

Everything You Need to Know about 202, Spring 2013

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course website

All the information you need for the course is at a site we've set up on google sites (not on blackboard). The address is: <https://sites.google.com/site/mc202/wiki/>

the theory of this course

Most courses in the political science department are meant to help you to master a particular body of substantive knowledge. For instance, when I teach a course on the U.S. Presidency, I aim to have my students understand (among other things) how the content of legislation restricts the range of actions available to the President. DSC 202 is very different. I am not trying to convey knowledge of any particular subject, but instead to help you develop a set of **skills** and **habits**. Broadly, these skills and habits are meant to help you become a **participant** in political science — not just spectator, but a person with his or her own critical perspective, who is able to gain understanding and see the implications of any given piece of original writing in the field. In short, by the end of this class you should be able to pick up any article from political science journal and know how to go about understanding it and forming your own views about its claims, arguments and significance.

course meetings

With the exception of the first and last meetings (1/17 and 4/30), this course is divided into 6 2-week blocks and 1 1-week block. Each block is associated with a single reading.

block	meeting dates	reading
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1	1/22,24,29,31	Hobbes
2	2/5,7,12,14	Sahlins
3	2/19,21,26,28	Carneiro
4	3/5,7	Tilly
5	3/19,21,26,28	Olson
6	4/2,4,9,11	North
7	4/16,18,23,25	Weingast

We will practice two in-class activities on the readings associated with each 2-week block: (a) formulating hypotheses, (b) interrogating hypotheses, with (c) during the first two meetings and (b) follows:

date	activity
Tue, 1/22	formulating hypotheses
Thu, 1/24	formulating hypotheses
Tue, 1/29	interrogating hypotheses
Thu, 1/30	interrogating hypotheses

To attend a "formulating hypotheses" session, you must have a printed out copy of the reading with you or (preferably) a laptop from which you can read the reading. You do not need to have read the reading before a "formulating hypotheses" session, and in fact you may get more out of these sessions if you don't do the reading beforehand.

If you come to an "interrogating hypotheses" session without a working precise of the reading by 11:50am on the Monday before the interrogating hypotheses session. For instance, to attend either of the sessions on 1/29 or 1/30, you must submit a working precise of the Hobbes reading by 11:50am on Monday 1/28. I will explain what a working precise is during the first week of class. What is important to know for now is that completing and submitting one on time is literally your "ticket" to attend class. You may not attend without

What is a working precise?

A working precise amounts to short answers to two questions: (1) What is the author trying to do? and

(2) How does he try to do it? Your answer to each of these should be just a few sentences. They do not need to be "correct" in fact, they are really just essays, best guess.

When you want to submit a working precise, do so by sending the professor an email directly (at stuart.jordan@rochester.edu). Put "working precise" in the subject line and then your best guess to the two questions in the body of the message.

required work and grading

There are two different types of assignments on which you will be graded:

- single-reading papers
- connection papers

During the semester, you are required to write 4 single-reading papers and 2 connection papers. If you do not complete this minimum, you will fail the course. But you have the option to write more than the minimum. In the end, only the 4 highest-graded of the single-reading papers you submit and 2 highest-graded connection papers you submit count towards the grade. Thus, 7 of them, you have a good bit of room for error.

To be counted, any paper you submit must be submitted by the deadline. I only accept late papers if you obtain permission to submit late from me before the deadline. The deadline for the papers is:

paper	deadline
single-reading paper on Hobbes	Sun, 2/3 by 11:59pm
single-reading paper on Sahlin	Sun, 2/17 by 11:59pm
single-reading paper on Carneiro	Sun, 3/3 by 11:59pm
connection paper 1	Sun, 3/3 by 11:59pm
single-reading paper on Tilly	Sun, 3/17 by 11:59pm
single-reading paper on Olson	Sun, 3/21 by 11:59pm
connection paper 2	Sun, 4/2 by 11:59pm
single-reading paper on North	Sun, 4/14 by 11:59pm
single-reading paper on Weingast	Sun, 4/28 by 11:59pm
connection paper 3	Sun, 4/28 by 11:59pm

Single-reading papers

Every single-reading paper is an essay of no more than 5 pages (double-spaced, in 12 pt font).

font, with no-less-than 1 inch margins) that answers the following question:

"What is [insert author's name here] trying to do in [the relevant reading] and how does he go about trying to do it?"

Every single reading paper is given a score on a 4-point scale according to the official "single reading paper rubric" posted to the website.

Connection papers

The idea behind connection papers is for you to discover ideas, concepts or arguments that appear in the readings that are relevant to several readings. A connection paper must be typed, double-spaced, 12 pt font, with no less than 1 inch margins.

"Hobbes vs. Sablins on tuna sandwiches: what exactly makes them delicious?"

As you can (honestly) infer from this example, connection papers point out an idea, theme, mode of argument, or question that plays a significant role in more than one of the assigned readings. It is up to you to define the main point of your connection paper, i.e. exactly what point you will try to make about the relationship between the idea you choose and the readings you write about. In any event, every connection paper is given a score on a 4 point scale according to the official "connection paper rubric" posted to the website. Further, the formatting requirements for connection papers are the same as those for single reading papers: they must be no more than 5 pages (double spaced, in no less than 12pt font, with no less than 1 inch margins).

The Wiki and Extra Credit

We will be maintaining a wiki throughout the semester. By contributing to this wiki, you can earn an additional 0.5 points on your final four-point grade. I'll explain exactly what you can contribute and how during the first weeks of class. For now, it suffices to say that:

- you will only be given credit for authoring pages that meet a certain threshold of usefulness.
- you earn 0.1 points on your final grade for each page you author that meets this threshold.
- you may not earn more than a total of 0.5 points in this way.

Final Grade

As explained above, each one of your papers is given a grade on a 4-point scale. To calculate your final grade, we take the (unweighted) average of the scores of your 4 highest scoring single reading papers and your 2 highest scoring connection papers, add any extra credit for contribution to the wiki, and then assign you a letter grade according to the following rules:

average 4-point score	final letter grade
at or above 3.85	A
at or above 3.5, less than 3.85	A-

average 4 point score final letter grade

at or above 3.15, less than 3.5 B+

at or above 2.85, less than 3.15 B

at or above 2.5, less than 2.85 B-

at or above 2.15, less than 2.5 C+

at or above 1.85, less than 2.15 C

at or above 1.5, less than 1.85 C-

at or above 1, less than 1.5 D

less than 1 E

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