

Department.: Political Science

Course number: POLS 296W

Course title: "Political Issues"

Credits: 3

Contact Person: Jennifer Sterling-Folker, Associate Professor

Catalog Copy: "POLS296W. Political Issues. Prerequisite: ENGL 105 or 110 or 111 or 250." This course is a W variant of POLS296.

W Criteria:

The purpose of the department's political issues course is to allow individual faculty members to teach specialized courses on particular topics that do not have designated course numbers. The topics must explore the fundamental nature of political conflicts on the national and international levels. The course content varies according to the professor's particular interests, and the number of sections offered each semester varies as well.

POLS296 allows professors to test and develop courses before they are required to submit the course for C&C approval and receive an established number in the undergraduate catalog. POLS296 also provides students with a greater variety of choices among course topics. Some topics that been taught as either POLS296 or 296W sections in the last few years include: Security and Human Rights in the Former Yugoslavia, Black Insurgency and Civil Rights, Arab-Israeli Conflict, Mass Media and Politics, Comparative Social Policy, Homeland Security, The Political of Supreme Court Litigation, and Black Feminist Politics.

The W variant of POLS296 allows faculty members to teach a POLS296 course as a W. Our POLS296W courses always have high enrollment, and the POLS296W option allows us to provide more W courses for our majors. The writing requirements of all POLS296W courses must abide by specific departmental

expectations. The department allows instructors of POLS296Ws to choose between two options in structuring their writing requirements for the course. Their first option is to require a series of short papers that will be commented on by the instructor and subsequently revised by the students. Their second option is to require a series of drafts for a longer, final paper (usually a research paper), all of which will be commented on by the instructor and subsequently revised by the students. In both of these options, students must write a minimum of 15 revised pages. Which of these options the instructor chooses must be informed by its suitability to the course's specific content, as well as the instructor's own preferences. All options require that the instructor provide feedback, advice, and comment on the student's written work. In each case, the writing component of the course must be worth 60% of the final grade, and students who fail the writing component fail the course.

Instructors are expected to build time into their course schedules to discuss the techniques of writing and revision with their class. They are also expected to be available either during class or office hours to discuss writing topics and concerns with their students. They are required hold a midterm and a final exam, and to ensure that the writing assignments are worth an appropriate percentage of the student's final grade.

In order to insure that these expectations are met, all instructors who have requested to teach a POLS296W course must develop a syllabus that clearly specifies which of these options they have chosen and how writing is incorporated into the course. Prior to the start of the semester, the instructor is required to submit a copy of this syllabus to the Department's Director of Undergraduate Studies for review. Any syllabus that does not meet the above expectations is returned to the instructor for revision. In this way, the department ensures that there is oversight in the writing quality and standards of its POLS296W courses.

The primary modes of writing instructions in POLS296W courses include the expectations that all writing options available to the instructor require that the instructor provide feedback, advice, and comment on the student's written work. Instructors are expected to build time into their course schedules to discuss the techniques of writing and revision with their class. They are also expected to be available either during class or office hours to discuss writing concerns with their students.

All of the options available to instructors of POLS296W require that revision be structured into the writing assignments of the course. If the instructor chooses to require a series of short papers, the instructor is expected to comment on these drafts and have students revise them into a series of final, short papers. If the instructor chooses to require a series of drafts for a longer, final paper, the instructor must comment on and have students revise each draft before they can submit the final, long paper.

Role of Grad Students: The department has not relied on graduate students to teach W courses or sections in the past, nor does it intend to do so in the future.