

## Political Science 104—Discussion Section Syllabus

Brett Kyle, TA

Office Hours: T, 12:15-1:15; W, 10:50-11:50

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Wednesdays: 8:50-9:40am (314; [polisci104-314-s09@lists.wisc.edu](mailto:polisci104-314-s09@lists.wisc.edu)) 2611 Humanities  
9:55-10:45am (323; [polisci104-323-s09@lists.wisc.edu](mailto:polisci104-323-s09@lists.wisc.edu)) 2131 Humanities  
12:05-12:55pm (315; [polisci104-315-s09@lists.wisc.edu](mailto:polisci104-315-s09@lists.wisc.edu)) 286 Van Hise  
1:20-2:10pm (316; [polisci104-316-s09@lists.wisc.edu](mailto:polisci104-316-s09@lists.wisc.edu)) B379 Chemistry

**Purpose of Section:** The purpose of section is to enable you to better absorb the material from the lectures and the readings and to allow you to utilize your critical thinking skills. You will give presentations, write memos, and engage in general discussion. Your section performance counts for **20%** of your course grade.

**Attendance & Participation (5%):** I will take attendance at each section. You are expected to inform me in advance if you are going to be absent. You are allowed one absence. Any absence after that will negatively impact your grade. Consistent tardiness (i.e. more than once) will negatively impact your grade. Come to section prepared to **ask** and **answer** questions. Every week I will prepare you for the exams by getting you to review the material you have read and the material you have been presented with in lecture. Your participation will be evaluated on how well you are prepared and how constructively you contribute to section discussion.

**Presentations & Memos (15%):** Students will give short presentations (3-5 minutes) and write 1-page memos. The goal is to *apply* your knowledge of course material to what is going on in the real world. This will require that you keep up with current events by reading a major daily newspaper (New York Times, Washington Post, LA Times) as well as keeping up with the course readings and lecture. Professor Goldstein intends for this assignment to give you practice doing what will be expected of you in the “real world”—talking in front of groups for very short periods of time and being equally succinct in your writing. The key is to get your message across with clarity and brevity. Details follow:

Presentations—

- Each student will give two presentations over the course of the semester
- Students will work in **pairs**
- The pair will have a **maximum** of 5 minutes—remember, the goal is to be succinct!
- Provide a handout so your audience can follow along
- Illustrate your points graphically—use maps, graphs, charts, etc. (as you have seen Professor Goldstein do in lecture)

Memos—

- Each student will write a one-page—and no more than one page—memo for each presentation he or she gives, to be turned in on the day of the presentation
- Students will write these **individually**
- The memo should **NOT** just be the text of the presentation—that is, do not read from your memo. Rather, use this part of the assignment to collect your thoughts and practice your writing skills—it is always a challenge to write less than more... remember the goal

**Grading Criteria for Presentations & Memos—They should do these things:**

- Describe the issue/problem/policy/current event that you are focusing on
- Demonstrate its significance—answer the “so what” question. Why should we care?
- Connect it to the lecture/readings
- Demonstrate “thinking like a social scientist”—consider cause/correlation, variables, what is different about the political science take on the issue versus the media’s take...
- Make a policy recommendation (if appropriate)
- Do all of this clearly and briefly

**Presentation Critiques:** You will also practice critiquing your colleagues’ work. After each presentation, assigned students will be responsible for commenting on, and asking questions about, the issues raised in the presentation. Substantive comments are best. Consider questions of clarification, other directions the presenter could have taken with the issue, other course material that the issue is connected to, etc. The comments should be more than just: “yeah, that was good...”

- Each student will do two critiques over the course of the semester (100-200 words each)
- The comments must be submitted to the TA within one week of the presentation
- You will be graded on the quality of your critique

**Norms for Discussion:** In the social sciences, a norm is an expectation of social behavior. I have two important norms for behavior in our discussions. The first is **Do Not Interrupt the TA or Other Students**. The second is that you approach discussions with a positive attitude and with respect for your peers. There will be times when we discuss contentious issues, and it is important that you attempt to understand one another and demonstrate respect for ideas that differ from your own.

**Office Hours & Grading Issues:** You are encouraged to come to office hours with questions on course material. If you cannot make it to scheduled office hours, please contact me at [bjkyle@wisc.edu](mailto:bjkyle@wisc.edu) to schedule an appointment. Provide me with a few days notice of when you would like to meet (ex: emailing on Tuesday to ask about meeting on Thursday). Arranging a meeting may take some back and forth with messages, so plan ahead and be patient. Students may email me with questions, but they need to be limited to questions of clarification that can be answered in a sentence or two. For anything requiring a detailed response or a back-and-forth dialogue you need to meet with me in person. Also, you must be sure to email me from your UW account. I cannot discuss your progress or any other related matter if you use an alternative email address. If there are concerns with a given grade, the student is required to wait at least 24 hours before contesting the grade and must submit the concern in writing. I will review the assignment in its entirety, so students should be aware that their grade after a second review could be lower than the grade originally given.

**McBurney Center:** Students utilizing the McBurney Disability Resource Center must present their Verified Individualized Service and Accommodation (VISA) plan and all necessary documentation to Professor Goldstein and to me within the first two weeks of class.

**Academic Integrity:** Any form of cheating or plagiarism will be subject to harsh penalties as outlined by university policies on academic misconduct (<http://www.wisc.edu/students/saja/misconduct/UWS14.html#overview>).