

The University of South Dakota
POLS 102: American Political Issues,
Who Shall Die? The Politics of the Death Penalty in the U.S.

Elizabeth T. Smith
 Dakota 129
 Office Hours: Tuesdays from 11-12 & Wednesdays from 10-12
 and by appointment

Fall 2006
 Phone: 677-5710
 E-mail: etsmith@usd.edu

Course meeting room: East Hall 313
 Course meeting time: Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:30 to 10:45

Catalog Description: Provides an in-depth exploration of a particular problem or issue, such as environmental control, minorities or poverty. Students learn the basic skills needed to succeed as a Political Science major

Instructional Method: Lecture and discussion.

Course Objectives

The purpose of this course is to provide new political science majors with the means to excel through the study of contemporary issues surrounding the death penalty as practiced in the United States. The course is based on two assumptions: First, academic success at the university level is a function of knowing what needs to be done, having the skills to do it, mustering the discipline to organize and complete work within prescribed time frames, and finding joy in the process. The second assumption is that the best way to accomplish these things is by doing them. Therefore, in the course of studying issues surrounding the use of the death penalty, seminar participants will also receive a comprehensive skills orientation including:

- Reading critically
- Participating actively in informed intellectual discussion
- Identifying, finding, digesting, and organizing relevant literature
- Organizing and drafting an excellent college-level research paper
- Giving memorable public presentations

The major goal of the course is that students will understand the organization, potential, and diversity of the human community through the study of the social sciences (System General Education Goal #3).

Learning Outcome	Assessment
1. Identify and explain basic concepts, terminology and theories of the selected social science disciplines from different spatial, temporal, cultural and/or institutional contexts.	Students will be evaluated with respect to this outcome in two ways: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The quantity and quality of daily class discussion as evaluated by the professor 2. A final examination that evaluates mastery of concepts, terminology, and theories from different institutional contexts
2. Apply selected social science concepts and theories to a contemporary issue	Students will demonstrate their ability to apply social science concepts and theories to a contemporary issue through writing a critical analysis of a social science problem, class discussion, the research paper, and the oral presentation.
3. Identify and explain the social or aesthetic values of different cultures.	Students will be evaluated on this ability through class exercises and discussion.
4. The origin or evolution of human	Students will be evaluated based on class discussion

institutions.	and a final examination.
5. The impact of diverse philosophical, ethical, or religious views	Evaluation of this outcome will be based on class discussion and a final examination.

Course Prerequisites: None

Course Requirements

Class Attendance

Regular class attendance and active, informed participation are mandatory and essential to doing well and getting the most from this class. It is not possible to do well in this course without regular attendance and participation. Regular attendance and active participation constitute 10 percent of the final grade.

Reading

Students will find it easier to participate and to enjoy class when they complete assigned readings and exercises before each class. Please plan to come to class prepared, and bring relevant books and notes for discussion. Occasionally, events conspire to make class preparation difficult. Should this occur, please do not miss class. Let the professor know by e-mail or in person that you will be unprepared for class and you can rest easy that you will not be called on that day. It is expected that this will not occur more than twice during the semester.

To the extent possible, course materials or the means to obtain them will be available on WebCT. You may access these at webct.usd.edu and will need a current university e-mail address and a password to do so.

Since staying current with daily public events is critical to the development of an educated person, it is strongly suggested that participants read a major daily newspaper regularly. The *New York Times* (www.nytimes.com), the *Washington Post* (www.washingtonpost.com), and other major dailies are available without charge on the Internet. Another excellent source of news is the *Washington Post National Weekly*, available to students at a deep discount (campus bookstores offer discount subscription applications).

Written assignments

Papers: Students will write a seven-page research paper and a four-page response paper during the semester, using guidelines available on WebCT. Due dates are listed in the syllabus. Please make a note of them. *Late papers will not receive full credit.* Papers should be written with special attention to spelling, grammar, punctuation, and the conventions of academic writing. Students must use a style manual to format their research paper. **NO PAPER WILL BE ACCEPTED UNLESS IT IS WRITTEN IN APA FORMAT.**

Class Policies

Disability Accommodation

Any student who feels s/he may need academic accommodations or access accommodations based on the impact of a documented disability should contact and register with Disability Services during the first week of class. Disability Services is the official office to assist students through the process of disability verification and coordination of appropriate and reasonable accommodations. Students currently registered with Disability Services must obtain a new accommodation memo each semester.

