

POLI 100: American Democracy in Changing Times
SECTION 603
FALL 2019

Teaching Assistant: Isaac Mehlhaff

Time and Location: Wednesday 2:30-3:20 PM; 423 Hamilton Hall

Email: mehlhaff@live.unc.edu

Office Hours: Tuesday 1:00-3:00 PM, Thursday 3:30-4:30 PM, or by appointment;
301 Hamilton Hall

Overview and Objectives

Welcome to our recitation section for POLI 100: American Democracy in Changing Times. As the title of the course suggests, this is an exciting and important time to study politics in the United States. It is exciting because our rapidly evolving political culture is challenging us to think critically about crucial issues facing our democracy and it is important because understanding the history and function of American governance helps us to act as informed and active citizens in the present. To that end, this section will:

- complement course lectures
- engage participants in active learning, dialogue, and discussion
- clarify and elaborate on material from lectures and readings
- draw connections between different concepts and ideas
- address questions about course material

How to Be Successful in Recitation

Attendance (25% of section grade)

Recitation sections are dedicated time for us to speak with and learn from each other. In order for this to happen, we must be present and arrive on time to our section meeting. If necessary, you may miss one section meeting with no impact to your attendance grade. If you need to miss additional meetings due to documented circumstances beyond your control (such as an illness, family emergency, or religious observance), please speak with me **in advance** and we will work together to find a solution.

Participation (75% of section grade)

Simply being present in section is helpful, but little to no learning can happen without active participation. This participation can take many forms, including but not limited to: speaking and listening to others during class discussion, raising questions for classmates to consider, engaging in small-group dialogue when appropriate, or completing brief in-class writing assignments. Aim for both quality and quantity in your participation; show us how you are thinking critically about readings and course material so we can learn from your perspective.

Communication

Communication with Me

I am always happy to meet with you during my scheduled office hours or outside those hours if they do not work with your schedule. If I need to change my office hours for any reason, I will give you sufficient notice and offer additional hours to make up for that lost time. I am also easy to reach via email; I try to tend to emails as quickly as possible, but please allow up to 24 hours for a response. I am here to facilitate your learning but, at the end of the day, you are the only one who can be responsible for your education. Be proactive and let me know how I can assist you.

Communication with Other Students

Learning is a collaborative endeavor, and we all bring unique backgrounds and experiences to the course material. Given the subject matter of the course, it is inevitable that we will discuss ideas on which we do not all agree. These diverse perspectives enrich our discussions and provide valuable insight, so please share them if you feel comfortable. While I will never ask anyone to share any opinions they do not want to, I do expect us to engage with other students' ideas in a respectful manner; treat your classmates how you want to be treated. On a similar note, your classmates are a valuable resource. While you should always produce your own work, I encourage you to form study groups and otherwise learn from each other by engaging the material outside class.

Electronics

The purpose of our recitation sections is to engage deeply with the material and with each other's interpretations of the material, both of which require active listening and thoughtful response. Electronic devices (laptops, tablets, cell phones, etc.) will therefore not be needed. To avoid distracting yourself or your classmates, please keep these devices turned off and/or put away. If there are times when we need technology, I will alert you ahead of time.

Academic Honesty

I expect all work you do in this course to be your own. The UNC Honor Code applies to all coursework, and your name on each of the assignments confirms your respect of Honor Code

rules. Your full observance of the Honor Code is required; ignorance is not a valid excuse. If you are unfamiliar with the Honor Code, please see <http://honor.unc.edu>. As a general rule of thumb, if you have to ask yourself whether or not you should cite something, that is typically an indication that it should indeed be cited. **Please see me** if you have any questions regarding this policy. It is **always** better to ask permission than forgiveness.

Student Accessibility

If you have a documented disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, please contact Accessibility Resources & Service. For more information, call (919) 962-8300, email accessibility@unc.edu or visit <https://ars.unc.edu>. Please speak with me as soon as possible if you require any accommodations to be successful in this course. If you do not have a documented disability, other useful services, including the Writing Center and the Learning Center, are available to all students. Visit <http://learningcenter.unc.edu> and <https://writingcenter.unc.edu> to learn more.

Finally, I care deeply about the mental health of my students and colleagues. While education should be an enriching experience, I recognize that it often causes distress and that this distress may unexpectedly strike even the most well-composed among us. While I am neither trained nor equipped to guide you through your personal struggles should they arise, I encourage you to alert me if circumstances out of your control hinder your ability to be successful in this course. I will make any necessary arrangements within the confines of Department and University policy. Call (919) 966-3658, email caps@unc.edu, or visit <https://caps.unc.edu> for more information and to seek professional assistance.

