Course Syllabus

Department Name: POLS & IA  
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Instructor: Charles H. "Trey" Wilson III  
Office Location: Hansford Hall 336

Course #: POLS 4590  
Office Phone #: (706) 867-2581*

Title: “Special Topics - American Law”  
Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 9:00 a.m. until 9:30 a.m., 12:15 p.m. until 2:00 p.m., & from 5:00 p.m. until 5:45 p.m. (appointments preferred)

Scheduled class time: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 9:30 a.m. - 10:45 a.m. in Memorial Hall 208**
*Note that email is the better way to reach me.
**Note that virtual and/or outside-of-class activities may occur in lieu of some class meetings.

Prerequisites: POLS 1101 or POLS 1101H

Corequisites: None

Course Description: This course will examine the sources and substance of American law from the Colonial period to the modern day.

Course Objectives
• Students will demonstrate collegiate level reading comprehension and effective writing
• Students will demonstrate collegiate level analytical and contextual thinking
• Students will analyze forms of expression that reflect individual, social, or cultural values
• Students will describe human behavior as a function of the commonality or diversity within or between groups
• Students will explain the interaction between US culture, history, or governance
• Students will demonstrate the ability to interpret, analyze, evaluate, make inferences, or explain an issue, artifact, or event

Methods of Instruction
In-class lecture, discussion, and perhaps via outside-of-class activities (virtual or otherwise).

Evaluation Methods
Your final letter grade for the course will be comprised of the following graded aspects, weighted as shown:

First examination – 25%
Second examination – 25%
Final examination – 25%
Class participation (includes virtual activities) – 25%

(Please see below for additional information about each of these evaluation methods.)

I will total the percentage points you accrue from these means and assign your final letter grade based upon the following grading scale: 100 - 90%: "A", 89 - 80%: "B", 79 - 70%: "C", 69 - 60%: "D", 59% and below: "F"

Students must accept that not all grades can be derived objectively; I will be judging your performance in some aspects and will assign grades based solely upon my assessment of how well you did. I pledge to be fair and impartial in any grading I must complete subjectively.
Knowledge Base/Required Textbook


Additional reading assignments may be required. These will be of reasonable length and accessible either online or in class.

General Expectations & Course Policies

The following items detail various course policies and expectations. Additional policies and guidelines that supplement this syllabus are also located online at the following URL: [http://ung.edu/academic-affairs/policies-and-guidelines/supplemental-syllabus.php](http://ung.edu/academic-affairs/policies-and-guidelines/supplemental-syllabus.php). Students should familiarize themselves with the materials at this link as well as the policies detailed below.

- **Class attendance policy:** "If a student’s total number of absences exceeds 14% of the scheduled classes, it shall become the prerogative of the instructor to drop the student from the class roll with a W or WF or to continue the student in class" (*Student Handbook*, 14). By the second session of class, please choose a permanent seat so a seating chart may be kept for discussion and attendance purposes.

- **Class participation policy:** Please see below under “Evaluation Methods.”

- **Individual vs. collaborative work policy:** Students shall work individually when taking examinations (though studying together is encouraged).

- **Class withdrawal policy:** In cases other than for excessive absences, it is the responsibility of the student to withdraw from a course. 4:59 p.m. on the published semester mid-point date is the last moment to withdraw from the course with a grade of “W”; you must withdraw by 5:00 p.m. on this date to avoid an academic penalty. Withdrawal through this date, for whatever reason, should result in a grade of “W” for the course. Withdrawal after this date will likely result in a grade of “WF,” which will negatively impact your GPA.

- **Academic integrity:** The UNG Honor Code operates in this course and reads: “On my honor, I will not lie, cheat, steal, plagiarize, evade the truth, conspire to deceive, or tolerate those who do” (*Student Handbook*). Suspected violations of the Academic Integrity policy should be referred by students to the instructor. The identity of individuals reporting violators will be kept confidential. If the professor concludes that a violation of the Academic Integrity policy has occurred, the professor will either (1) penalize the student “in house” and/or file an incident report with the Academic Integrity Council or (2) refer the matter directly to the Academic Integrity Council. If an incident report is filed by the instructor, the instructor will review the completed report with the student and will request that the student sign the report as an indication that the student is aware of the contents of the report.

  Above all, note that the instructor reserves the right to give a student a lower grade, such as an “F,” on either individual assignments or in the course overall in case of academic integrity violations such as cheating or plagiarism.

