

## Overview

This portfolio demonstrates how I have carried out my teaching philosophy in past courses, including courses I will teach at Wesleyan University; courses I have taught in the Communication Departments at Loyola University-Chicago and DePaul University; and the courses for which I was a teaching assistant in the Government/Political Science Departments at Georgetown University and Northwestern University.

I was recently awarded the Weinberg College Outstanding Graduate Student Teacher Award for 2011-2012. The award is given annually to three students at Northwestern University- one in the social sciences, one in the humanities, and one in math and biological sciences- for excellence in teaching and commitment to undergraduate education. I am proud to be the recipient of the award for the best teaching assistant in the social sciences at Northwestern University.

The core of my teaching philosophy is to create a classroom environment where students are encouraged to reflect critically on American politics, its actors and processes, and perhaps most importantly, its relevance and significance in everyday life. I encourage students to engage with both recent political and social research and current events, to discuss these issues with their peers, and to seek guidance from me when developing research questions.

The following pages include my teaching philosophy, previous experience, teaching awards and evaluations, sample syllabi and lesson plans, and the abstract of a teaching and learning article I am writing. I believe this portfolio demonstrates the passion and energy with which I approach teaching and learning.

Thank you for your consideration,

Brian F. Harrison  
Department of Government  
Wesleyan University

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## Teaching Philosophy

My overarching goal in teaching is to catch my students off guard and to challenge them to look at politics and government with a fresh perspective. Active learning involves much more than rote memorization and successful completion of examinations; it is a collaborative integration of information that results in meaningful, long-lasting changes in knowledge, behavior, and understanding. When I teach, I bring my passions for teaching and for American politics to the classroom, emphasizing the normative importance of being informed and engaged with politics and government.

My course design and implementation focus on three central goals: consuming political events as an everyday habit; communicating clearly and effectively through a variety of media; and thinking broadly and critically about political events and actors. First, I encourage students to incorporate knowledge and consumption of current political events into their everyday life. By discussing theory through the lens of current politics, participants in my classes critically evaluate current political events and actors and apply course concepts to accessible examples. Second, I challenge students to communicate their thoughts about political and social behavior through a variety of media. Given the importance of written and verbal communication regardless of career path after college, my students complete a variety of assignments to develop their written, verbal, and presentational skills. Finally, I encourage students to ask interesting and important theoretical questions and to consider the normative implications of those questions.

I constantly strive to surprise and to challenge my students by engaging them in unique, targeted collaborative activities, lectures, and small group assignments to further their understanding of key aspects of a course. To cultivate communication skills, for example, students in my course Communication Processes in the Communication Department at Loyola University-Chicago focused on developing skills in writing, visual presentation, and critical thinking. Students chose a mass communication medium (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, cable news, internet reporting, blogs, etc.) and argued which mass media theory best demonstrated the medium's hypothesized impact. Each student wrote a significant analysis paper and presented arguments to the class in a 10-minute presentation. From the course evaluations, it was clear that students appreciated the opportunity to apply the theories and concepts from lecture and course readings on topics that they found personally relevant and important. Throughout the semester, I met with students individually and in small groups to discuss thesis statements, writing structure and organization, and principles of public speaking to improve their writing and presentation skills.

Another example of a thought-provoking, integrative activity involves in-class simulations. While serving as a teaching assistant in a Parties and Elections course at Northwestern, I designed and implemented a mock election to give students the opportunity to apply the concepts from lecture and course readings. I assigned each of three discussion sections to one political party or movement (Democratic, Republican, or Tea Party), and each week, students were given a collaborative task that would ultimately help them run their "campaign." Among other tasks, students nominated a party chairperson and a Presidential candidate, a communications director, and a research director. Throughout the quarter, students worked in small groups in discussion section, integrating new concepts into their campaign strategy, and I structured discussion section in a way to ensure that they were relying on course readings as well as contemporary politics to develop their platforms.

Over the course of the quarter, the candidates and parties designed their respective strategies to fit within the ideology of their given party/movement but also to appeal to the most students in the 50-

student course. I then moderated a Presidential candidate debate, and each party chairperson gave a presentation outlining the party platform. Due to a clever, well-targeted approach, the Tea Party candidate came three votes from winning despite the strong Democratic/liberal leanings of the students. The campus newspaper covered the event, and one student noted, "It's thinking about how [the issues] can be related in a totally successful way to the electorate, which in this case is the class... The challenge is how to frame those issues to appeal to a relatively liberal group of students" (Daily Northwestern, November 15, 2010). This is just one example of how I have engaged students in a genuine, novel way so they not only retain information but also apply the key concepts in the course. I have found that catching students off-guard challenges them to think critically, even about pre-existing attitudes and beliefs.

My passion for teaching and for American politics is integral to the efficacy of the learning process and my course evaluations from Northwestern provide an assessment my teaching goals. In terms of critical thinking and asking important questions, one student wrote, "Brian does a great job of encouraging discussion. He tries to get us to question the readings and develop our own ideas. Section was always productive, and it was never just a mere regurgitation of the lectures or readings." Another wrote, "Brian was very engaging and did a good job of reviewing material and helping us critically evaluate the readings." Finally, one student wrote, "Brian is one of the most competent and enthusiastic teaching assistants I've had thus far. Practical application of course concepts is something many TAs struggle with but Brian did an excellent job of connecting current events with course material." In terms of developing writing and communication skills, one student evaluated my teaching by writing, "Brian really wanted us to learn about this subject matter. He was great in helping me to learn how to improve upon my writing and analytical skills. Enthusiastic and understanding, he tied the course to the readings and helped clarify the professor's objectives in what he was teaching and how he would evaluate us." Lastly, another student's evaluation reads, "Brian really got every student involved in discussion session so that we were talking and discussing our theories more than he was." While student evaluations are only one component of assessment, I feel the feedback I have received demonstrates that my primary teaching goals are being met reasonably well in the classroom. I genuinely value student feedback and frequently integrate suggestions and improvements into future courses.

While at Northwestern, I have sought actively to broaden my repertoire of teaching techniques. I have given numerous guest lectures relating my research to undergraduate students in political science courses. I was also accepted into the Graduate Teaching Certificate Program through the Searle Center for Teaching Excellence at Northwestern. In the program, I have attended intensive teaching seminars on writing course objectives and designing courses, developing assessment methods, encouraging critical thinking, and developing writing skills. I have also evaluated a variety of different teaching techniques and designed a syllabus for a future course. I will continue to grow as a teacher by contributing to the scholarship of teaching and learning; by soliciting and integrating student feedback; and by finding new ways to make political and social science relevant to student learning and life goals.

I have been extraordinarily fortunate to have had positive learning experiences throughout my undergraduate and graduate education, experiences that have inspired me to be a professor who is an enthusiastic teacher, advisor, and scholar. I am devoted to strengthening undergraduate education by creating and implementing clear course objectives and by focusing on creating a new generation of critical thinkers, savvy communicators, and active citizens.

## Weinberg Teaching Award/Student Letters of Recommendation

**Context:** I am the winner of the 2011-2012 Outstanding Graduate Student Teaching Award from the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences at Northwestern. Three graduate students— one from the social sciences, one from the humanities, and one from math and biological science— win the award each year. I am proud to be the winner from the social sciences. Below are three letters that students submitted to the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences at Northwestern in support of my nomination for the Graduate Student Teaching Award.

(**Note:** these letters were written and submitted before I asked students to allow me to include them here. I have the permission of the students to use their letters of recommendation).

### Letter 1:

Steven W. Cole  
Assistant Dean for Faculty Evaluation  
Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences  
Northwestern University  
1918 Sheridan Road

Dean Cole,

I can say without hesitation or reservation that Brian Harrison is the finest graduate student with whom I have ever had the pleasure of taking a class. I have been lucky enough to have Brian as a teaching assistant for three different political science classes during my time at Northwestern: Professor Harbridge's "Congress and the Legislative Process" class, Professor Galvin's "Presidency" class, and Professor Page's "American Parties and Elections" class. In all of the work he did in those three classes, Brian exhibited all of the qualities that make for an excellent teaching assistant.

Brian had a thorough understanding of the courses' materials and explained them clearly to the students in his discussion section—in fact, his grasp of the relevant literature was sufficiently broad that he was able to answer questions even outside the scope of the course with competence and clarity. When he lectured, his lectures were well-organized and easy to follow. When he took questions from the class, his answers were articulate and to-the-point. His wide-ranging knowledge of theory, methodology, and practice are undoubtedly significant contributors to Brian's excellent teaching, but it is certainly not the only contributor.

Perhaps even more important is that Brian is dedicated to his students' success. In each of the classes for which I had him as a teaching assistant, he made sure to explain concepts in terms we could understand, even when it would have been easier to simply parrot the language of the readings; he was gracious with his time, always willing to meet with students who had questions; and he consistently ensured that everyone understood the class's core concepts, all without seeming pedantic or tedious.

These qualities make for an exceptional teaching assistant, and Brian excels in all of them. But, in fairness, there are probably other graduate students who know their material and who prioritize teaching. What distinguishes Brian from being a merely good teacher to being an outstanding teacher assistant is his commitment to teaching his students more than just the names, dates, and concepts covered in the readings and lectures: by the end of the quarter, he expects his students to

have refined their critical thinking skills, and has developed innovative strategies in his pursuit of this goal.

Just one of several examples of this is the political party simulation Brian designed for Professor Page's "Parties and Elections" class. Brian grouped the discussion sections into analogues of America's political parties, guiding us as we took on the primary functions of modern parties: designing a party platform, nominating a Presidential candidate and party leader, and creating a campaign strategy. In addition to being entertaining, this exercise was educational as well. Putting us in the positions of party leaders brought us insights into the kinds of decisions the real party leaders make—and why they make them. Additionally, it gave us an opportunity to sharpen our critical thinking skills, as we were forced to determine which arguments and policies not only appealed most to us, but also which would most appeal to our classmates. We also defended these decisions, both orally and in writing.

In sum, Brian is a deserving recipient of the Weinberg College Outstanding Graduate Student Teacher Award because he has demonstrated a commitment to passionate, innovative, and effective instruction.

Sincerely,

Kian Hudson

**Letter 2:**

Steven W. Cole  
Assistant Dean for Faculty Evaluation  
Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences  
Northwestern University  
1918 Sheridan Road

Dear Dean Cole,

My name is John Lee and I am currently a senior political science major in Weinberg. I am writing to express my sincere and enthusiastic support of Brian Harrison's nomination for the Graduate Teaching Award. In my first recommendation letter, I talked about his extremely meticulous preparation for each class, as well as his strong concern for the educational outcomes of his students. Through this final letter, I wanted to provide several specific examples of how Brian successfully sought to instill within his students the following crucial life skills that are broadly applicable outside of the classroom: critical (i.e., strategic) thinking, teamwork, and leadership.

