# Engineering Politics: Partisan Redistricting in American Politics

WSUA 102AB CRN:

Fall 2021

* Instructor: Neal Allen, Professor of Political Science
* Department: Political Science / Honors College
* Office Location: Lindquist Hall
* Telephone: 316-978-7133
* Email: neal.allen@wichita.edu
* Preferred Method of Contact: email
* Student Hours: TBA and by appointment
* Classroom Day/Time/Location: TBA

## How to use this syllabus

This syllabus provides you with information specific to this course, and it also provides information about important university policies. I will closely follow the parameters laid out here, but may need to adjust some due dates if something unexpected arises. I will communicate any changes to you on Bb and through your WSU email.

## Course Description

## This course will help students integrate into the college environment and build academic skills, all while learning about how elections are structured in the United States. We will discuss legislative districting as an example of political engineering, and its implications for representation of majorities and minorities in the U.S. We will learn how geographical analysis software is used to draw districts, and students will have the opportunity to draw their own districts for U.S. and Kansas elections.

## Learning Outcomes

### General Education Basic Skills Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course students should be better prepared to:

1. *Engage* in higher-order thinking that moves beyond rote memorization and factual acquisition to more advanced higher levels of thinking (e.g., thinking critically and creatively).
2. *Articulate and defend* their positions through dialogue, discussion, and writing.
3. *Effectively access and critically evaluate* information from a variety of sources.
4. *Identify* appropriate library and other resources to facilitate research and accurately provide citations.

### Student Success Learning Outcomes included in FYS

Upon completion of this course students should be able to:

1. *Recognize* how the expectations of higher education differ from secondary education
2. *Learn strategically* by developing skills and habits that promote deep learning and long-term retention of knowledge.
3. *Develop* more effective life and study skills in areas including time management, note taking, test taking and personal finance.
4. *Capitalize* *on* university resources and extracurricular experiences designed to promote their success.

### Disciplinary Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course students should be able to:

1. *Demonstrate* understanding of how legislative districts are drawn in the United States, including federal, state and local offices.
2. *Demonstrate* the ability to gather and analyze journalistic accounts of an ongoing process of election administration and reform.
3. *Demonstrate* through written and oral communication understanding of how citizens, civil servants, judges, and elected officials can influence the electoral process.

##

## Required Course Materials:

*What the Eyes Don’t See* by Mona Hanna-Atisha, free to all WSU First-Year students

“The Gerrymandering Project” on fivethirtyeight.com, both podcasts and The Atlas of Redistricting

Articles by Sean Trende at realclearpolitics.com, Dave Wasserman at the Cook Political Report

Selected articles on contemporary redistricting politics at fivethirtyeight.com

 Other materials as assigned

## Grading Scale

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Percentages | Letter Grade |
| 93-100% | A |
| 90-92% | A- |
| 87-89% | B+ |
| 80-84% | B |
| 80-82% | B- |
| 77-79% | C+ |
| 73-76% | C |
| 70-72% | C- |
| 67-69% | D+ |
| 60-66% | D |
| 59% and below | F |

Grade of A-, A (90-100)

“A” level work exudes “excellence”. Excellence is demonstrated through completeness, reason, reflection, a high level of critical thinking, creativity, original thought and application of knowledge, readings, experiences, class discussions, and theory beyond what would be expected. This is a **WOW** assignment.

Grade of B+, B, B-, (80-89)

“B” level work shows a clear understanding of concepts/topics/processes and is well-organized, clear, concise and complete. Originality of thought, reflection, and creativity are evident although not to the extent found in “A” work. Application of prior knowledge, experiences, readings, and theory is evident. This is a **GOOD** assignment.

Grade of C+,C, or C- (70-79)

“C” level work shows a completed assignment with minimal critical thinking. Little original thought, reflection or application of knowledge, experience, readings, or theory is evident. Creativity is lacking. This work demonstrates a very basic understanding of the course concepts/topics/processes. This is a **FAIR** assignment.

Grade of D+, D (60-69)

“D” level work demonstrates a lack of understanding of the theories and concepts/topics/processes addressed in class and in the coursework. Minimal or no effort is observable. No original thought or application of knowledge is demonstrated. Oral or written communication skills are poor, and the work may be incomplete. This is an **UNACCEPTABLE** assignment.

Grade of F (below 60)

“F” quality work is not expected in this course.

## Graded Components

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Common Read Paper | 15 pts |
| Personal Goal Paper | 10 pts |
| Essay Exam | 20 pts |
| Group Presentation | 25 pts |
| Weekly Journal Entries (2 pts each for total of 20 pts) | 20 pts |
| Weekly class discussion and general participation | 10 pts |
| Total | 100 pts |

## Assignment Details

Graded Assignments – all submitted on Blackboard

* Common Read Paper

Students will write a paper analyzing the interaction of race, class, and public infrastructure in the Flint Water Crisis, using data from the 2020 United States Census and *What the Eyes Don’t See* by Mona Hanna-Atisha.

* Personal Life Goal Paper

Students will write a 1-2 page paper outlining their life goal(s) and how higher education will contribute to achieving them.

* Essay Exam

Students will write 2-3 essays in class about legislative redistricting, drawing on assigned readings.

* Student Success and Reading Journal

Students will keep a weekly journal, documenting their use of Student Success resources and reflecting on their strengths and needs as a college student, as well as their reactions to assigned reading.

* Advocacy Group Presentation

Students will work in groups to develop and present recommendations for reform of redistricting in the United States, or use open-source redistricting software to construct their own legislative maps for public presentation.

* Class discussions

The course is discussion-based and students will be expected to attend regularly and actively engage with each other and the instructor during each class, incorporating the assigned readings and their own group research into the discussions.

