

CONTACT INFORMATION

Office: Leutze - 118
E-mail: lowery@uncw.edu
Personal web page: <http://people.uncw.edu/lowery/>
Course web page: <http://people.uncw.edu/lowery/pls203/index.htm>
Office Hours: http://people.uncw.edu/lowery/Weekly_schedule_Spring_2014.pdf

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- This course examines the origin, nature, and consequence of religion's influence on politics in the United States. As we shall see, the free exercise of religious beliefs can take a political form that is passive or active, can have results that are positive or negative, and can be motivated by beliefs that are liberal or conservative. We will also observe religion's influence reaching far beyond clearly religious issues -- like the legal status of abortion -- to supposedly secular issues of economic growth, public safety, world peace, and social justice. Religion is relevant to American politics far beyond the contentious church-and-state issues like public-school prayer. Throughout history, religious communities have entered the political arena in organized efforts to shape public policy on a wide range of issues. The United States is no exception.
- A basic assumption of this course is that religion is only one of many competing influences upon political values, institutions, and policies. Thus, a second course objective is to identify the conditions that enhance religious influence upon government and politics. A related goal is to understand those circumstances that limit the political impact of religious forces.
- This course also examines the influence of government and politics on religion in the United States. We will study how the legal status of religious organizations has changed over time in response to changing interpretations of what Thomas Jefferson and other founding fathers meant by a "wall of separation" between church and state.
- Another basic assumption of this course is that the study of religion and politics has value to both believers and skeptics, to those who applaud the connections between religion and politics as necessary and proper as well as to those who see this connection as the root of mischief and tragedy. As its fourth objective, this course attempts to identify and analyze both the noble and the unfortunate sides of the religious element in politics. In doing so, the course adopts a social-scientific approach that rejects both the tendency to explain religion only in terms of supernatural forces as well as the opposite tendency to reduce all religious attitudes and behaviors to biological or genetic traits. Instead, the focus is upon those psychological, economic, and social factors that shape religious activity in the political system.
- As part of this course, you will use the Internet to enhance classroom discussions. First, I will introduce you to various web sites that summarize and interpret both survey and aggregate data pertaining to religious attitudes and behavior. Second, I will also point you towards web sites of various religious organizations. Third, we will all use email as a communication tool to share information throughout the course.

Class meetings are intended to blend lecture and discussion. In order for the latter to prove valuable, you will need to complete the assigned readings on time and to come to the class with questions and observations in mind.

TWO REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS

Both are required and both can be obtained locally or online.

1. Wald & Calhoun-Brown. 2010. *Religion & Politics in the United States*. [6th edition]. [ISBN: 9781442201521](https://www.amazon.com/dp/9781442201521)
2. eInstruction.com. *CPS RF Pulse Clicker*. [2010 edition]. [ISBN-13: 9781881483816](https://www.amazon.com/dp/9781881483816)

STUDENT RESPONSE KEYPADS

Bring your activated *Student Response Keypad* to every class -- starting with the first class meeting. You can learn how to activate your keypad by reading the instructions posted at: http://people.uncw.edu/lowery/pls203/Handouts/Student-response_keypad_instructions_Spring_2014.pdf

- You will use the keypad in every class meeting to anonymously respond to true/false or multiple-choice questions that arise during class discussion.
- The aggregated class responses are projected on an overhead screen as full-color bar- or pie-charts, so that the class and I can see and comment upon the distribution of class responses.
- I find that the anonymity and confidentiality of this feedback method encourages all students to enthusiastically participate in this interactive form of active learning. Students who rarely or never raise their hand in response to questions are comfortable in responding with their keypads and are more likely to join the resulting discussion of how and why the class divided in their collective responses.
- The keypad responses also give me immediate feedback regarding the extent to which students understand concepts being discussed. This allows me to make informed decisions about the pace and organization of class discussions.

TESTS AND GRADING

Your course grade will be based on a total of 400 points divided in equal fourths between quizzes, two hourly examinations, and a final examination.

- A series of eleven 10-point quizzes keyed to the assigned readings will contribute a possible 100 points toward your course grade. Your total quiz score will be computed by first deleting the lowest quiz score and then averaging the remaining quiz scores and multiplying that quiz average times 10.
- The two hourly and one final examination will each contribute a possible 100 points toward your course grade. Each exam will be one-half essay (optional) and one-half multiple choice. Essay review guides are available on the course web page. If you choose not to do the essay, the multiple-choice portion of the exam will be worth 100 points. Prior to each exam, a list of essay topics will be provided on the course website. Prior to each assigned reading and class discussion, a chapter outline will be provided on the course website that includes material that relates to one of the essay topics.
- Up to 25 bonus points can be added to your total course points, if you are the first to report to me (by email from your UNCW email account) any typographical or substantive errors in any course materials (available on the web, handed out in class, or included in a reading assignment). Each

typographical error (spelling, punctuation, syntax, etc.) is worth 1 point added to your final course point total. Each *substantive error* (an error of fact or interpretation) is worth up to 3 points. In order to earn bonus points, your email must come from your UNCW email account and include:

- where the error was found
 - if in a textbook, give the book title, page and paragraph number,
 - if on a Web page, then copy the URL and tell where on the page you see the error
- what correction you suggest to replace the error.