In winter of my sophomore year, I took Prof. Harbridge's class on Congress and the Legislative Process. To this day, other students and I still vividly remember the practical lessons we learned through the Congressional simulation, which Brian directed. Our class was divided into two parties, and every student was assigned a district to represent. As the majority party leader, I worked with my party members to draft a roadmap for how we planned to move our bills through committee, to the floor, and finally into law. This report required a multifaceted strategic approach in which we integrated theories from class—e.g., about the median voter, electoral incentives—with critical

assumptions of our opponents' moves, their reactions to our votes, and Brian's preferences (as president), in order to maximize our legislative agenda.

Frankly, we thought we had it in the bag. After hours and hours of preparation, my party believed our 1,600-word report was virtually foolproof—that we had anticipated every possible voting coalition for the major bills, and formulated optimal responses for each condition (e.g., we planned to override certain vetoes by logrolling/promising pork). But Brian saw our document—we had to 'cc him on our email chains—and he decided to push our strategic analysis several steps further in rigor. That is, he told my party he would veto all of our bills unless we supported the passage of a socially controversial bill sponsored by the opposition. This seemed somewhat irrational on his part, because he, as a “moderate” president, ostensibly had little to gain from this; as such, we hadn't anticipated the possibility of this threat. Ultimately, we were forced to go back to the drawing board and holistically reassess our legislative strategy. This taught my classmates and me several important lessons: first, never actually assume any plan is infallible; second, relying exclusively on assumptions of rational behavior limits one's ability to be flexible; third, always prepare a backup to your backup plan (one is never enough).

Beyond those valuable lessons in critical thinking and strategy, we also learned a great deal about what it takes to work successfully in teams, as well as how to be an effective leader. Specifically, this experience taught us that teamwork is truly about two things: compromise and empathy. My party had over 20 students, and collectively, we represented a diverse range of districts—from the ultra conservative, to those that actually leaned left. Because of this, it was very difficult to create several omnibus bills that satisfied everyone; in fact, it was impossible. The only way we were able to ultimately move forward was by working together to identify the priorities, which were absolutely nonnegotiable, and distinguish them from those which were merely preferred. This gradual process of seeking mutual consensus, naturally, helped us realize the importance of empathizing with the perceived needs of others.

Finally, this experience provided a critical lesson in what it takes to lead—especially when all you have is “soft power.” Before this class, I mistakenly thought that leadership was mostly about the ability to develop intelligent, visionary goals. This experience taught me, however, that leadership is far more about the power to negotiate and persuade, as any plan that cannot be implemented is useless. My party only held a slim majority, and I knew all it would take was a few defections for our plans to unravel. In short, the other party leaders and I learned to carefully pick our battles, and only justify the need for complete party unity when it was absolutely necessary. Significantly, throughout this entire process—which was challenging, at times—Brian was there to offer his support, encouragement, and advice.

Brian's ability to effectively coordinate and facilitate this learning experience was no accident. I was fortunate enough to take Prof. Page's class on Political Parties & Elections, where Brian effectively ran a similar simulation, to the huge benefit of his students. These experiences changed the trajectory of my undergraduate career. After these classes, I realized that I was drawn more broadly to the practical application of strategy and analytical thinking, and will now be pursuing an early career in consulting after graduation. Yet my story is just one example of the numerous students who left these two classes with a stronger sense of how to think critically and analytically; how to navigate the challenges of team projects; and what it takes to be an effective leader. Without a doubt, I believe these are crucial life skills, which will serve our graduates well in whatever fields they choose to pursue. These learning experiences would not have been possible without Brian's preparation and guidance.

However, I do not only believe that Brian should be selected for this award for his exceptional teaching ability. I also support Brian's nomination because among the 15 or 16 TA's I have had at Northwestern, he has been an absolute star in terms of the passion and natural love of teaching that he consistently brings to every section. When he talks about politics, he exudes a visible energy that is both contagious and inspirational. Given the importance of undergraduate education, I believe that top research universities such as Northwestern should recognize and encourage graduate students like Brian, who strive to balance the demands of excellence in both research and instruction.

With that, I again enthusiastically submit my recommendation of Brian Harrison for the Graduate Teaching award, with zero reservations.

Sincerely,

John J. Lee  
Northwestern University, Class of 2012

**Letter 3:**

Dean Steven W. Cole  
Assistant Dean for Faculty Evaluation  
Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences  
Northwestern University  
1918 Sheridan Road  
Evanston, Illinois 60208

Dear Dean Cole,

My experience in the Political Science Department at Northwestern has been shaped most profoundly not by any tenured professor, but by a single teaching assistant, Brian Harrison. After my first quarter as Brian's pupil, in my sophomore year of college, I began to deliberately choose my Political Science courses according to his teaching assignments. I enrolled in a total of three subsequent courses with Brian, and if I could have taken more I would have. It is because of Brian that I chose to pursue Political Science in my college career in the first place. I chose a single class, The Presidency with Dan Galvin, and I was hooked. Brian uses brilliant classroom simulations and practical applications to bring high level political science and theory to an undergraduate understanding and appreciation. He is able to do this while engaging us as peers rather than inferiors, as colleagues rather than immature young minds. He challenges us as developing intellectuals rather than children in need of instruction. Brian's skill set makes him an invaluable resource, and yet he is so approachable that any undergraduate student would feel comfortable reaching out to him for direction and mentorship.

As a senior graduating in March 2012, I have come to appreciate Brian's contribution to my personal development as much as to my academic growth. Brian's effort and ability to teach my peers and I not only how to analyze data but how to write about it and not only how to evaluate material but how to communicate our findings is a rare skill I have identified in no other teacher. He has truly had a profound influence on my academic life thus far, and the development of my reading, writing, and communication skills are greatly indebted to him.

Brian's unmatched passion for both Political Science and people is expressed through his every word and deed, both in and out of the classroom. It is abundantly clear that Brian loves what he does, and he has the exceptional trait of being able to instill this love in his students. When Brian asked me to write this letter, I did not hesitate. To do so would have been to risk depriving future generations of college students the incredible opportunity to learn from him. There is no other teacher that can provide well-rounded education of the caliber that Brian Harrison has proven himself able.

Sincere Regards,

Kristina Nickele  
Weinberg College of Arts and Science Class of 2012  
Classics & Political Science

## Student Evaluations

**Context:** Below are my course evaluations for the courses for which I was a teaching assistant at Northwestern University. There is both a quantitative and a qualitative component, with average values indicating 1 (low) or 6 (high) on each question. In addition, students had the ability to leave their own comments; **all comments are duplicated without alteration below.** The questions asked of students are:

Question 1: The Teaching Assistant was able to answer students' questions adequately.

Question 2: The TA was well prepared for each session.

Question 3: The TA communicated ideas in a clear manner.

Question 4: The TA showed strong interest in teaching the course

### Overall Summary Statistics for Student Responses\*

	Congress & Legislative Process (Winter 2010)	The Presidency (Spring 2010)	Political Parties and Elections (Fall 2010)	Congress & Legislative Process (Winter 2011)	Public Opinion & Voting Behavior (Fall 2011)
Question 1	5.56	5.15	5.76	5.57	5.65
Question 2	5.37	5.22	5.84	5.74	5.71
Question 3	5.59	5.04	5.81	5.74	5.61
Question 4	5.58	5.30	5.86	5.66	5.57
Number of responses	n= 27	n=46	n=37	n= 35	n= 31

\*Scale ranges from 1 (low) to 6 (high)

## • Congress & Legislative Process (Winter 2010)

Summary Statistics for Student Responses\*

Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4	Responses
5.56	5.37	5.59	5.58	27

\*Scale ranges from 1 (low) to 6 (high)

### **Student Comments (Complete and unedited):**

Brian rocks. Period./He's the greatest TA who ever lived. Plain and simple./Brian is an expert that is good at listening to his students. It is rare to find a TA who both teaches and connects with the students so that they learn and feel free to ask the questions they need to. Brian is one of those rare TAs. It was great being in his section./Brian's the man, really nice guy, always approachable, always willing to listen to student questions./Brian was wonderful. He encouraged us to think critically and delve deeper into the readings./knew a lot and was always ready to give advice./He is AWESOME!! HE has actually worked in the field and knows what he is talking about. And he actually wants us to think critically and he is actually good at inspiring us to do so. He is so great that we actually want to work hard for him. I LOVE BRIAN!!/The TA was very helpful. He made the material interesting and was always more than willing to answer our questions./Brian is by far and away the best teacher (or TA) I've had at Northwestern. There is no doubt in my mind that he is the most qualified educator when it comes to Congress at this University./He knows his stuff and was a nice guy, despite his tough guy front. Brian's the man!/He is great at answering questions and clearing up material from lecture and stressing the important points. However, he wasn't much help on the paper./Approachable and knowledgeable. Pretty cool guy. Puts people on the spot every once in a while which is a little awkward./Brian seemed a little disinterested in everything Harbridge would teach. He would explicitly say that certain concepts were overly tedious and unimportant, and certain ones ended up being overarching themes for the course./Brian's discussion sections were interesting and helpful. However, whenever I had a question for him, he always answered with, "I think that's part of the assignment to figure it out on your own." When I'd ask Professor Harbridge the same question, she would give me a detailed answer. This really annoyed me. I wish he would have been more helpful./He's pretty reasonable. I can't really think of any weaknesses; he's also really funny./Brian is an excellent, excellent TA. He is deeply knowledgeable and passionate about the subject, is always prepared for sections, takes time to answer questions (and is able to answer them clearly and understandably), and leads section discussions with aplomb. The most significant factor in how much I learned in this class was the TA, no question. No discernable weaknesses, Northwestern would be well-advised to send Brian around teaching other TAs how to be more effective./Brian is a highly competent individual who helped make this course as enjoyable as it was

## • The Presidency (Spring 2010)

Summary Statistics for Student Responses\*

Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4	Responses
5.15	5.22	5.04	5.30	46

\*Scale ranges from 1 (low) to 6 (high)

