

SOUTHERN POLITICS

POL 461

Dr. Thornberry
Ext. 2282

Spring 2003
Wednesday 1:30-4:30

Scope and Coverage:

“The South may not be the nation’s number one political problem, as some northerners assert, but politics is the South’s number one problem.” -- V. O. Key

The idea of the South as a separate political unit is over a century and a half old. We will look at how history has shaped the modern South and how that South has influenced the rest of the nation. We will pay particular attention to how race, economics, and religion have shaped the political choices of the region. Using Key’s classic as our starting point, we will ask how much and in what ways the South has changed in the last 50 years.

Required Texts:

Peter Applebome -- Dixie Rising
Earl and Merle Black -- Politics and Society in the South
W. J. Cash – The Mind of the South
Robert Caro -- Path to Power
Gary Pomerantz – Where Peachtree Meets Sweet Auburn
V. O. Key -- Southern Politics in State and Nation

Participation:

Since this course is a seminar which meets only once a week, attendance and participation are both essential. Each class period is focused on a particular theme. A tentative list of readings is give on page 3 of this syllabus. Each person is expected to have done the reading before coming to class. Bring the relevant texts for the week with you.

Each Tuesday you should email me a comment for the week no later than 4 p.m. These comments should be no more than a page in length. You may use them to compare and contrast readings, apply ideas to current events, or to critique material presented. You can raise questions that the reading suggests. I will use as a starting point for class discussion. They will be graded for depth of thought. In addition, I will give you a grade each week for your overall contribution to the class. Practice proper citation form in these papers.

Major Paper

Each student in this seminar will write a research paper. This assignment will fulfill the departmental “major paper” requirement for graduation. Even if you have already written such a paper in another course, you are expected to write a paper as part of the seminar, though it need not be as extensive. Those writing a research paper should aim for 20 to 25 pages. There will be a data set available – the 1992 national election study – though you may choose a different source for data if you wish. At the end of the course, each student will make an oral presentation of the data, and all papers will be critiqued by two classmates.

Grading

Weekly comments count 20% of the final grade. Class participation counts another 10%. Each critique counts 5%, the oral presentation 20%, and the final paper 40%. Note that missing class means that you automatically lose a point on your overall average. Missing more than two classes will result in an F in the course. Coming in more than half an hour late counts as an absence.

Honor Code

All written work is covered by the Davidson Honor Code. While I encourage you to write “pledged” on all assignments, the absence of such a formal statement does not exonerate you. If there are any questions about how to footnote or what counts as common knowledge, do not hesitate to ask. Talking about material with others in the class is a great idea; once you start to write, however, all work should be your own. Using the writing center is not a violation of the code and is highly encouraged.

Office Hours

My office hours for this semester are: MWF 9:30-10:20 and TTh 2-4. If you cannot make these times, please email me for an appointment.

Extra Events

There are several speakers coming to campus this semester who will be of great interest to this class. Prominent among them are former Governor Wilder, speaking at 11 a. m. next Monday and Congressman John Lewis, who will be on campus Feb. 24th. We will have some time to speak with each of these apart from their main presentation.

Matters of Style

In writing papers, you are expected to follow all rules of standard English and to produce a product of which a literate person would be proud. Buy a dictionary and use it. Use computer programs to check your spelling. Avoid slang, contractions, indefinite antecedents, starting sentences with conjunctions, ending them with prepositions, using split infinitives, relying on "et. cetera," and the thousand other sins of which First Year English tried to cure you. Papers should be typed, have a cover sheet, and be held together firmly with some marvel of modern technology. Notation should be in the style of in text citations (Jaggar 38) and be supported by a Works Cited page at the end. Textual footnotes are permitted, but should be used sparingly.

Please pay careful attention to the suggestions which follow. You can certainly insure better grades on any written assignment by observing the conventions mentioned there. I will mark papers for grammar and spelling as well as content. Points will be deducted for those who persist in obvious errors. You should have access some type of handbook as a reference for grammar and usage.

1. Commit yourself to a specific stance. Frame and answer useful and interesting questions. Be controversial; don't be wishy-washy. There is no substitute for an interesting hypothesis.
2. Have something to say. Present a thesis. Take a stand. Prove a point. You need to show that there may be other points of view, but you should show that your ideas are worth consideration.
3. Pre-write. Take time before you actually start the paper to jot down the major points that have to be made. Consider what details you want to emphasize and what examples will illustrate your ideas. Develop your thoughts. Not only the whole paper but also each paragraph should have a beginning, a middle, and an end.
4. Use specific examples. Quote directly from sources where appropriate and useful.
5. Be selective. Do not try to tell me everything you know. Use illustrations as an example of a larger point. Never waste time merely summarizing situations.
6. Find your own voice. At times the first person may be appropriate. Write for a specific audience. Be clear and consistent in addressing that audience.
7. Use action verbs. Choose distinct nouns. Avoid "this" when the reference is vague.
8. Pay attention to spelling, punctuation, and grammar. [Examples include: Avoid split infinitives. Do not begin sentences with conjunctions except on rare occasions. Do not end sentences with prepositions. Avoid abbreviations.]
9. Use gender-inclusive language.
10. Document properly and concisely.
11. Watch transitions. Try reading your work out loud to a sympathetic friend. Can someone who hears your thoughts make sense of them?
12. Be sure to leave enough time for revising, editing, and proofreading your papers. You ought to have 24 hours between each draft. Two drafts are a minimum.
13. Keep a journal of your own errors. You will identify patterns of mistakes that will make improving your writing much easier.
14. BE INTERESTING! Writing is hard work, but the results should be fun.

Tentative Schedule

January 15: Introduction – what is the South? Film

January 22: What makes Southern Politics? Cash: intro (1+2), 3-185: K: 1-18.

January 29: The Old South in Action: K 106-129; 205-228; 254-276, 386-485.

February 5: South on the National Stage: K 317-382; 489-672.

February 12: A Study in Power: Caro: intro, 1-49, 141-160, 174-214, 241-292, 306-368.

February 19: Power Part II: Caro: 493-605, 741-768.

February 26: no class – conferences on papers

Spring Break

March 12: The New South: B+B: 1-171.

March 19: On the Road to Change: B+B: 176-316.

March 26: A Tale of Two Families: P: 69-248.

April 2: The Tale Continued: P: 251-545.

April 9: Modern Insights: A: 1-181, 211-236, 298-345.

April 16: Presentations

April 23: Convocation – conferences on papers

April 30: Presentations

May 1: Final papers due

May 7: Critiques due