Ernetta L. Fox, Director
 Disability Services, Room 119 Service Center
 (605)677-6389
 Web Site: www.usd.edu/ds
 E-mail: dservices@usd.edu

Plagiarism Policy of the College of Arts and Sciences

The College of Arts and Sciences considers plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic dishonesty inimical to the objectives of higher education. The College supports the imposition of penalties on students who engage in academic dishonesty, as defined in the “Conduct” section of the University of South Dakota Student Handbook.

Cheating is defined as intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise (Student Conduct Code).

Plagiarism is defined as intentionally or knowingly representing the words or ideas of another as one’s own in any academic exercise (Student Conduct Code).

At the discretion of the instructor, a student caught engaging in any form of academic dishonesty may be given a zero for that assignment; allowed to rewrite and resubmit the assignment for credit; assigned a reduced grade for the course; dropped from the course; failed in the course. No credit can be given for a dishonest assignment

N.B., In general, my policy in cases of cheating or plagiarism is to give a failing grade for the course.

Freedom in learning

Students are responsible for learning the content of any course of study in which they are enrolled. Under Board of Regents and University policy, student academic performance shall be evaluated solely on an academic basis and students should be free to take reasoned exception to the data or views offered in any course of study. Students who believe that an academic evaluation is unrelated to academic standards but is related instead to judgment of their personal opinion or conduct should first contact the instructor of the course. If the student remains unsatisfied, the student may contact the department head and/or dean of the college which offers the class to initiate a review of the evaluation.

Bases of Grading:

Response Paper	25%
Research Paper	40%
Final Examination	25%
Class Participation	10%

Variable Credit Activities:

Up to FIVE additional credits will be added to your final grade based on the following activities:

- Attending a political science lecture and submitting a one-page response paper (1 credit awarded for each lecture, up to 5 credits for the course)
- Joining a political science organization on campus, attending at least two meetings and submitting a statement signed by yourself and the group’s faculty advisor attesting to your attendance (1 credit)
- Meeting with a professor in his or her office and submitting a brief summary of the meeting and how you benefited from it (1 credit)

Required Books

The following books are required and may be purchased at the Barnes and Noble Bookstore on campus or at the Nebraska Textbook Company:

Perrin, Robert	Pocket Guide to APA Style*	Houghton Mifflin	any
----------------	----------------------------	------------------	-----

Scheck, Barry, Peter Neufeld and Jim Dwyer	Actual Innocence, When justice goes wrong and how to make it right	New American Library	2001 or 2003 OK
Sundby, Scott E.	A Life and Death Decision, A jury weighs the death penalty	Palgrave Macmillan	2005
Schmidt, Diane E.	Writing in Political Science, A practical guide*	Pearson Longman	2005
Bedau, Hugo and Paul Cassell, ed.	Debating the Death Penalty	Oxford University Press	2004

Judicature Volume 89 March-April 2006 (entire issue on capital punishment)

*Please plan to retain these books throughout your college career. You will find it very useful in the future for writing papers.