### **Student Comments (Complete and unedited):**

Brian really wanted us to learn about this subject matter. He was great in helping me learn how to improve my writing and analytical skills./Brian is very knowledgeable, friendly, and keeps discussions organized. He did a good job of leading conversations and of making discussions relevant to what we were learning in lecture./Brian prepared well for class but sometimes I felt that class discussions failed to resolve specific course issues. We would discuss tangential issues and discussions were dominated by the same few students./Brian did not get all students involved and let students that were very politically polarized take center stage too often. At times he would cut these students off but not enough. It was annoying when it seemed impossible to contribute anything to discussion. Apart from this, he was very involved and facilitated our thinking outside the lecture and applying it to the world today. I would take a class with him again./Brian does a great job of encouraging discussion. He tries to get us to question the readings and develop our own ideas. Section was always productive and it was never a mere regurgitation of the lectures or readings./Brian cares about his students and works hard to help them- Great TA. Is very accessible and responds quickly to e-mails./Brian was good. Discussion was fairly productive. I just wish the final assignment was individual rather than group and that it had clearer guidelines./Brian was a superb TA. He incessantly leads interesting discussions during section, and he always does a good job of answering students' questions and making sure we are prepared and confident for papers and exams. Some activities felt a little forced or tacked on but they served their purpose of making us think about the topic and better understand the material./Great TA, enthusiastic and insightful and intelligent./Brian is incredible. Discussion is usually tedious and boring and awkward but he makes me want to go every Friday. He's a wonderful TA and extremely knowledgeable and helpful. If he was a professor, I would take his classes!!/Very tough grader though interested and relevant./Brian is very interested in the subject; however, he gets off topic and doesn't go over all the readings and concepts equally./Brian is awesome. Very organized, interested in the subject, and willing to provoke debate./Cared WAY too much about the organization of the paper. This isn't a class on writing on the presidency and shouldn't be cared that way. He's a terrific TA, cares a lot about students, and wants us to learn. However, he grades too harshly. He doesn't go over the readings or lecture in discussion but comes up with very broad questions that don't help much./Brian is the best. So helpful, intelligent, and hilarious!/Strengths- enthusiastic, very open and helpful. Weaknesses- not a good grader for the essays. He expected essays that were simplistic and easy to grade. Would write comments before actually reading the essay./Strong ability to connect with students but weak in incorporating everyone into discussion./Brian was as great a TA as you could ask for. He really helped me understand the material being taught in class while also helping to expand on it a little or explore other dimensions of that week's material, and just really helped a lot and I enjoyed the discussion section./Brian was smart and fun and good at answering questions. He, too, though was a little too tough on the grading./Brian appeared to be really smart but he always came into class unprepared and extremely bored as if he didn't want to be there. He also developed

cliquey relationships with certain students he knew from other classes which created a very horrible class dynamic./Brian is by far the best TA I have ever had. It was a privilege to be in his discussion section for two quarters./He loves what he does, he's young, he's pretty funny, and he likes getting everyone involved and comfortable with each other./He knows the subject extremely well, stimulates discussion very well, does a great job getting everyone involved and sharing opinions, draws a good line between discussing his own opinions enough to get more information out and letting students to the talking. Grades papers way too difficult, way too picky when it comes to those./Brian is the greatest TA I have ever had. Give this man a trophy for making discussion sections meaningful and thought provoking and tools to deepen my understanding of the class./Brian really got every student involved in discussion section so that we were talking and discussion our theories more than he was. During the first half of the course, I was very intimidated by how much knowledge people had on the presidency that went beyond the bounds of the class., but I still feel comfortable speaking in the class. He was also a fair grader./GREAT TA, never have had such a knowledgeable TA that incorporated lesson materials so well./Brian was very engaging and did a good job of reviewing material and helping us critically evaluate the readings./Brian is awesome! He throws in his thoughts but still knows how to facilitate our discussions really well. And he's done a lot of cool things in the past so we really respected him./Very kind and caring; truly available to answer questions and offer help; smart and knowledgeable on the subject, being able to really teach additional info and cover unclear things from lecture./I thought Brian was the bomb. The extra information he added to classes were very interesting and he did a good job of summarizing the notes. The discussion questions were a good way to push people to do the reading but I never knew if my questions were good or what he was looking for. A little feedback would have been nice. I also thought the way he had us review was awesome and really helpful. Brian was the best TA I've had in my one year at NU. It's a shame this will be his last year as a TA and that more students won't be able to have him.

**• Parties & Elections (Fall 2010)**

**Summary Statistics for Student Responses\***

Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4	Responses
5.76	5.84	5.81	5.86	37

\*Scale ranges from 1 (low) to 6 (high)

**Student Comments (Complete and unedited):**

He knows a lot about politics and manages the discussion section in a very good way in which dialogue is promoted and learning is high./Brian is great! He made this course. He did the best he could to help us get a good grade, even if Professor Page made that difficult. He'll be an excellent professor someday./Brian was great a clarifying everything we had questions on from lecture./Brian was great! He identified important concepts for us and set up an awesome simulation that showed us the important concepts in real life. Really relaxed too!/Brian is fantastic!! His project was exciting and he really made the discussion interesting./Brian is awesome. As a poli sci major, I absolutely hate sections! They are unbearable and usually pointless but this is the BEST SECTION I HAVE EVER BEEN IN. Brian was funny and lead discussion in a way that it was easy to participate and our discussions weren't mind numbing. No one person in the class completely took over and he was

super creative by giving us a campaign and election to participate in ourselves. Also, having study guides to use was the best thing ever. I can't thank him enough for that. I would love to have Brian as a TA again! / One of the best TAs I've ever had, was informed and interested. / Brian is the best T.A. I've ever had. He does a great job identifying the most important concepts from the class, which was especially important in this class because Dr. Page tended to give us quite a bit of information, not all perfectly organized, during lecture. / Knows the material and explains things well. I wasn't big on the simulation, though it did liven up the class a bit which was nice. / Brian is an exceptional TA. This is the second class I've taken where he has TAed and he always comes prepared to each discussion section, knows what he's talking about, and clearly makes efforts to foster discussion and engage the class in (healthy) debate. But even more, he's really approachable outside of class, always answers our questions, and is just a nice guy overall. All in all, he's a super star within the department and hopefully he will TA my next poli sci class too! / Brian Harrison is the best TA you will ever have in the political science department. Hands down. / Brian is the best TA at Northwestern, bar none. He clearly enjoys teaching and is very good at it. He was knowledgeable and was able to answer clearly any and every question any of us asked him. His passion for the subject combined with his passion for teaching made the discussion sections a pleasure. / Brian made the course material easier to understand and helped to stimulate our interest in the subject. / Brian was a fantastic TA. I was so pleased with discussions. He was very engaging and did a superb job. One of the best TAs I have had the pleasure of working with. / Brian was a great TA. Very helpful, very insightful, and very funny. Best TA at NU to date. / Did a great job, taught the information better than Page did. Answered questions and explained readings/lecture very well. / Brian gave the class a little more heart and less dust. Both witty and informative. / Brian is great. He cares about the students and subject and tries his best to help us in the course. / Brian Harrison is the best TA I've had thus far at NU. He knows everything and presents it in this very accessible manner, maintains objectivity, and fair-mindedness, and is really fair. I really enjoyed the election simulation. / Enthusiastic and understanding, he tied the course to the readings and helped clarify the professor/s objectives in what he was teaching and how he would evaluate us. / Brian was awesome. He was enthused about the subject and went out of his way to help us prepare for the final. He also organized an entire election simulation that was really helpful in explaining the process of elections from different party standpoints. I really really really am glad that I had him as my TA. / Brian is by far the best TA and maybe the best instructor in general that I've had at Northwestern. I actually enjoyed going to section and looked forward to it. / Fantastic TA. / Awesome TA, one of the primary reasons I learned in the class, so organized and intelligent, very effective teacher. / Command of the material and an ability to succinctly distill course material. He was also quite personable and enthusiastic in offering support to his students, whether with questions regarding readings or general advice about the study of political science. / BRIAN IS AMAZING. He really wants to help and makes section extremely fun.

**• Congress & Legislative Process (Winter 2011)**

**Summary Statistics for Student Responses\***

Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4	Responses
5.57	5.74	5.74	5.66	31

\*Scale ranges from 1 (low) to 6 (high)

**Student Comments (Complete and unedited):**

Brian was one of the best political science TAs I've had at NU. Very organized and knowledgeable, did a great job facilitating discussion. I also really appreciated the review he organized- so helpful! Plus he's from Iowa./Brian is an exceptional TA and would make a terrific professor. He is wonderful at explaining course material, fun, respectful, engaging, and interested in the material. I had a fantastic experience in his section./Brian is the best. He is able to take dense readings full of statistics and point out the important takeaway points. His grading is fair and he is always willing to discuss how he graded an assignment. Brian is also extremely good at getting back to his students via e-mail when they have questions about assignments. His system of preparing us for the final was really useful, and he also did a good job of outlining the important themes and concepts of the course./Brian was probably the best TA I've had in three years at Northwestern. He was very organized and prepared, easily to explain important concepts during section, and very good at leading informative conversations. I looked forward to section every week./Brian was a great TA. The thing I appreciated most about him was his ability to answer all questions in a really coherent, intelligent way. It's clear that he really understands this literature and can give you a concise explanation. He's also really helpful outside of section which is not true for most TAs. He always clearly said that we could email him with any questions or if we needed help on any assignment./Brian was very knowledgeable about the material, related well to students, and encouraged discussion and questions. The final review he set up was really helpful as well./No real weaknesses. Brian was always prepared and ready to answer any questions./Brian was great. Not only did he understand the material very well and answer all our questions, he was funny and stimulated my interest in the class./The best part about Brian was that he was always willing to help. He also knew exactly what he was talking about and he was a great help in studying for the exams./Brian was an amazing TA- any questions you had, he would be more than happy to answer them, but he's not just going to "give away" answers if you won't learn./He is really good at answering questions accurately and is very good at preparing students for the exams./very helpful with the readings but harsh on grading./Brian is one of the most competent and enthusiastic teaching assistants I've had thus far. Practical application of course concepts is something many TAs struggle with but Brian did an excellent job of connecting current events with course material. He always made himself available to help students either during office hours or via e-mail. Overall, just a really great teaching assistant and person./Brian was extremely effective at communicating the most important course concepts in section. He was extremely helpful in office hours and in helping with the district analysis paper. He was also a fair grader and really made the class a positive experience overall./Brian relays the concepts very well. He clearly knows a lot about the material and clearly answers our questions./Brian is awesome. He is knowledgeable./Brian is the best TA I've had here. I learn just as much or more from his discussions than I do in lecture./I can only point to strengths. I have chosen my political science courses for the past 3 quarters based on which ones he is teaching. I have learned more from him than any professor at Northwestern and I sincerely mean that. He is very clear in identifying what is important to take away from the course and breaks it down into manageable, understandable parts. He somehow manages to develop relationships with all of his many students and is very approachable, always willing to respond to emails or answer questions. I am disappointed that I have completed my last quarter with him as a TA because no one else could compare./Strengths: interested in the subject matter and willing to meet with me on occasion. Weakness: expects certain answers rather than accepting valuable support./Very smart, funny, very helpful to students./Wonderful!/Brian is an intelligent and thoughtful teaching assistant. Discussions were useful and engaging. His sense of humor was appreciated.