* Out of Class Events

 One of the goals for the class is help students connect with others and engage with activities at WSU. In order to meet this goal, students are expected to attend three events outside of class. These events can be virtual or in-person. You will be required to provide evidence of attendance. At least two events must somehow contribute to your academic growth and ability to do college work.

 Possible Events:

Convocation

Office of Diversity and Inclusion and/or Student Involvement activities

Common Read Events

Office of Student Success Events

\*\* NOTE: Feel free to suggest events to me that can fulfill this requirement.

## Extra Credit

No Extra Credit will be offered. Do each assignment that is given.

## Submission of Late Assignments

5% will be taken off for each day an assignment is late.

NO late journal entries will be accepted.

##

## Additional Policies and Student Resources available at [www.wichita.edu/syllabuspolicies](http://www.wichita.edu/syllabuspolicies)

Information on:

* Important Academic Dates
* Academic Integrity
* Definition of a credit hour
* Video and Audio recording
* Shocker Alert System
* Intellectual Property
* CARE Team
* Counseling and Prevention Services
* Student Health Services
* Heskett Center and Campus Recreation
* Inclusive Excellence
* First Generation Students
* Names and Pronouns
* Disability Services
* Title IX
* Concealed Carry Policy

## Course Schedule: Topics and Readings may be altered or added

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| DATE | TOPIC | Readings (to read by this day) | Work Due |
| **Week 1****Aug 16 (Mon)** | Introduction | “The Gerrymandering Project” Podcast pt. 1  |  |
| **Aug 18 (Wed)** | Government as an Engineered System | “The Gerrymandering Project” Podcast pt. 2 |  |
| **Week 2****Aug 23****(Mon)**  | Peer Feedback |  | Life Goal Paper  |
| **Aug 25****(Wed)** | Political System Failure | *What the Eyes Don’t See* pt. 1 |  |
| **Week 3****Aug 30****(Mon)** | Infrastructure Failure | *What the Eyes Don’t See* pt. 2 | Journal Entry 1 |
| **Sept 1 (Wed)** | Public Health Failure | *What the Eyes Don’t See* pt. 3 |  |
| **Sept 6****(Mon)** | *Labor Day* |  |  |
| **Week 4****Sept 8 (Wed)** | Student Success Partner Presentation – Student Involvement |  | Common Read Paper |
| **Week 5****Sept 13 (Mon)** | Introduction to Legislative Elections | Bullock, *Redistricting* Introduction and Ch. 1 | Journal Entry 3 |
| **Sept 15 (Wed)** | Redistricting: Mechanics | Anderson, *One Person, No Vote*, Ch. 4 |  |
| **Week 6****Sept 20 (Mon)** | Redistricting: Partisanship | Trende 2021-2022 Redistricting Preview, realclearpolitics.com |  |
| **Sept 22 (Wed)** | Exam Preparation | Student Success Partner Presentation – Office of Student Success |  |
| **Week 7****Sept 27 (Mon)** | Essay Exam |  | In-class Essay Examination |
| **Sept 29****(Wed)** | Race and Redistricting | “The Gerrymandering Project” Podcast pt. 3 |  |
| **Week 8****Oct 4****(Mon)** | Redistricting Local Government | Guest Speakers: Mayor Brandon Whipple and Sen. Ty Masterson | Journal Entry 4 |
| **Oct 6****(Wed)** | Student Success Partner Presentation: Counseling |  |  |
| **Week 9****Oct 11**  | Fall Break |  |  |
| **Oct 13 (Wed)** | Student Success Guest: Office of Student Money Management | “The Gerrymandering Project” Podcast pt. 4  |  |
| **Week 10****Oct 18 (Mon)** | Internships and Active Learning | Guest Speakers: former WSU Washington, D.C. and Topeka interns | Journal Entry 5 |
| **Oct 20****(Wed)** | Art and Politics | Guests: Janna Erwin (Ulrich Museum), Dr. Brian Amos |  |
| **Week 11****Oct 25 (Mon)** |  |  | Journal Entry 6  |
| **Oct 27 (Wed)** | Student Success Guest: LAS and Engineering College Advising |  |  |
| **Week 12****Nov 1****(Mon)** | Class Cancelled: Campaign Volunteering |  | Journal Entry 7 |
| **Nov 3 (Wed)** | **City Council and School Board Election Recap** | Read *Wichita Eagle* online for election results |  |
| **Week 13****Nov 8 (Mon)** | Redistricting and Fair Elections | “The Gerrymandering Project” Podcast pt. 5 | Journal Entry 8 |
| **Nov 10 (Wed)** | Kansas Redistricting Report |  | Choose Project Groups |
| **Week 14****Nov 15 (Mon)** | Student Success Partner Presentation: WSU Library | Identify 2-3 readings relevant for Project work | Journal Entry 9 |
| **Nov 17****(Wed)** | Group Work on Presentation |  |  |
| **Week 15 Nov 22****(Mon)** | Group Work on Presentation |  | Individual Reports on Project progress |
| **Nov 24** | THANKSGIVING BREAK |  |  |
| **Week 16****Nov 29 (Mon)** | Redistricting Map Presentations |  |  |
| **Dec 1 (W)** | Redistricting Reform Proposal Presentations |  |  |

## Assignments that Contribute to General Education (G), Student Success (S) and Disciplinary (D) Learning Outcomes:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | G1 | G2 | G3 | G4 | S1 | S2 | S3 | S4 | D1 | D2 | D3 |
| Life GoalPaper |  | X |  | X | X |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| CommonRead Paper | X | X | X |  |  |  |  | X |  |  | X |
| Essay Exam | X | X | X |  | X | X | X |  | X | X |  |
| GroupPresentation | X |  | X | X |  | X |  |  | X |  | X |
| EventRequirement |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | X |  |  |  |