All components of the final course grade are combined before a course letter grade is determined, using the following scale:

- A = 90–100% of total possible points
- B = 80– 89% of total possible points
- C = 70– 79% of total possible points
- D = 60– 69% of total possible points
- F = 00– 59% of total possible points

Any form of cheating on any graded work will result in an automatic grade of F for the course, no matter what the quality of all other course work.

REQUIRED ATTENDANCE

If you are a full-time, in–state student, the tuition and fees that you pay (**\$6,343 per year**) account for *about one-fourth* of the annual cost of your education at UNCW (**more than \$20,825**).¹ The taxpayers of North Carolina pay much of the difference. This public assistance amounts to more than \$14,482 per year (think of it as tuition stamps) for each in-state, full-time student.² Out-of-state students pay **\$18,479 per year** in tuition and fees about 89% of the annual operating-budget cost. NC taxpayers (over three-fourths of whom are *not* college graduates) have a right to expect that you attend classes -- *their* money pays for a significant portion of *your* public-university education. UNCW's in-state tuition & fees (2013-14) are lower than those at all 17 of our peer institutions:

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|---------------------------------------|----------|--|---------|
| • College of New Jersey | \$14,730 | • Towson University | \$8,602 |
| • College of William & Mary | \$14,165 | • Cal Poly - San Luis Obispo | \$8,523 |
| • Rowan U. (NJ) | \$12,380 | • SUNY Binghamton | \$8,069 |
| • James Madison University | \$11,827 | • U of Northern Iowa | \$7,685 |
| • UT-Dallas | \$11,804 | • U of Maine | \$7,277 |
| • College of Charleston | \$10,230 | • Murray St. U. (KY) | \$7,044 |
| • U of Maryland - Baltimore | \$8,909 | • Truman State U. | \$7,096 |
| • U-W Eau Claire | \$8,710 | • Cal St - Chico | \$6,972 |
| • Western Washington U. | \$8,863 | | |

PENALIZED ABSENCES

- **In the real (job) world, unforeseen circumstances (alarm clock doesn't go off, car trouble) are accepted as legitimate excuses for short and infrequent absences from work. Similarly, in this course two un-penalized absences will be allowed (equivalent to a full week's worth of classes in a regular semester). For each additional un-excused absence, your final course grade will be reduced one letter grade.**
- *In addition, no makeup quizzes or exams will be given for un-excused absences occurring under normal circumstances. An un-excused absence will result in a grade of zero for any quiz, hourly, or final exam.*
- If late to class, it is your responsibility to ensure (*immediately after class*) that you are recorded present on the class attendance roll. Should you fail to ask to be marked present after class, you will have used up one of any remaining un-penalized absences. Your being late to class is not a problem *as long as this happens infrequently. If you are tardy, see me immediately after class to make sure that your name was counted on the roll -- otherwise, you will be marked absent.*
- Once in class, it is expected that you will stay until dismissed or unless some foreseen or unforeseen emergency occurs. In the former case, please advise me ahead of class; in the latter case, leave class as quietly as possible and inform me as soon as possible of the circumstances that led to your unexpected departure. *Otherwise, you will be marked absent for that day.*

EXCUSED ABSENCES

- In the real (job) world, frequent or lengthy absences are excused only in cases of serious illness or injury, death in the immediate family, or other catastrophic events. Similarly, in this course, *truly extraordinary circumstances that rarely occur may warrant special arrangements that will be made on a case-by-case basis. Excused absences require written documentation.*
- **The following circumstances do not constitute an excused absence: job conflicts, an alarm clock that doesn't go off, or an illness that was not serious enough to send you to a healthcare provider who can provide written documentation. Save your two "free cuts" for situations like these.**
- Once in class, it is expected that you will stay until dismissed or unless some foreseen or unforeseen emergency occurs. In the former case, please advise me ahead of class; in the latter case, leave class as quietly as possible and inform me as soon as possible of the circumstances that led to your unexpected departure. *Otherwise, you will be marked absent for that day.*

¹ \$286,000,000 UNCW 2013-14 operating budget (estimated) divided by 13,733 student FTEs. Revenue sources for the University include state appropriations (33 percent); the other 67% comes from student tuition & fees, endowments, federal contracts & grants, auxiliary enterprises, etc. See: <http://www.uncw.edu/aboutuncw/aboutJustthefacts.html>

² This public assistance is actually greatly understated because it does not reflect the cost of the state's capital investment in UNCW's buildings and grounds – currently valued at approximately \$210,000,000.