## • Public Opinion & Voting Behavior (Fall 2011)

### Summary Statistics for Student Responses\*

Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4	Responses
5.65	5.71	5.61	5.57	27

\*Scale ranges from 1 (low) to 6 (high)

### Student Comments (Complete and unedited):

Brian is a great TA. His style of structuring discussion sections is just the right balance between class discussion and reviewing the week's readings. I appreciated the fact that he was so committed to preparing us for the final./Brian was one of the most helpful TAs I've ever had./Brian was very good at answering questions in a clear manner that could be easily understood. No real weaknesses./Brian was a great TA. Very knowledgeable about politics and very organized. He was insightful about telling us the important concepts of the course but the only weakness was that he didn't use any materials to help out what he was trying to relay to us. He was a very nice and approachable person./He knew a lot about the subject and was able to clarify ideas in discussion section and sometimes go more in depth. That said, I do feel like he could have been a bit more engaged with the material and his students. He was a good TA though./He is incredibly smart, enthusiastic, and supplements the instructor's lectures well. He also encouraged us to think for ourselves and facilitated learning./He assigned way too much extra work!! We had a 10-page paper assigned by him as part of our discussion grade which was only 20% of our grade. He was eager to teach the subject though./Brian was great with his explanations and helping us further our understanding of Professor Chong's material. He doesn't have any crucial weaknesses, though classes did tend to run slightly long./Brian sincerely wants you to perform well in the class./Brian's pretty great. I'd be happy to have him as a TA again./Very knowledgeable, enthusiastic about subject, eloquent and presents material in an interesting manner that is easily applicable to what is happening in the news./High interest in the subject and good at breaking it down into simple, important facts. Also helps by giving hypothetical exam questions and pointing out what parts might be most important. He also provided both perspectives on issues./He is knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the class. He was very patient with students who didn't understand all the concepts. Having said that, I think the whole Power Point slide incident made it so he was on the bad side of many students./Brian had real world experience that allowed him to relate the information to us incredibly well. Not only did he respond quickly and was willing to go the extra mile to help us understand the concepts, he had a natural knack for explaining the concepts to us that was aided by his obviously thorough knowledge and passion for the subject./Relates everything to current events and is willing to accommodate the needs of students. Very engaging and has a good sense of humor. Also knows the material well./Brian is probably the best TA I've had at Northwestern thus far. No doubt he's the best poli sci TA I've had. His strengths include being very direct in answering students' questions- often times I think professors tend to ramble on and on when answering a question but Brian has the perfect mix of providing context and providing the answer. He also is very honest about the course material and very very knowledgeable about public opinion and voting behavior!/Very available, able to answer questions quite well./Brian is absolutely fantastic. He helped clarify the main points of the readings, asked and answered questions well, and administered a project that was relevant to the course and informative. He is very personable, approachable, and extremely helpful. The best TA I've had!/Brian was GREAT. He was really engaged with the

material and presented it in a way that was easy to understand. The lecture he taught about President elections was so interesting. Also he was really helpful outside of class/if you e-mailed him with questions.

## Teaching Experience

**Context:** I am currently Visiting Assistant Professor at Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut. Prior to Wesleyan, I taught five of my own courses as well as served as a teaching assistant for various classes at Georgetown University, DePaul University, and Northwestern University. Below, I provide a list of the courses taught both in communication and political science departments.

1. **Visiting Assistant Professor**, Department of Government, Wesleyan University, 2013-2014  
Responsibilities: I will teach Introduction to American Politics and Government and LGBT politics in the Fall 2013 semester and Empirical Methods and Identity Politics in the Spring 2013 semester.
2. **Teaching Assistant**, Department of Political Science, Northwestern University, 2009-2011  
Responsibilities: Held weekly discussion sessions, graded all course material, and provided feedback on all written and verbal assignments.

Courses Taught: Congress & the Legislative Process (Winter 2010 & Winter 2011); The Presidency (Spring 2010); Parties and Elections (Fall 2010); Public Opinion and Voting Behavior (Fall 2011).

3. **Lecturer**, Department of Communication, Loyola University-Chicago, 2007-2008  
Responsibilities: Served as an undergraduate advisor to new communication majors and teach courses in communication theory.

Courses Taught: Communication Processes (3 sections, Fall and Spring semesters); Public Speaking and Critical Thinking (Spring semester)

4. **Instructor and Teaching Assistant**, Department of Communication, DePaul University, 2007  
Responsibilities: Assisted professors in the School of Communication, both inside the classroom and with ongoing research. Taught one course as instructor of record.

Courses Taught: Introduction to Public Relations (2 sections; 1 section as instructor); Seminar on Anti-Americanism; Public Relations Theory; Communication Campaigns

5. **Teaching Assistant**, Department of Government, Georgetown University, 2001-2003  
Responsibilities: As Assistant Director of the Washington Semester Program, completed the administrative and logistical needs of the program, served as teaching assistant to courses taken by both Georgetown students and visiting students from other universities.

Courses taught: Introduction to Public Policy (3 sections); Seminar on Constitutional Reform

## Professional Development and Departmental Service

**Context:** I have served in several positions that show my commitment to teaching and to departmental service, both as a graduate and as an undergraduate student. I have been involved in admissions committees in several capacities and have also earned a position as the Assistant Director of the Washington Semester Program within the Government Department at Georgetown University, integrating many facets of the undergraduate experience. Most recently, I was accepted into the Graduate Teaching Certificate Program at Northwestern, an intensive yearlong program focusing on teaching methods, assessments, and evaluation.

1. Graduate Teaching Certificate, Northwestern University, Searle Center for Teaching Excellence, 2011-2012  
Year-long program including discipline specific as well as cross-disciplinary discussions of core issues in university teaching, culminating in a teaching portfolio project.
2. Student representative, Tenure and Promotion Review Board, DePaul University, 2006-2007  
Conducted independent survey research on student evaluations of and experiences with communication professors under review for tenure and promotion, presented findings to the university tenure committee, and mediated discussion between departmental leadership and the DePaul University tenure review board
3. Undergraduate Representative, Georgetown College Department of Admissions, 2003  
Reviewed undergraduate applications, selected students for acceptance, and helped to determine the composition of the incoming first-year class of 2003.
4. Assistant Director, Teaching Assistant for Washington Semester Program, Georgetown University, 2001-2004  
Determined the academic makeup and admission standards for the Georgetown University internship program in the Government Department. I also organized the Washington Semester office, coordinated the arrival, housing, course registration, and orientation for undergraduate participants. Finally, I provided academic and career advice to undergraduate students and coordinated administrative and academic support in courses offered by the Government Department and throughout the university.

## Descriptions of courses and sample syllabi

**Context:** Below, I include the syllabus for two courses I will teach at Wesleyan University in the Fall 2013 semester. I also include a brief description of another course that I am developing for the Spring 2014 semester called Empirical Research Methods.

### 1. **Introduction to American Politics** (Course will be taught Fall 2013; syllabus listed below)

This course serves as an introduction to the systematic and scientific study of American politics, political institutions, and political actors. Students will be introduced to the basic institutions of American government, especially as established in the Constitution, and with an introduction to currents of thought among social scientists about the workings of U.S. politics and political actors. This course familiarizes students with innovative as well as classic approaches to studying U.S. government. In the end, each student will have a solid grounding in our national political institutions and processes, sharper reading and writing skills, and insight into approaching politics critically and analytically.

### 2. **LGBT Politics** (Course will be taught Fall 2013; syllabus listed below)

In the past 15 years there has been a meteoric and unprecedented shift in attitudes in the United States toward gay marriage and toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals, yet many obstacles to LGBT equality remain. This course will include a broad discussion of public opinion, its formation, and how it is affected by the news media; contemporary opinion toward LGBT individuals in the U.S. context; a history of the LGBT movement; and a focus on institutional constraints on issues like marriage equality, adoption rights, employment non-discrimination, and transgender equality. As a result of this course, students will be able to:

### 3. **Empirical Research Methods** (Course will be taught Spring 2014; description listed below)

This course will discuss the amount of data available about people's behaviors, words and emotions and how to apply that data to support a larger research project or agenda. In addition, students will explore the many ways to gather and use this data for both qualitative and quantitative research questions. Geared toward upper-level students who have an initial research question they wish to develop further, students will become familiar with an array of digital research methods and apply at least two of these methods to the research question they bring to the course. This course will prepare students to work on an undergraduate thesis project or another substantial research project within political science.

**GOVT 151: American Government & Politics**

**Fall 2013**

Mondays & Wednesdays, 8:30-9:50am or 1:10-2:30pm

Dr. Brian Harrison, Ph.D. [bfharrison@wesleyan.edu](mailto:bfharrison@wesleyan.edu)

Office/Office Hours: PAC 331, Thursdays 11am-2:00pm

**Purpose:** This course serves as an introduction to the systematic and scientific study of American politics, political institutions, and political actors. Students will be introduced to the basic institutions of American government, especially as established in the Constitution, and with an introduction to currents of thought among social scientists about the workings of U.S. politics and political actors. This course familiarizes students with innovative as well as classic approaches to studying U.S. government. In the end, each student will have a solid grounding in our national political institutions and processes, sharper reading and writing skills, and insight into approaching politics critically and analytically. As a result of this course, students will be able to:

**Overall Course Objectives**

- Cultivate an appreciation for and attention to American politics as a habit in everyday life
- Feel like a more informed citizen of the United States and of the world
- Develop a deeper understanding of political science as a discipline and understand how political scientists perform their work

**Specific Learning Objectives**

- Clearly communicate the importance of American politics in American life through both verbal and written assignments
- Critically analyze biased political media sources, one-sided political analyses, and/or partisan reasoning
- Assess the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches to the study of American political institutions and actors

**Etiquette:** Although I will spend some of our class time lecturing, we will have many dialogues, both in class and online. In these discussions, you are encouraged to use your personal experiences and perspectives as well as your understanding of the course material and current events. Direct personal attacks against others in the class are not permitted. Insulting anyone one inside or outside the class on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, age, sexual orientation, religion, party affiliation, or national background is not permitted. Violations of these rules will be reflected in your grade and, if they continue, may result in disciplinary action by the University.

I highly value class discussion and interaction. I regard it as an integral part of the learning experience and learning from you is one of the joys of my job. Therefore, I expect you to attend lectures and to complete the assigned readings before attending class. I look forward to hearing your thoughts and your interpretations of the way the course material informs our understanding of current events.

**Students with Disabilities:** Students requiring classroom accommodation for disabilities must provide written documentation from the appropriate university official regarding the specific disability during the first week of class. Any student with a disability requiring special accommodation should contact the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities as soon as possible. It is the responsibility of the student to make the teaching assistant aware of any disabilities as soon as possible so all accommodations can be made.

**Copyrighted Class Materials:** All course materials including but not limited to class notes, lectures, handouts, and presentations are the copyrighted materials of the instructor. The copying and sale of any such materials will subject the involved parties to the provisions of the Federal Copyright Act.

