

The University of North Carolina Wilmington  
Department of Political Science  
Spring, 2007

**PLS 401: SENIOR SEMINAR**

Dr. Tom Barth  
Office: Leutze Hall 270

Phone: 962-3385 (w) 231-1181 (cell)  
Email: [bartht@uncw.edu](mailto:bartht@uncw.edu)

Office Hours: M-W-F 9:00 – 10:00 a.m.  
Tuesdays 5:00 – 6:00 p.m. or by appointment

Class Hours: M-W-F: 11:00 – 11:50 a.m. LH 111

**I. COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES**

This is the capstone course for senior political science majors. The course examines the relationship between the study of political science and career choice and promotes critical thinking by providing students the opportunity to demonstrate what they have learned as a political science major to fundamental concepts of government and political issues of the day. This class also serves as the Department's oral competency course and will also focus on the continued development of writing skills. No political science major should graduate without sound oral presentation and writing skills.

**Course Objectives:**

- To further develop oral competency by presenting information to the class and receiving feedback from the instructor and peers.
- To be able to demonstrate and translate what has been learned as a political science major by analysis of concepts and major public issues facing American citizens and public leaders.
- Apply what has been learned in the major by completing an active learning project appropriate to the student's interests.
- Polish skills in writing and research that reflect clear and reasoned thinking.
- Assess the acquisition of learning outcomes established for political science majors.
- To clarify post-graduation career plans.

**II. READINGS**

To be assigned as appropriate throughout the semester.

### **III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

#### **A. Participation (20%)**

A seminar by definition requires the presence of students and their enthusiastic participation. The participation grade will be based on attendance (100% attendance and timely arrival expected unless prior approval is received from the instructor) and energy/preparedness for issue discussions and other assignments. As a guideline all students are allowed three absences; four absences = automatic C; and five absences = automatic F on this portion of the grade.

#### **B. Writing and Presentation Exercise on Political Identity (20%)**

The political identity exercise will be a five page essay that describes your personal political identity. What political ideology (conservative, liberal, independent, socialist, etc.) most accurately describes your personal philosophy? What are the core concepts? Who are the civic or political leaders you admire and determine what philosophy guides them. Include the writings of both contemporary and classic political thinkers to trace the lineage of your philosophy. Papers will be presented to the class in no more than five minutes. Both writing and presentation effectiveness will be graded. **Papers due on February 5.**

#### **C. Applied Research Paper (20%)**

A political science major should be able to demonstrate the basic research and writing skills necessary to produce a quality paper relevant to the discipline. Each student shall identify a question related to political science that puzzles them, conduct research that addresses the question, and write a ten page paper with appropriate citations that answers the question.

#### **D. PLS Major Portfolio (10%)**

Students must compile a folder (appropriate for professional presentation) containing at least three papers from courses they have taken as a political science major (papers should be edited). Students must examine these papers and write a five page descriptive essay on what these papers demonstrate about their experiences in political science at UNCW. Essays will be graded on clarity and writing. A polished resume must also be included. **Portfolios will be assessed by peers in class on April 2 and 27.**

## **E. Active Learning Experience (30%)**

The College of Arts and Sciences is embarking on an initiative to require all students to have an opportunity to apply what they have learned in the major to the relevant professional world. As political science majors, that world relates to the public sphere, whether it be electoral politics, public policy, public administration, interest groups, public law, etc. To achieve this experience, at the beginning of the semester the class will brainstorm and identify a list of relevant active learning projects, which students will form, teams around and complete by the end of the semester. Possibilities include but are not limited to:

- design the strategy and structure for a political campaign
- develop a public interest group
- develop a proposed piece of legislation
- conduct a political poll
- evaluate a government program
- creation of a nonprofit organization
- develop a policy or program to address a pressing problem

Teams will develop a contract with the instructor detailing the final product and will present their projects at the end of the semester. Class time will be devoted to updates and team meetings throughout the semester but it is expected that teams will also meet outside of class. Peer evaluations will be conducted to avoid any “free riders.”

## **IV. COURSE SCHEDULE**

January 10	<b>Introductions and Course Expectations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Description of current career plans</li><li>■ Review of Syllabus</li></ul>
January 12	<b>No Class</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Reflect on active learning project and research topic</li></ul>
January 15	<b>Martin Luther King Holiday (no class)</b>
January 16	<b>Extra Credit: Julian Bond Lecture (evening...Kenan Aud)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Two page typed reflection by Jan. 19 (5 pts. toward lowest portion of grade...must show ticket stub)</li></ul>
January 17	<b>Class Forum on Campus Diversity</b>
January 19	<b>Class Forum on Campus Diversity</b>

January 22	<b>Brainstorm on Active Learning Projects</b>
January 24	<b>Assignment of Active Learning Project Teams</b>
January 26	<b>Active Learning Team Strategy Meetings</b>
January 29	<b>Career Development Self-Assessment</b> ■ Myers-Briggs Type Indicator
	<b>***Note: Research Paper Topic Due (one page description of question to be addressed)***</b>
January 31	<b>Career Development Self-Assessment</b> ■ Career Anchor Theory
February 2	<b>Career Development Guidance</b> ■ Speaker: What Do You Do with a Political Science Degree?
February 5	<b>Political Identity Presentations</b>  <b>***Note: All papers due***</b>
February 7	<b>Political Identity Presentations</b>
February 9	<b>Political Identity Presentations</b>
February 12	<b>Active Learning Project Team Updates (Strategy and Workplan)</b>
February 14	<b>Active Learning Project Team Updates (Strategy and Workplan)</b>
February 16	<b>Active Learning Project Team Updates (Strategy and Workplan)</b>
February 19	<b>Class Forum on Ethics</b>
February 21	<b>Class Forum on Ethics</b>
February 23	<b>Class Forum on Ethics</b>
February 26	<b>No Class – Active Learning Project Team Meetings</b>
February 28	<b>No Class – Active Learning Project Team Meetings</b>
March 2	<b>Consultation on Active Learning Projects</b>
March 5-9	<b>Spring Break – No Class</b>

March 12	<b>Research Paper Presentations</b>
	<b>***Note: All papers due***</b>
March 14	<b>Research Paper Presentations</b>
March 16	<b>Research Paper Presentations</b>
March 19	<b>American Government Assessment with Faculty</b>
March 21	<b>Political Theory Assessment with Faculty</b>
March 23	<b>IR/CP Assessment with Faculty</b>
March 26	<b>Active Learning Project Team Updates (Strategy and Workplan)</b>
March 28	<b>Active Learning Project Team Updates (Strategy and Workplan)</b>
March 30	<b>Active Learning Project Team Updates (Strategy and Workplan)</b>
April 2	<b>Sharing of Draft Portfolios</b>
April 4	<b>Class Forum on Leadership</b>
April 6	<b>No Class</b>
April 9	<b>Class Forum on Leadership</b>
April 11	<b>Class Forum on Leadership</b>
April 13	<b>Active Learning Team Meetings</b>
April 16	<b>Active Learning Team Meetings</b>
April 18	<b>Active Learning Team Meetings</b>
April 20	<b>Active Learning Project Presentations</b>
April 23	<b>Active Learning Project Presentations</b>
April 25	<b>Active Learning Project Presentations</b>
April 27	<b>Sharing of Final Portfolios</b>
April 30	<b>Last Day of Class</b>
	■ Student assessment of course and experience as a PLS Major