- **TurnItIn.com:** Broadly defined, plagiarism is the act of presenting another’s words and/or ideas as one’s own original work in the absence of proper citations that would attribute the matter to an actual source. This is a very serious offense. Students agree that by taking this course any required work may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to services such as TurnItIn.com for the detection of plagiarism. Students also agree that other methods for checking for plagiarism (e.g., simply “Googling” excerpts from papers)
may likewise be employed. All submitted work may be included as source documents in the TurnItIn.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the TurnItIn.com service is subject to the Terms and Conditions of Use posted on the TurnItIn.com site.

• Make-up examinations: Make-ups for missed examinations (possibly in a different format from that of the regularly scheduled examination) will be administered only for students with prompt and proper documentation (e.g., physician's note, etc.) for missing an examination. Absent such documentation, make-up examinations are not possible. Also, any students with significant religious or vocational commitments that conflict with a scheduled examination will be accommodated, providing accommodating arrangements are made with the instructor well in advance of a published examination date.

• Student behavior: Courtesy is ALWAYS expected of students. Students who exhibit behaviors that are considered to obstruct or disrupt this class or its learning activities will be considered under the Board of Regents Policy on Disruptive Behavior. Behaviors which are considered to be inappropriate in the classroom include sleeping, eating, coming in late, interrupting others, talking out of turn, inappropriate behavior during group work, verbal (or nonverbal) behavior that is disrespectful of other students or the faculty member, or other behaviors that may be disruptive. Students who exhibit such behaviors may be temporarily dismissed from the class by the instructor and may be subject to disciplinary procedures. Disruptive behavior may also result in a failing grade in addition to disciplinary action. Please note that the spirit of this policy extends to online interactions between students as well. Behaviors unacceptable in an online environment would primarily include making inappropriate comments in online discussion posts or in other forms of electronic communication to fellow students or the instructor. Such behaviors will also not be tolerated. Please be respectful of the views and opinions of other students even if they differ from your own. Also, please keep an open mind and a positive (maybe even enthusiastic...) attitude.

• Make-up Work, Extensions of Due Dates, and Extra Credit: All deadlines in this course are firm; no opportunities to make up any missed work will be provided, nor do I anticipate offering any extra credit. Simply put, for any assignment, late work will not be accepted nor due dates extended for any reason, so please do not even ask about it. In particular, students would be VERY wise to bear this in mind while deciding when to tackle virtual assignments. Do the assignments sooner rather than later. Note that this policy applies even in the face of circumstances that may be beyond your control. So, for example, if you get sick toward the end of a week or if a thunderstorm knocks out your power and/or Internet connection over a weekend leaving you in the lurch when you otherwise might have had time to finish participating in that online discussion virtual activity, you will not be permitted to make up the assignment missed or to turn it in late. Complete your work early to guard against these kinds of things.

• Accommodation of students with disabilities: This University is committed to equal access to its programs, services, and activities, and welcomes otherwise qualified students with disabilities. Students who require accommodations and services must register with Disability Services and submit supporting documentation. Disability Services provides accommodation memos for eligible students to give to their instructors. Students are responsible for making arrangements with instructors, and must give reasonable prior notice of the need for accommodation.

• Class evaluations: Class evaluations at North Georgia are now conducted online through BANNER. Evaluation of the class is considered a component of the course and students will not be permitted to access their course grade until the evaluation has been completed. The evaluations will be accessible beginning one week prior to Final Exam week.
Course Content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weeks in Semester</th>
<th>Material for class discussion will relate to corresponding reading assignment in the textbook, so please read prior to class to better inform class discussion.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 (Jan. 6, 8) &amp; 2 (Jan. 13, 15)</td>
<td>Introduction to course/Chapter 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 (Jan. 20, 22) &amp; 4 (Jan. 27, 29)</td>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 (Feb. 3, 5) &amp; 6 (Feb. 10, 12)</td>
<td>Review for First Examination; First Examination Chapter 3</td>
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<td>7 (Feb. 17, 19) &amp; 8 (Feb. 24, 26)</td>
<td>Chapter 3 Chapter 4</td>
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<td><strong>Feb. 27=midpoint</strong></td>
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<td>9 (Mar. 3, 5) &amp; 10 (Mar. 10, 12)</td>
<td>Chapter 4 Review for Second Examination; Second Examination</td>
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<tr>
<td>13 (Mar. 31, Apr. 2) &amp; 14 (Apr. 7, 9)</td>
<td>Chapter 5 No class; Chapter 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 (Apr. 14, 16) &amp; 16 (Apr. 21, 23)</td>
<td>Chapter 6 Review for Final Examination</td>
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<td><strong>Final Examination, Thursday, April 30, 10:20 a.m. – 12:20 p.m.</strong></td>
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Appendix One: Course Evaluation Methods

**Examinations**

There will be three (3) examinations (two “in class” and one final) in this course spaced roughly five weeks or so apart from each other. Each will count for 25% of your final grade. The two in class examinations will be non-cumulative, covering only the material under study since either the beginning of the course (in the case of Examination One) or since the previous examination (Examination Two). The Final Examination may be, at least in part, cumulative. Each examination may consist of any combination of multiple-choice, short answer, or essay questions deemed appropriate by your instructor.