**Assessment Plan:** More details for each assignment will be provided in lecture.

1. Midterm Examination: 20%. The exam will consist of both short answers and an essay.
2. Critical Analysis Papers: 20%. You will write two short 3-5 page (individual) papers, due on Monday, October 30 and Wednesday, November 13. More details to follow.
3. Group presentation/short paper: 20%. As a group, you should write a 7-10 page written evaluation of a media report that you feel is biased or uses deception to make its point. You will then present the report, its strengths and weaknesses, etc. to the class, and how bias is present, drawing from course readings and discussions. Also due is a short synopsis and evaluation of your presentation and how you contributed to the group work.
4. Final exam: 30%. The exam will consist of both short answers and an essay. The exam will be comprehensive, covering all material from the entire term.
5. Participation: 10%. We will have a variety of different exercises during class that will give you many opportunities to voice your opinions about current events and the course materials.

**Grade Requests:** Grading can be a subjective exercise and sometimes, despite my best efforts, I make a mistake. If you want to contest your grade on a specific assignment, you must wait 24 hours before you may discuss it with me. I ask that you give me a one-page (at most) explanation for your request. At my discretion, I may re-grade the assignment but it should be noted that your grade may go up *or down* as a result of the re-grading.

**Writing Specifications:** Please note that all written assignments are expected to be typed, doubled spaced with one-inch margins and in a 12-point font. Acceptable fonts are Palatino Linotype or Times New Roman. Please number your pages and be sure that your paper is stapled before you turn it in. The clarity of your writing will affect the strength of your argument and therefore students should proofread and spell-check their work carefully. You must cite any information and/or ideas that you take from someone else's work. Also note, you should limit your use of direct quotations (someone else's words surrounded by "") to the rare occasion when the original author has stated your point perfectly and it cannot be improved. Otherwise, you are generally better off stylistically using your own words and citing the ideas and facts provided by other authors. For citations, I prefer that students use the American Psychological Association (APA). However, any

citation method is acceptable as long as it is used correctly and consistently. For additional information on APA style, visit <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/> or <http://www.apastyle.org/learn/tutorials/basics-tutorial.aspx>

## Course Syllabus

### Required Texts

- Kernell, Samuel, Gary C. Jacobson, & Thad Kousser. 2012. *The Logic of American Politics* (5<sup>th</sup> Edition). Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.
- Kernell, Samuel & Steven S. Smith. 2013. *Principles and Practice of American Politics* (5<sup>th</sup> Edition). Washington D.C.: CQ Press.

Readings not in the Kernell, Jacobson, & Kousser book (KJK) or the Kernell & Smith book (K & S) are marked “online” and/or will be distributed in class.

Classes begin on Monday, September 2

### **Week 1: Introduction**

*Monday, September 2 (No Assigned Reading)*

- Introduction to the course, student and professor expectations, syllabus review.

*Wednesday, September 4:*

Topics: Collective action, the prisoner’s dilemma, institutional design, public and private goods, principals and agents.

*Readings:*

- KJK, chapter 1
- Mancur Olson, Jr. From *The Logic of Collective Action*. (K & S 1-1, p. 1)
- Garrett Hardin. The Tragedy of the Commons. (K&S 1-2, p. 12)

### **Week 2: The Founders and the Constitution**

*Monday, September 9; Wednesday, September 11*

Topics: Weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation, Checks and balances, popular sovereignty, the Great Compromise, separation of powers, federalism, nationalization.

*Readings:*

- KJK, chapters 2 and 3
- The Constitution of the United States (in KJK, pp. 552-61)
- The Federalist, 10, 51 (K & S, 2-3 and 2-4, pp. 64 and 71)

**Week 3: Congress and the Legislative Process***Monday, September 16; Wednesday, September 18*

Topics: Representation, redistricting and gerrymandering, incumbency advantage, leadership structure, the committee system, how a bill becomes a law.

*Readings:*

- KJK, chapter 6
- David Mayhew, “Congress: The Electoral Connection.” From *The American Congress Reader*, Steven Smith, Jason Roberts, and Ryan Vander Wielen (eds). (ONLINE).
- John Aldrich & David W. Rohde. “Congressional Committees in a Continuing Partisan Era.” (K & S 6-3, p. 231).

**Week 4: The Presidency***Monday, September 23; Wednesday, September 25*

Topics: Various roles of the president, growth of presidential power over time, the cabinet, going public, presidential rhetoric, the president’s staff.

*Readings:*

- KJK, chapter 7
- Richard E. Neustadt. From *Presidential Power*. (K&S 7-1, p. 254).
- John P. Burke. “The Institutional Presidency.” (K&S 7-2, p. 275).
- Samuel Kernell. From *Going Public*. (K&S 7-3, p. 300).

**SHORT PAPER #1 DUE MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 30****Week 5: Supreme Court***Monday, September 30; Wednesday, October 2*

Topics: Judicial review, structure of federal judiciary, Supreme Court history, justice confirmation process, judicial activism, recent decisions.

*Readings:*

- KJK, chapter 9
- The Federalist, No. 78 (K&S 9-3, p. 414).
- Antonin Scalia. From *A Matter of Interpretation: Federal Courts and the Law*. (K&S 9-1, p. 383).
- Stephen Breyer. From *Active Liberty*. (K&S 9-2, p. 401).

## **Week 6: Civil Rights and Civil Liberties**

*Monday, October 7; Wednesday, October 9*

Topics: Rights and liberties, recognition of rights of ethnic/racial groups, the Bill of Rights, due process, equal protection, freedom of speech, religious freedom, privacy.

*Readings:*

- KJK, chapters 4 and 5
- Richard Thompson Ford. From *The Race Card*. (K&S 4-1, p. 110)
- Cass R. Sunstein. From *Republic.com 2.0*. (K & S 5-1, p. 139).

## **MIDTERM EXAM: Monday, October 14**

NO CLASS: Wednesday, October 16

FALL BREAK: No class, Monday, October 21

## **Week 7: Political Parties and Partisanship**

*Wednesday, October 23*

Topics: Who controls the party, nominations and the united front, partisanship among voters and elites, partisanship versus ideology, factions versus parties, third parties, party system history, party decline and resurgence

*Readings:*

- KJK, chapter 12
- John Aldrich. From *Why Parties?* (K&S 12-1, p. 602).
- American Political Science Association, "Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System." (ONLINE).
- Larry M. Bartels. "Partisanship and Voting Behavior, 1952-1996." (K&S 12-2, p. 615).

## **Week 8: Public Opinion**

*Monday, October 28; Wednesday, October 30*

Topics: Voters and non-voters, ideologues and the undecided, polling, non-attitudes, partisanship, polarization.

*Readings:*

- KJK, chapter 10
- Herbert Asher. "Analyzing and Interpreting Polls." (K&S 10-1, p. 436).

- Morris P. Fiorina. From *Culture War: The Myth of a Polarized America*. (K&S 10-3, p. 481).

### **Week 9: The Media**

Monday, November 4; Wednesday, November 6

Topics: Television versus newspapers, bias, reporters versus editors, sound bites, images versus text, the White House Press Corps, media effects (priming, agenda-setting, framing)

*Readings:*

- KJK, chapter 14
- Nelson, Thomas E., Rosalee A. Clawson, & Zoe M. Oxley. 1997. "Media Framing of a Civil Liberties conflict and its Effect on Tolerance." *American Political Science Review*, 91(3): 567-583. (ONLINE).
- Druckman, James N. 2004. "Priming the Vote: Campaign Effects in a U.S. Senate Election." *Political Psychology*, 25(4): 577-594. (ONLINE).

### **SHORT PAPER #2 DUE WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 13**

### **Week 10: Political Campaigns and Elections**

Monday, November 11; Wednesday, November 13

Topics: The powers and limits of campaigns, turnout, how voters decide, campaign spending, positive and negative advertising, the Electoral College

*Readings:*

- KJK, chapter 11
- Popkin, Samuel. From *The Reasoning Voter*. (K&S 11-1, p. 533).
- Schudson, Michael. "America's Ignorant Voters." (K&S 11-4, p. 588).

### **Week 11: Political Science Methodology and Measurement**

Monday, November 18; Wednesday, November 20

Topics: Surveys and polls, experimental design, interviews and qualitative research, measurement (and mis-measurement) of political phenomena

*Readings:*

- Hillygus, Sunshine D. 2012. "The Practice of Survey Research: Changes and Challenges." In *New Directions in Public Opinion*, Adam Berinsky (ed). New York: Routledge. (ONLINE).
- Huff, Darrell. 1954. *How to Lie with Statistics*. New York: W.W. Norton Company. Chapters 1-3, pp. 13-54. (ONLINE).

**Week 12: Presentations (ATTENDANCE MANDATORY)**

Monday, November 25: Small Group Presentations

Wednesday, November 27 (No Class)

**Week 13: Presentations & Wrap up**

Monday, December 2: Small Group Presentations

Wednesday, December 4: Remaining presentations, final conclusions, exam review

**FINAL EXAM SCHEDULE:**

8:30am section: Final Exam on Thursday, December 12; 9-12

1:10pm section: Final Exam Wednesday, December 11; 9-12

**GOVT 242: LGBT Politics in the United States**

Fall 2013

Mondays &amp; Wednesdays, 11am-12:20pm

Dr. Brian Harrison, Ph.D. [bfharrison@wesleyan.edu](mailto:bfharrison@wesleyan.edu)

Office/Office Hours: PAC 331, Thursdays 11am-2:00pm

**Purpose:** In the past 15 years there has been a meteoric and unprecedented shift in attitudes in the United States toward gay marriage and toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals, yet many obstacles to LGBT equality remain. This course will include a broad discussion of public opinion, its formation, and how it is affected by the news media; contemporary opinion toward LGBT individuals in the U.S. context; a history of the LGBT movement; and a focus on institutional constraints on issues like marriage equality, adoption rights, employment non-discrimination, and transgender equality. As a result of this course, students will be able to:

**Overall Course Objectives**

- Analyze the progression of LGBT rights in the context of public opinion and U.S. institutions
- Think about social justice and social movements in the context of LGBT identities and politics
- Critically evaluate arguments and/or counter-arguments to contemporary debates surrounding LGBT rights

**Specific Learning Objectives**

- Read controversial and difficult material objectively and critically.
- Communicate how the LGBT movement changed over time and the social and cultural significance of those changes
- Engage with different approaches to the study of public opinion, identity politics, and LGBT politics
- Construct a narrative about identity, sexual orientation, and public opinion in the United States over the past several decades

**Etiquette:** Although I will spend some of our class time lecturing, we will have many dialogues, both in class and online. In these discussions, you are encouraged to use your personal experiences and perspectives as well as your understanding of the course material and current events. Direct personal attacks against others in the class are not permitted. Insulting anyone one inside or outside the class on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, party affiliation, or national background is not permitted. Violations of these rules will be reflected in your grade and, if they continue, may result in disciplinary action by the University.