Course Readings

There is no required textbook for recitation, but your knowledge of the required lecture readings will be indispensable for your success in recitation. Similarly, recitation readings will be included on course exams. Assigned recitation readings for each week can be found in the course outline below and **must be completed before you attend section that week**. The vast majority of these readings can be found in the “Resources” folder on Sakai. For the readings not on Sakai, I have included links to where they can be found online. This reading list is subject to change; I will give you sufficient advance notice if any such changes are made.

Course Outline

Week 1: Introductions (August 21)

- No readings

Week 2: Concepts and the Constitution (August 28)

- *Constitution of the United States*, <https://www.law.cornell.edu/constitution/index.html>.

- There are many places you can read the Constitution online. I prefer this one because it explains each article and amendment in everyday language, links sections of the text to relevant amendments, and provides citations of court cases and other resources.

- Richard Stengel, “One Document, Under Siege,” *TIME* (June 23, 2011).

Week 3: Constitution (September 4)

- *The Federalist Papers*:
 - Number 10: https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/fed10.asp
 - Number 51: https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/fed51.asp

Week 4: Federalism (September 11)

- Paul Callan and Danny Cevallos, “Marijuana: Is the Party Over?,” *CNN* (January 20, 2017).
- David G. Evans and Paul Armentano, “Should federal laws be enforced where marijuana is legal?,” *CQ Researcher* (October 16, 2015).

Week 5: Congress (September 18)

- Andrew Prokop, “Gerrymandering, Explained,” *Vox*, <https://www.vox.com/2014/8/5/17991934/gerrymandering-explained>.
- Ezra Klein, “Congressional Dysfunction,” *Vox* (May 15, 2015).

Week 6: Presidency and Bureaucracy (September 25)

- John Dickerson, “The Hardest Job in the World,” *The Atlantic* (May 2018).
 - This is a long article; while it is a fast read, feel free to skim if you need to. This is a good exercise in reading quickly and for comprehension.

Week 7: Judiciary (October 2)

- Garrett Epps, “The Extreme Partisanship of John Roberts’ Supreme Court,” *The Atlantic* (August 27, 2014).
- Norm Ornstein, “Why the Supreme Court Needs Term Limits,” *The Atlantic* (May 22, 2014).

Week 8: Public Opinion (October 9)

- Ezra Klein, “The Single Most Important Fact about American Politics,” *Vox* (April 28, 2016).

Week 9: Elections and Public Opinion (October 16)

- Jacob Smith, “Cherie Berry put her picture in every North Carolina elevator. Here’s how that affected her reelection,” *The Washington Post* (April 14, 2016).

Week 10: Participation (October 23)

- Adam Taylor, “American Voter Turnout is Still Lower than Most Other Wealthy Nations,” *The Washington Post* (November 10, 2016).

Week 11: Civil Rights (October 30)

- Jaime Fuller, “How Has Voting Changed Since *Shelby County v. Holder?*,” *The Washington Post* (July 7, 2014).

Week 12: Civil Liberties (November 6)

- Roger Parloff, “Christian Bakers, Gay Weddings, and a Question for the Supreme Court,” *The New Yorker* (March 6, 2017).
- Adam Liptak, “In Narrow Decision, Supreme Court Sides With Baker Who Turned Away Gay Couple,” *The New York Times* (June 4, 2018).

Week 13: Parties (November 13)

- Jonathan Rauch, “How American Politics Went Insane,” *The Atlantic* (July/August 2016).
 - This is another article that is long but can be read quickly. Skim if you need to and practice reading quickly and for comprehension.

Week 14: Media (November 20)

- Matthew Levendusky, “Are Fox and MSNBC Polarizing America?” in Daniel J. Hopkins and John Sides, eds., *Political Polarization in American Politics* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2015), 95-99.
- Kevin Arceneaux, “Why You Should Not Blame Polarization on Partisan News” in Hopkins and Sides, *Political Polarization in American Politics*, 100-105.
- Neil Malhotra, “The Media Make Us Think We Are More Polarized Than We Really Are” in Hopkins and Sides, *Political Polarization in American Politics*, 106-114.

Week 15: No Recitation (November 27)