To prepare for the examinations, in addition to thoroughly reading assignments from your textbook and elsewhere, students should pay attention in class and diligently take detailed class notes. Since it is unlikely your future employers and/or graduate and law school programs will distribute “study guides” to you for any reason, I shall not do so in this course either. I will, however, happily meet with any student to discuss how one might develop such guides independently and to discuss other study and test-taking strategies that might prove worth noting.
Class Participation
At minimum, "satisfactory" class attendance and participation are expected of all students. All students should plan on attending class and making some contribution to the class discussion during each and every class session. However, conscientious students will greatly exceed this base criterion. Students with exemplary attendance records who consistently and productively engage in class discussions whether by being called upon or by volunteering to speak will be rewarded for their excellence. Conversely, students who demonstrate a lack of preparation for class by being unable to answer questions or by being inattentive in class may be penalized.

The instructor also reserves the right to dismiss from any class meeting any student who seems to be particularly unprepared or inattentive. It is simply not fair for unprepared students to sit idly by in class taking notes while their peers who actually prepared for class by reading and digesting the material do all of the work by carrying the class discussion along. If you consistently do not read and take notes from the reading assignments that we will be discussing in our class meetings, then please do not bother showing up to class. What you must NOT do when called upon would be to try to hastily read the text for the first time on-the-spot and clumsily try to formulate an answer. That wastes everyone's time. If you do not know the answer to a question posed to you, simply admit that you cannot answer and I will ask another student to assist you. There is no shame at all in not knowing the correct response to an occasional question—just don’t make a habit of it.

Students must understand and accept that, by nature, determining one’s class participation grade is largely a subjective process. Know that throughout the term I will call on several students in any given class meeting session to answer questions; consequently, everyone will have ample opportunity to contribute to the class discussion, either by being called upon or by volunteering to speak. Also, know that I will never ask a question with the intent to “stump” or embarrass a student. I will keep a rudimentary tally of all students’ performance during the semester. Generally speaking, I note the most students who consistently participate well and students who consistently participate poorly; everyone else would be doing about “average” in terms of class participation. If they wish, any student may periodically inquire with me before or after class for an informal assessment of about where I esteem them to be in terms of their class participation grade. I will generally include in that assessment references to other students in the class who I believe are doing "A quality" work in class participation so as to give a basis for comparison. (Any student who would prefer that I not use them as exemplars of good-quality class participation may communicate this to me and I will refrain from mentioning them.)

Another aspect of your class participation grade will be constituted by your performance on several “Virtual Activities” that may be assigned throughout the term. A few times during the semester, you may be asked to complete activities delivered in an online format in lieu of attending a regularly scheduled meeting of class. These Virtual Activities may take several forms. For example, I may ask you to participate in an online threaded discussion, to view a video and respond to questions about it, to complete a modest written assignment, to attend a speaker’s presentation on campus, etc. These activities will be posted on the course D2L homepage. The assignments will typically be made accessible to you a day or so before the dates indicated on the tentative course schedule that a particular virtual assignment will substitute for a class meeting. You will need to complete the assignment prior to the beginning of the next regularly scheduled class meeting session, unless otherwise indicated. Typically then, for any given week, a Virtual Activity will open for you to complete on Thursday. You will work on the activity over the next few days and will not be required to attend class on Thursday to afford you the time you will need to address the assignment. The activity would then have to be completed and submitted either online or in-class prior to the start of class on Tuesday of the immediately following week. Note that some activities such as online discussions (if assigned) cannot really be
adequately completed in a single sitting by your making a single discussion post. So, you will want to start work on an activity of this nature sooner rather than later so you will be able to make multiple posts and responses over the course of a few days. Note also that Virtual Activities may not be submitted late or made up for any reason, so it would be prudent not to procrastinate as you tackle completing these assignments. Virtual Activities will typically be graded on a “pass/fail” basis. Please note that attaining a passing grade on any individual assignment will require putting forth no small amount of effort. In other words, simply submitting some work product in response to a virtual assignment is no guarantee you will pass it.

Final grades for class participation are cumulative and so cannot be calculated until the end of the semester. Overall, your class participation grade will count for 25% of your overall course grade.