I highly value class discussion and interaction. I regard it as an integral part of the learning experience and learning from you is one of the joys of my job. Therefore, I expect you to attend lectures and to complete the assigned readings before attending class. I look forward to hearing your thoughts and your interpretations of the way the course material informs our understanding of current events. As a teacher, one of my primary goals is to empower students to claim their own education. I emphasize discussion and limit the number (and length) of my lectures. This discussion-based format means that you, along with your classmates, bear a lot of responsibility for the success of the class. You must hold each other accountable for the claims that you make and the ideas you

express. And you must make sure that you come to class prepared with some thoughts/questions so that we can have respectful and productive discussions about the material.

**Students with Disabilities:** Students requiring classroom accommodation for disabilities must provide written documentation from the appropriate university official regarding the specific disability during the first week of class. Any student with a disability requiring special accommodation should contact the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities as soon as possible. It is the responsibility of the student to make the teaching assistant aware of any disabilities as soon as possible so all accommodations can be made.

**Copyrighted Class Materials:** All course materials including but not limited to class notes, lectures, handouts, and presentations are the copyrighted materials of the professor. The copying and sale of any such materials will subject the involved parties to the provisions of the Federal Copyright Act.

### **Required Books:**

1. Mucciaroni, Gary. 2008. Same Sex, Different Politics: Successes and Failures in the Struggle Over Gay Rights. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
2. Blasius and Phelan, eds. 1997. We Are Everywhere. New York: Routledge.
3. David Eisenbach, 2006. Gay Power: An American Revolution. New York: Carroll & Graf.
4. The Politics of Same-Sex Marriage, Craig A. Rimmerman and Clyde Wilcox, eds. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
5. LeVay, Simon. 2011. Gay, Straight, and the Reason Why. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
6. Chauncey, George. 2004. Why Marriage? The History Shaping Today's Debate over Gay Equality. New York: Basic Books.

Other readings will either be put online or will be provided in class.

### **Required Assignments:**

6. Class Leadership (10%): With a partner, each student—with assistance from Professor Harrison—will lead discussion once during the semester. Class leadership will correspond with the class for which students draft a response memo (#2 below). In other words, you will lead discussion during the class for which you wrote a memo.
7. Short Memo Paper (15%): Coinciding with your class leadership, you should turn in a short paper (2 pages, single spaced) that synthesizes and critically analyzes the topics and readings of that day. The paper will be due at the beginning of the course for which you are the class leader (see above). The paper should address the key points of the readings and at least 3 questions for discussion. Note the paper should *not* simply summarize the readings but offer your thoughts on the themes, how those themes relate to previous readings, and ask a set of questions triggered by your interpretation. In other words, you should develop an original claim about the readings that suggests, for example, how they relate to one another or how they correspond to or contradict previous readings.
8. Short papers (20%): You will write 2 short papers (5-6 pages, double spaced). The purpose of these papers will be to synthesize and to link together institutional, cultural, and social

mechanisms or trends in order to make an original contribution to the study of LGBT politics and history. Again, you should *not* just summarize the readings but instead should discuss how they compare to and contrast with other readings or contemporary LGBT politics.

9. Final Presentation (15%): In small groups, you will make a professional presentation of a topic of your choice at the end of the semester. More details to come. The presentation should be 15-20 minutes and will discuss a topic from the course or will apply course readings to a contemporary issue in LGBT rights.
10. Final Paper (30%): You will receive an essay prompt and will be expected to draw from the entirety of the semester's readings, lectures, and class discussions to synthesize an argument about the trajectory of LGBT rights in the United States. You will be able (and encouraged) to use any source materials you like, with an emphasis on the assigned reading for the course. This is your opportunity to demonstrate what you have learned throughout the semester and to create linkages between topics and ideas.
11. Participation: (10%). We will have a variety of different exercises during class that will give you many opportunities to voice your opinions about the course materials and current events.

**Grade Requests:** Grading can be a subjective exercise and sometimes, despite my best efforts, I make a mistake. If you want to contest your grade on a specific assignment, you must wait 24 hours before you may discuss it with me. I ask that you give me a one-page (at most) explanation for your request. At my discretion, I may re-grade the assignment but it should be noted that your grade may go up *or down* as a result of the re-grading.

**Writing Specifications:** Unless otherwise noted, all written assignments must be typed, doubled spaced with one-inch margins, and in a 12-point font. Acceptable fonts are Palatino Linotype or Times New Roman. Please number your pages and be sure that your paper is stapled before you turn it in. The clarity of your writing will affect the strength of your argument and therefore students should proofread and spell-check their work carefully. You must cite any information and/or ideas that you take from someone else's work. Also note, you should limit your use of direct quotations (someone else's words surrounded by "") to the rare occasion when the original author has stated your point perfectly and it cannot be improved. Otherwise, you are generally better off stylistically using your own words and citing the ideas and facts provided by other authors. For citations, I prefer that students use the American Psychological Association (APA). However, any citation method is acceptable as long as it is used correctly and consistently.

For additional information on APA style, visit <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/> or <http://www.apastyle.org/learn/tutorials/basics-tutorial.aspx>.

## Course Syllabus

Classes begin on Monday, September 2

### Introduction

*Monday, September 2 (No Assigned Reading)*

- Introduction to the course, student and professor expectations, syllabus review, etc.

### Gender & LGBTQ Identity

*Wednesday, September 4:*

- LeVay, Simon. 2011. Gay, Straight, and the Reason Why. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapters 1-3.
- Nagoshi, Julie L., Stephan/ie Brzuzny, & Heather K. Terrell. 2012. "Deconstructing the Complex Perceptions of Gender Roles, Gender Identity, and Sexual Orientation among Transgender Individuals." *Feminism & Psychology*, 22(4), 405-422.

*Monday, September 9:*

- LeVay, Simon. 2011. Gay, Straight, and the Reason Why. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapters 4, 5, 7.
- Mucciaroni, Gary. 2008. Same Sex, Different Politics: Successes and Failures in the Struggle Over Gay Rights. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Chapter 1.
- Blaius, Mark. 2001. "An Ethos of Lesbian and Gay Existence." In Sexual Identities, Queer Politics, Mark Blasius ed. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, pp. 143-177.

*Wednesday, September 11:*

- In Blasius and Phelan, eds. 1997. We Are Everywhere. New York: Routledge.
  - Scientific-Humanitarian Committee, "The Social Problem of Sexual Inversion" (1903), p. 138
  - U.S. Senate, "Employment of Homosexuals and Other Sex Perverts in the U.S. Government" (1950), p. 214.
- Margot Canaday. 2009. The Straight State. Princeton: Princeton University Press, Introduction, Chapter 1, Chapter 5, Conclusion.

### Who is the LGBT Community?

*Monday, September 16:*

- Stryker, Susan. 2008. "Transgender History, Homonormativity, and Disciplinarity." *Radical History Review*. 145-157.

- Shaiko, Ronald G. "Same-Sex Marriage, GLBT organizations, and the Lack of Spirited Political Engagement." In *The Politics of Same-Sex Marriage*, Craig A. Rimmerman and Clyde Wilcox, eds. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 85-103.
- Badgett, et al. 2013. "New Patterns of Poverty in the Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Community." <http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/LGB-Poverty-Update-Jun-2013.pdf>, pp. 1-17.
- Gates, G., 2011. How many people are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender? Los Angeles: UCLA Williams Institute. <http://www3.law.ucla.edu/williamsinstitute/pdf/How-many-people-are-LGBT-Final.pdf>

*Monday, September 23:*

- Bradford, J. & Mayer, K. 2008. Demography and the LGBT population: What we know, don't know, and how the information helps to inform clinical practice. In *The Fenway guide to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender health*, Makadon, H. et al. (eds). Philadelphia: American College of Physicians, pp. 25-41.
- Gilley, B.J., *Becoming two-spirit: Gay identity and social acceptance in Indian country*. Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2006, Chapter 2: From gay to Indian, pp. 23-50.
- Hunter, Marcus Anthony. 2010. "All the Gays are White and all the Blacks are Straight: Black Gay Men, Identity, and Community." *Sexuality Research and Social Policy* 7 (2): 81-92.
- Dang, A. et al., *Living in the margins: A national survey of lesbian, gay bisexual and transgender Asian Pacific Islander Americans*. NGLTF Policy Institute and several API LGBT organizations, 2007, executive summary. [http://www.thetaskforce.org/downloads/reports/reports/API\\_ExecutiveSummaryEnglish.pdf](http://www.thetaskforce.org/downloads/reports/reports/API_ExecutiveSummaryEnglish.pdf)

### SHORT PAPER #1 DUE AT BEGINNING OF CLASS (SEPTEMBER 25)

#### Before Stonewall: Rise of a Gay & Lesbian Rights Movement

*Wednesday, September 25:*

- Johnson, David K. 2004. *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Chapter 8)
- Eisenbach, David. 2006. *Gay Power: An American Revolution*. New York: Carroll & Graf. (Chapters 1, 2, and 3)

*Monday, September 30:*

- In Blasius and Phelan, eds. 1997. *We Are Everywhere*. New York: Routledge.
  - ACLU, "Homosexuality and Civil Liberties" (1957), p.247
  - Donald Webster Cory, "The Society We Envisage," Chapter 21 of *The Homosexual in America* (1951), p. 275

- Machine Foundation/ Society, Mission Statement and Membership Pledge (1951), p. 283
- Jeff Winters, “A Frank Look at the Mattachine: Can Homosexuals Organize” ONE (1954), p. 315
- Daughters of Bilitis, “Statement of Purpose” (1955), p. 328
- Franklin Kameny, “Gay is Good” (1969), p.366

### **In Stonewall’s Wake: Gay Liberation of the 1970s**

*Wednesday, October 2:*

- Eisenbach, David. 2006. *Gay Power: An American Revolution*. New York: Carroll & Graf. (Chapters 4-6 and Chapter 9)
- Valocchi, Steve. 2001. “Individual Identities, Collective Identities, and Organizational Structure: The Relationship of the Political Left and Gay Liberation in the United States.” *Sociological Perspectives*, 44 (4): 445-67.

