations.

- Henry E. Brady; Sidney Verba; Kay Lehman Schlozman. 1995. "Beyond SES: A Resource Model of Political Participation" *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 89(2): 271-294. **BB**

## **Week 5: Education and Civic Education**

Tuesday, September 20<sup>th</sup>: The family as a unit of political socialization.

- Jennings, M. Kent, Laura Stoker and Jake Bowers. 2009. "Politics Across Generations: Family Transmission Reexamined." *Journal of Politics*. 71(3): 782-799. **BB**

Thursday, September 22<sup>nd</sup>: Learning in Schools.

- Niemi, Richard G. and Jane Junn. 1998. *Civic Education: What Makes Students Learn*, chapters 6 and 7 **BB**
- Writing Assignment 2 Due Today!

## **Week 6: Political Knowledge.**

Tuesday, September 27<sup>th</sup>: What we know and don't know.

- What People Know: <http://www.people-press.org/2015/04/28/what-the-public-knows-in-pictures-words-maps-and-graphs/>**BB**

Thursday, September 29<sup>th</sup>: Mis-information.

- Nyhan, Brendan and Jason Reifler. 2010 “When Corrections Fail: The Persistence of Political Misperceptions” *Political Behavior* 32(2): 303-330. **BB**
- Hidden Brain: When It comes to Vaccines, Science Can Run Into a Brick Wall <http://www.npr.org/2014/03/04/285580969/when-it-comes-to-vaccines-science-can-run-into-a-brick-wall> **BB**

**Week 7: Midterm Exam** Tuesday, October 4<sup>th</sup>:

- Review Day

Thursday, October 6<sup>th</sup>:

- Mid term Exam – Don't forget your blue book.

**Week 8: Collective Action and participation.**

Tuesday, October 11<sup>th</sup>: Collective action.

- Will Black Lives Matter be a Movement that Persuades? <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/09/will-black-lives-matter-be-a-movementthat-persuades/407017/> **BB**
- Simon, Bernd, Michael Loewy, Stefan Stuermer, Ulrike Weber, Peter Freytag, Corinna Habig, Claudia Kampmeier, and Peter Spahlinger. 1998. “Collective Identification and Social Movement Participation.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. 74:646-658.

Thursday, October 13<sup>th</sup>: Engaging in protest and inequality.

- “The Failure of Occupy Wall Street” [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/andy-ostroy/the-failure-of-occupy-wal\\_b\\_1558787.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/andy-ostroy/the-failure-of-occupy-wal_b_1558787.html) **BB**
- Norris, Pippa, Stefaan Walgrave, and Peter Van Aelst. 2005. “Who Demonstrates? Antistate Rebels, Conventional Participants, or Everyone?” *Comparative Politics* 37(2):189-205. **BB**



### **Week 9: Running for Elected Office.**

Tuesday, October 18<sup>th</sup>: Political ambition.

- Chapter 2 Lawless and Fox *Running From Office* **BB**

Thursday, October 20<sup>th</sup>: Throwing your hat in the ring?

- Chapter 3 Lawless and Fox *Running From Office* **BB**

### **Week 10: Inequality and Participation.**

Tuesday, October 25<sup>th</sup>: Sources across groups.

- Jan E. Leighley; Arnold Vedlitz . 1999. "Race, Ethnicity, and Political Participation: Competing Models and Contrasting Explanations", *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 61, No. 4: 1092-1114. **BB**
- Writing Assignment 3 Due Today!

Thursday, October 27<sup>th</sup>: Technology and inequality.

- Schlozman, Kay Lehman, Sidney Verba and Henry Brady. 2010. "Weapon of the Strong? Participatory Inequality and the Internet." *Perspectives on Politics* 8(2): 487-509 **BB**

### **Week 11: Our Connections with Government.**

Tuesday, November 1<sup>st</sup>: Tolerance.

- Chapter 5 The Good Citizen

Thursday, November 3<sup>rd</sup>: Trust.

- Chapter 7 The Good Citizen
- Beyond Distrust How Americans View their Government <http://www.people-press.org/2015/11/23/beyond-distrust-how-americans-view-their-government/>

### **Week 12: Our Connections with Government.**

Tuesday, November 8<sup>th</sup>: Government the Problem or Solution

- Chapter 6 The Good Citizen

Thursday, November 10<sup>th</sup>: Connection between policy and participation.

- Chapter 1 and 2 The Submerged State
- Writing Assignment 4 Due Today!

### **Week 13: The Submerged State.**

Tuesday, November 15<sup>th</sup>: Who benefits from government?

- Chapters 3 and 4 The Submerged State
- <http://www.marketplace.org/2016/06/09/wealth-poverty/how-welfare-money-funds-college-scholarships>

Thursday, November 17<sup>th</sup>: Why are we disenchanted with government?

- Chapters 5 and 6 The Submerged State

**Week 14 -Thanksgiving Break**

### **Week 15: Thinking about Citizenship.**

Tuesday, November 29<sup>th</sup>: Norms of citizenship.

- Chapter 8 The Good Citizen
- Writing Assignment 5 Due Today!

Thursday, December 1<sup>st</sup>: Some final thoughts on citizenship.

- Chapter 9 The Good Citizen