*Monday, October 7:*

- In Blasius and Phelan, eds. 1997. *We Are Everywhere*. New York: Routledge.
  - Carl Wittman, “A Gay Manifesto” (1969-1970), p. 380
  - Radicalesbians, “The Woman-Identified Woman” (1970), p.396
  - Robin Morgan, “Lesbianism and Feminism: Synonyms or Contradictions?” (1973), p. 424
  - National Organization for Women, “Resolution on Lesbian and Gay Rights” (1980), p. 468
  - Audre Lorde, “I am Your Sister: Black Women Organizing Across Sexualities” (1980), p. 472
  - Marilyn Frye, “Lesbian Feminism and the Gay Rights Movement” (1981), p. 498

### **AIDS: Altering and Emboldening the Movements**

*Wednesday, October 9:*

- Eisenbach, David. 2006. *Gay Power: An American Revolution*. New York: Carroll & Graf. (Epilogue)
- Vaid, Urvashi. 1995. *Virtual Equality: The Mainstreaming of Gay and Lesbian Liberation*. New York: Doubleday. (p. 69-105).
- Ghaziani, Amin. 2008. *Dividends of Dissent: How Conflict and Culture Work in Lesbian and Gay Marches on Washington*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Chapter 4)
- Zak, Dan. “In 2012, AIDS is a Different Beast for Gay Men in D.C.” *Washington Post*, July 23, 2012

*Monday, October 14:*

- In Blasius and Phelan, eds. 1997. *We Are Everywhere*. New York: Routledge.
  - Richard Berkowitz and Michael Callen, with Richard Dworkin, “We Know Who We Are” (1982), p. 563
  - Richard Berkowitz and Michael Callen, “How to Have Sex in an Epidemic” (1983), p. 571
  - Larry Kramer, “1,112 and Counting,” (1983), p.577
  - Peg Byron, “AIDS and the Gay Men’s Health Crisis of New York” (1983), p. 587
  - Larry Kramer, “The Beginning of ACTing UP” (1987), p. 609
  - Eric Rofes. “Gay Lib vs. AIDS: Averting Civil War in the 1990s” *Out/Look* (1990), p. 652
  - Maxine Wolfe, “AIDS and Politics: Transformation of Our Movement” (1989), p. 638

*Wednesday, October 16:* Film viewing in class: *How to Survive a Plague* (2012)

*NO CLASS (FALL BREAK): Monday, October 21*

### **The Gay ‘90s: The Victory of Visibility for Gays, Lesbians, and Bisexuals?**

*Wednesday, October 23:*

- Ghaziani, Amin. 2008. *Dividends of Dissent: How Conflict and Culture Work in Lesbian and Gay Marches on Washington*. Chicago. University of Chicago Press. (Chapters 6 and 8)
- Seidman, Steven. 1993. “Identity and Politics in a ‘Postmodern’ Gay Culture: Some Historical and Conceptual Notes.” In *Fear of a Queer Planet*. Michael Warner, ed. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- From Blasius and Phelan, eds. 1997. *We Are Everywhere*. New York: Routledge.
  - Hunter Madsen and Marshall Kirk, “Strategy: Persuasion, Not Invasion” (1989), p. 736
  - Randy Shilts, “Is ‘Outing’ Gays Ethical?” (1990), p. 767

*Monday, October 28:*

- Gallagher, John and Chris Bull. 1996. *Perfect Enemies: The Religious Right, the Gay Movement, and the Politics of the 1990s*. New York: Crown. (Chapters 1 and 3)
- Tina Fetner. 2001. “Working Anita Bryant: The Impact of Christian Anti-Gay Activism on Lesbian and Gay Movement Claims.” *Social Problems* 48. (3): 411-428.
- Vaid, Urvashi. 1995. *Virtual Equality*. New York: Anchor Books. Chapter 4, pp. 106-147

SHORT PAPER #2 DUE AT BEGINNING OF CLASS (OCTOBER 30)Contemporary LGBT politics: Marriage and Beyond*Wednesday, October 30:*

- Mucciaroni, Gary. 2008. Same Sex, Different Politics: Successes and Failures in the Struggle Over Gay Rights. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Chapters 1-3.
- Lofton, Katie and Donald P. Haider-Markel. 2007. "The Politics of Same-Sex Marriage Versus the Politics of Gay Civil Rights: A Comparison of Public Opinion and State Voting Patterns." In The Politics of Same-Sex Marriage, Craig A. Rimmerman and Clyde Wilcox, eds. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 313-340.

*Monday, November 4:*

- **LGBT rights and the Courts. Guest Lecture, Dr. Stephen Engel, Bates College (and Wesleyan alumnus).**
  - Readings TBD

*Wednesday, November 6:*

- Chauncey, George. 2004. Why Marriage? The History Shaping Today's Debate over Gay Equality. New York: Basic Books. Chapters 1-3.
- Mundy, Liza. 2013. "The Gay Guide to Wedded Bliss." *The Atlantic*. [http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2013/06/the-gay-guide-to-wedded-bliss/309317/?single\\_page=true](http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2013/06/the-gay-guide-to-wedded-bliss/309317/?single_page=true)
- Harrison, Brian F. & Melissa R. Michelson. "Not That There's Anything Wrong with That: The Effect of Personalized Appeals on Marriage Equality Campaigns." *Political Behavior*, 34 (2): 325-344.

*Monday, November 11:*

- Chauncey, George. 2004. Why Marriage? The History Shaping Today's Debate over Gay Equality. New York: Basic Books. Chapters 4-5.
- Cahill, Sean. 2007. "The Anti-Gay Marriage Movement." In The Politics of Same-Sex Marriage, Craig A. Rimmerman and Clyde Wilcox, eds. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 155-191.
- Ettelbrick, Paula L. "Since When is Marriage a Path To Liberation" (1989), p. 757. In Blasius and Phelan, 1997. *We Are Everywhere*. New York: Routledge.

*Wednesday, November 13:*

- Mucciaroni, Gary. 2008. Same Sex, Different Politics: Successes and Failures in the Struggle Over Gay Rights. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Chapters 4-6.
- Harrison, Brian F. & Melissa Michelson. Under Review. "It Does Matter if You're Black or White: The Power of Race and Elite Cues."

- Harrison, Brian F. & Melissa Michelson. "Religious Identity and Attitudes toward Same-Sex Relationships."

*Monday, November 18:*

- Halkitis, Perry N. 2010. "Reframing HIV Prevention for Gay Men in the United States." *The American Psychologist*, 65: 752-753.
- Cohen, Cathy J. 2001. "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?" in *Sexual Identities Queer Politics*, Mark Blasius, ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Mucciaroni, Gary. 2008. Same Sex, Different Politics: Successes and Failures in the Struggle Over Gay Rights. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Chapter 7-8.

*Wednesday, November 20; Monday, November 25: **ATTENDANCE MANDATORY***

- Student Presentations

*Wednesday, November 27 (No Class)*

*Monday, December 2; Wednesday, December 4: **ATTENDANCE MANDATORY***

- Student presentations. Wrap up, conclusions, and final thoughts. Final exam (paper assignment) handed out on December 4. Paper is due **stapled, in hard copy** by no later than 5pm, December 14.

## Sample Lesson Plans and Evaluation Plans

**Context:** This is a brief description of how I would address one of the topics on the syllabus for the Introduction to American Politics course, including objectives, discussion, lecture, and assessment. I also include evaluation plans to allow students to provide feedback, both on course topics and readings but also the structure and accessibility of the teaching.

### Sample Lesson Plan & Assessment for Week 9: The Media (Introduction to American Govt.)

#### **Lesson objectives:**

- (1) To discern the similarities and differences between prominent media theories like agenda-setting, priming, and framing.
- (2) To identify and to interpret the variety of avenues media affect our political attitudes and behavior
- (3) To critically analyze potentially biased media sources and to identify the source and effect of the biases

Assuming the course has an hour and 20 minute sessions, I would lecture for roughly 30 minutes, (broken up into two 15-minute segments), and administer two small group tasks (20-25 minutes each). I would begin with lecture about media effects- priming, framing, and agenda-setting, outlining the similarities and differences between the two. I would then play different examples of political communication- political advertisements, 527 and PAC advertisements, etc.

The first group task would be to design a political advertisement that advocates for one political candidate and make it completely “unbiased.” I would bring in large pieces of paper to hang around the room for students to draw their “story board” for the ad. I would go around and comment on each and we would have a short discussion of what bias means and discuss each ad in terms of the degree of bias it may have. I would then lecture for 15 more minutes, linking week 8 to week 9 by discussing attitude formation, memory, and motivated reasoning that would be the topic of week 8’s lecture. The second group task would be to read a short article on a political topic (I’ll pass out several topics from various sources) and write a collaborative paper on the techniques used within the article. I would ask students to draw on the course readings on media effects to choose one media theory that would explain the impact of the article (and justify why the other two models are insufficient). If time allowed, one representative from each group could discuss their article and which media theory best exemplified the techniques used in the article.

Assessment for this individual course meeting would involve reading the collaborative paper that each group writes during the course meeting and the quality of presentation of the paper. Another example of how I might assess student work is by having student groups create a Google document and use it as a collaborative tool to write papers/presentations for the course. I could view progress (or lack thereof) in a group and provide instant feedback for the students to integrate into the final product.

## Overall Course Evaluation Plan

I have three main assessment tools that I plan to use in my courses. First, I plan to use minute papers to allow students the opportunity to provide weekly or bi-weekly feedback on the course. These papers will be anonymous and will involve given prompts (i.e. What is one aspect of the course that could be improved?; Is the level of discussion too much, about right, or too little; etc.). Secondly, if the course is sufficiently small, I plan to require several visits to my office hours during the semester to get to know students better and to encourage them to be comfortable with speaking with me directly. During these meetings, I will ask pointed questions about course readings and the direction of the course to spark a dialogue with students. Lastly, after exams or other major assignments are returned, I will hand out a questionnaire in class for students to address concerns about the exams, my comments, and their grade. I feel students will appreciate the ability to anonymously express their reactions to my grading and comments so I can incorporate their needs and wants in future assignments.

These evaluations link directly back to the learning objectives for the course by allowing students to communicate not only any clarifying questions from the material but also the effectiveness of the course at achieving overall goals. The questions for each minute paper will be tailored to ensure course objectives are met. For example, questions may relate to how political scientists would evaluate a political situation in different ways; how current political events may inform the way we look at larger issues in political science; and how existing methods of inquiry may be improved or changed. Additionally, I will ask probing questions during office visits to get a sense of how students are integrating American politics into their everyday life and media consumption choices.

## Student self-reflection: connecting the first & last day of class

**Context:** A key goal of my teaching is to help students evaluate and reflect upon their own learning. This assignment asks them to evaluate what they've learned and how they've developed during the course. I also use these responses to evaluate my teaching qualitatively. This type of assignment is appropriate for discussion-based seminars.

On the first day of class, I will ask students to write down how politics and political decisions affect them on a daily basis, how often they consume political media sources, etc. At the end of the quarter, I will return that paper to students and ask them to add a paragraph to what they wrote before, asking how the course made them think differently about politics and political actors. I will give the following prompt to students on the last day for either an in-class writing exercise or a short reflective paper exercise.

### Self-Evaluation Assignment

Throughout the semester, we discussed the importance of being an active, engaged citizen and integrating political information into your everyday life. What, if anything, has changed in the way you would approach such a discussion today? When you see political ads or read political news, how will you evaluate them differently?

In this course, we have also talked about writing for the social sciences in particular and academic writing in general. We also discussed the importance of developing public speaking skills. What have you learned about writing and presenting this quarter? Do you feel you were able to put what you learned into practice in your own paper? Considering peer and instructor feedback, has your approach to constructive criticism of your writing changed this semester?

Responses should be 2-3 pages in length and demonstrate serious reflection on these questions.

## Higher education-related article (*in progress*)

Harrison, Brian F. "Think Outside Your Political Box: Reducing Motivated Reasoning and Selective Exposure From the Classroom."

**Context:** The content of my dissertation topic- selective exposure and partisan reasoning- highlight the dangers in limiting oneself only to information and media outlets that merely reaffirm existing attitudes. This article identifies several techniques to encourage students to evaluate both sides of a political or policy argument, particularly if they already have an established belief on the topic. The political science classroom can be an important vehicle in reducing biased, partisan reasoning and self-selection into like-minded partisan media outlets.

**Abstract:**

Given the dramatic increase of (partisan) media outlets and the increasing level of elite polarization, it has become easier and easier for people of all ages to simply ignore political debate that conflicts with existing views. Existing work in motivated reasoning and selective exposure show that people are becoming more likely to only seek out congruent political information and when they are exposed to dissonant information, they are more likely to counter-argue or to dismiss it. There is genuine value in a free-flowing marketplace of ideas and encountering views that are different from one's own; this is particularly true in the realm of American politics. Political scientists in the classroom are in a unique position to encourage healthy, robust debate on important issues of the day. While new views and outlooks may prove to be unpersuasive, it is important to encourage students to consume diverse information, particularly information that is divergent from established attitudes and beliefs. After identifying the need for robust debate in the classroom and its long-term benefits to political attitudes, I identify several techniques and classroom activities that can help stimulate debate and encourage students to evaluate all possible information when forming an attitude, not simply the easiest or most accessible information.

## Example of a multi-week, in-class exercise

**Context:** I designed and implemented a mock election to give students the opportunity to apply the concepts from lecture and course readings. The “election” spanned the course of roughly 4-5 weeks, integrating elements of the course and of political campaigning into discussion section each week. I assigned each of three discussion sections to one political party or movement (Democratic, Republican, or Tea Party), and each week, students were given a collaborative task that would ultimately help them run their “campaign.” Among other tasks, students nominated a party chairperson and a Presidential candidate, a communications director, and a research director. Throughout the simulation, students worked in small groups in discussion section, integrating new concepts into their campaign strategy, and I structured discussion section in a way to ensure that they were relying on course readings as well as contemporary politics to develop their platforms. The Daily Northwestern wrote a story about the election simulation I ran for the Parties and Elections course

### Political Science 324: Political Parties & Elections Simulation

Fall 2010 Quarter

Purpose: The purpose of this exercise is to simulate an electoral process and to gain first-hand experience with important aspects of party organization and leadership. From Thursday, October 21 through Thursday, November 18, students will simulate key elements of party and electoral strategy concurrent with the elements being introduced in lecture. Discussion sections during this period will integrate course readings with a simulation of a partisan election. Each discussion section will turn in a final document including the important written elements of each week.

Each discussion section will serve as a political party (or ideological group)- one Democratic, one Republican, and one Tea Party. During the early section meetings listed below, students will nominate a party leader or leaders (i.e. chairperson, party liaison, whip, etc.) who will be responsible for overseeing that section’s partisan activities. Throughout the month, students will be responsible for designing a party platform consistent with the ideology assigned to them; nominating a Presidential candidate and party (group) leader; creating a media campaign/strategy; and initiating a general campaign strategy for both their party and nominee. For the purpose of the final vote, the voting population will be the class. For the purpose of writing the party platform and of media planning, etc., we will assume the American public breaks down along the same percentages as the class. Out of 52 total students, there are 24 Democrats (46%), 17 Republicans (33%), and 11 Tea Party Members (21%).

At the end of the exercise (during lecture on Thursday, November 18), each Presidential nominee and party (group) leader will be responsible for giving an address or a series of addresses embracing their given ideology and laying out a Presidential agenda as well as their party agenda. A vote will be taken on that day and winning Presidential candidates and party will be chosen.

#### Objectives:

1. To gain a better understanding of party nominations, party platform development, and electoral strategy
2. To highlight potential disconnects between party motivations and candidate agendas
3. To develop a successful party operation to win the course election
4. To better understand the four models of party/public interactions

**Grading:** Grading will be based on two elements: first, the final written product from each discussion section, including all of the required elements listed below. The final grading will also be based on student participation and initiative as observed both by the teaching assistant during discussion section and by attention paid to e-mails sent between student members. **Please cc: [partieselections@gmail.com](mailto:partieselections@gmail.com) to all correspondence on this project.** Added weight will be given to those who are nominated and elected to party leadership positions. Grades are NOT incumbent upon which party wins the final vote.

The portfolio should have 12-point (or smaller) Times New Roman font, have standard margins, and be either double-spaced or 1 ½ spaced. All plagiarism and academic honesty policies apply. The final portfolio should include:

1. Names of all leadership positions; names of issue committees, chairs and committee members; roles of all students involved [2-3 pages]
2. Party platforms and committees [3-4 pages]
  - a. 4 issue committees- chairs and members
  - b. 4 top issues; reason they were selected; argument/data to support selection
  - c. One of four models must be chosen to reflect party strategy (i.e. responsible parties, electoral competition, electoral rewards and punishments, selection of competent and benevolent leaders) and the portfolio should reiterate the importance/assumptions of the model throughout
3. Presidential platforms [3-4 pages]
  - a. 4 issues of focus; reason they were selected; argument/data to support selection
4. Target constituencies and justification of choices [3-4 pages]
  - a. Differentiation of how to treat party in electorate; party in organization; party in government
5. Media strategy/outreach strategy [3-4 pages]
  - a. Media targets chosen and why;
  - b. 3 targeted constituencies
    - i. Which issues will be the focus to each constituency and why?

**Important dates:**

Friday, November 5 (by 5pm): Email me the party platform and issues chosen (not the justification for choices) to [bharrison@u.northwestern.edu](mailto:bharrison@u.northwestern.edu) (and/or [partieselections@gmail.com](mailto:partieselections@gmail.com)). I will distribute each party's platform to the other two parties at this point.

Thursday, November 18: Final vote/presentations in lecture

Tuesday, November 23: Bring a hard copy of your party portfolio to lecture. No late assignments will be accepted for any reason!

**Tasks for each discussion section**

Overall tasks:

1. Nomination/leader selection; Chairperson of the Party, President
2. Writing a platform and separating issues into committees
3. Determining issue salience and priorities, measuring public opinion, finding likely voters
  - a. Select one of the four election models and use that as a baseline

4. Communicating with constituents, media and messaging;
5. Election during lecture on Thursday, November 18<sup>th</sup>

Discussion section 1 [October 21/22]:

Introduction, explain the purpose and mechanics of exercise

Relevant readings

Hershey, pp.45-46; ch.3, “State and Local Organizations”; ch.4, “National Organizations”

**Discussion section 2 [October 28/29]:**

First full meeting, selection of policy focuses, selection of committees for each policy and committee chairs, begin crafting party platform

Nomination, candidate selection, measuring issue stances and preferences

1. Nominate and select leaders
  - a. Chairman/chairwoman of party
  - b. Presidential nominee selection
  - c. Select 4 policies and select committees

Relevant readings

Hershey, pp.159-160; ch.9, “How Parties Choose Candidates”; ch.10, “Choosing the Presidential Nominees”; Jamieson, Electing the President 2008, “Introduction”; “The Annenberg Study” (read especially carefully the timeline, pp.6-12)

**Discussion section 3 [November 4/5]**

Due on Friday, 5pm: Platform (to send to each party)

Continue discussing issue platform (and particularly justification for the choice of platform), determine issue salience and priorities and public opinion measurement.

**Discussion section 4 [November 11/12]**

Final meeting; final coordination between Presidential candidate and party platform. Messaging strategy (as if this were for the general election), media strategy, etc. Strategize on best campaign based on other parties’ platform.

Relevant readings

Key, “Critical Elections,” Woll 199-204; Hershey, ch.7, “Party Coalitions and Party Change”

Final election on Thursday, November 18 during lecture

## **Student Newspaper Article**

Context: The Daily Northwestern, a weekly student newspaper at Northwestern, wrote a story about the election simulation I ran for the Parties and Elections course, providing some context and several interviews with students in the course.



ADVERTISE

# In-class election teaches 'candidates' to frame issues for voter interests

By Peter Larson

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More than two weeks after the national midterm elections, one class will head to the polls Thursday in a political science simulation.

Three student candidates will face off for the first 30 minutes of lecture Tuesday afternoon in a pre-election debate put together by Political Science 324: Political Parties and Elections.

The debate and Thursday's election mark the end of a project the class has been working on for the last several weeks: an attempt to simulate a real election.

Brian Harrison, a political science graduate student and teaching assistant, decided to use the project to transform discussion sections. Each of the three sections was assigned a political party and charged with doing issue research to create a realistic policy platform.

Similar to the general election two weeks ago, Thursday's mock election will include candidates representing the Democratic, Republican and Tea parties.

"It's thinking about how (the issues) can be related in a totally successful way to the electorate, which in this case is the class," said SESP sophomore Zach Glasser, whose section is taking the role of the Republican Party.

A comparable project was done in last year's Congress class, Harrison said. Because 2010 is an election year, students were supposed to analyze their party's platform and design a campaign.

"So they develop their party platform, but the other part of it is getting students in to vote for them," he said.

That's been particularly challenging for some of the sections, Glasser said, whose group has had the difficult task of turning the Republican platform, which traditionally attracts

an older demographic, into something that can appeal to college students.

"The challenge is how to frame those issues to appeal to a relatively liberal group of students," Glasser said.

If that was a challenge for the Republicans, it could have been a political nightmare for the Tea Party section.

Michael Kurtz, the appointed candidate for the group, joked that if he were running as Sarah Palin he wouldn't get a single vote.

But that's where his personal proposed platform differs from the research his section has done.

"It's their job to articulate our principles, but it's my job to marry our principles to electoral necessity and try to win a majority," the Weinberg sophomore said.

Kurtz said his campaign could be described as socially semi-tolerant, non-interventionist in foreign policy and fiscally very conservative.

To prevent a harsh negative reaction from student voters to a right-wing social agenda, he said he decided instead to incorporate the Tea Party's stringent interpretation of the Constitution. It would provide for issues such as gay marriage and marijuana legalization to be settled at the state level, he said.

"That's somewhat tolerant, but intelligently you could also fathom a Tea Partier taking that stance," Kurtz said.

And that demonstrates what he said he learned the most about through the project.

"You have to remember that within any party there's a spectrum," Kurtz said. "There's more than this left-right dichotomy."

The class will vote during Thursday's lecture after the debate Tuesday. Harrison will ask the three candidates questions from a list of topics and audience members will also have the opportunity to pose their own.

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