Course Schedule

- August 29** **Introduction to the Death Penalty in the U.S.**
- August 31** Read three part series on Carlos de Luna case at:
<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/specials/broadband/chi-tx-htmstory.0,7935000.htmlstory>
Schmidt, Chapters 1 and 2: Political Inquiry and Critical Thinking about Politics
- September 5** **Introduction to the Capital Punishment Debate**
Read: Bedau and Cassell, Introduction and Chapters 1 and 2
“How to Read a Book for Discussion” (on WebCT)
- September 7** **The Problem of Wrongful Death**
Read: Scheck, Neufeld, and Dwyer (Introduction and chapters 1-6)
† **Due: Response paper on Scheck book** (See WebCT for guidelines on how to write a response paper)
- September 12-14** **The Problem of Wrongful Death, cont'd**
Read: Scheck, Neufeld, and Dwyer (chapters 7 through the end)
† **Due on September 12: Peer Review of assigned response paper** (See handout to be distributed in class on September 7)
- September 19-21** **The Constitution and Capital Punishment**
Oral arguments in the *Furman v. Georgia* Case
Read: Excerpts of the following court cases on WebCT (at webct.usd.edu)
Furman v. Georgia, (1972)
Gregg v. Georgia (1976)
Woodson v. North Carolina (1976)
Coker v. Georgia (1977)
Atkins v. Georgia (2002)
Roper v. Simmons (2005)
House v. Bell (2006)
“‘What Is ‘Cruel and Unusual’?” *Policy Review* 34 (Dec2005/Jan2006) p15-28.
Available through Academic Search Premier or at:
<http://search.epnet.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&an=19197225>
† **Due on September 19: Final draft of response paper on the book, Actual Innocence** (N.B., late papers will not receive full credit)

Saturday, September 23rd, kayak with Missouri River Expeditions 8:30 to 3:00—must sign up ahead

September 26-28

Capital Juries

Film and discussion: Twelve Angry Men
Read: Sundby, Chapters 1 through 3

October 3-5

Capital Juries, continued

Read: Sundby, Chapters 4 through end
† **Due on October 13: A paragraph describing your proposed research topic**

October 10

The Logic of Research: Choosing a Subject and Narrowing

Read: Schmidt, Chapters 3 and 4: Choosing a Topic and Locating Research

October 12

*****THIS CLASS WILL BE HELD AT IDWEEKS LIBRARY**

Classroom TBA

October 17-19

Race and the Death Penalty

Read: Bedau and Cassell, Chapters 4 and 5.
Schmidt, page 183: Annotated Bibliographies
† **Due on October 19: One- page précis of your research paper topic (see WebCT for guidelines on preparing a paper précis)**

October 24-26

Issues from Prosecution to Execution

Read: Bedau and Cassell, Chapters 6 and 7
Koniaris, Zimmers, Lubarsky & Sheldon, “Inadequate anaesthesia in lethal injection for execution.” *Lancet* 365 (4/16/05) 1412-1416.
† **Due on October 26: Annotated Bibliography of resources you will use to write your paper (see handout for guidelines)**

Oct. 31- Nov. 1

The Implementation of the Death Penalty in Illinois

Read: Bedau and Cassell, Chapter 8
Chicago Tribune Series (available on WebCT)
Armstrong, Ken and Maurice Possley. “The verdict: Dishonor.” *The Chicago Tribune* (10 January, 1999).
_____. “The flip side of a fair trial.” *The Chicago Tribune* (11 January, 1999).
_____. “Prosecution on trial.” *The Chicago Tribune* (12 January, 1999).
_____. “Reversal of fortune.” *The Chicago Tribune* (13 January, 1999).
_____. “Break rules, be promoted.” *The Chicago Tribune* (14 January, 1999).

November 7-9

Is the Death Penalty a Deterrent?

Reading:
Testimony of Jeffrey Fagan, U.S. Senate Hearing (on Web CT)
Donohue, John J. and Justin Wolfers (2005) “Uses and Abuses of Empirical Evidence in the Death Penalty Debate.” 58 *Stanford University Law Review*, 791.

November 14-16

The Process of Research

Read: Schmidt, Chapters 11 and 12 (read formulas, skim examples)
Schmidt, pages 197-205

The Paper Plan

Read: Schmidt: Chapter 6: Properties of Essays and Research Papers.
Schmidt: Chapter 14
Perrin, Section 1 (pages 1 to 22)

The Process of Writing: Using a Style Manual, Revisions

Read: Schmidt, Chapters 7 and 8: Common Problems and Formats
Skim Sections Two and Three of Perrin (p 25-58)

November 21

The Death Penalty Debate

November 28

Effective Oral Presentations

Read: Schmidt, pages 206 to 211

† ***Due: Research Paper*** (N.B., late papers will not receive full credit)

Nov. 30, Dec. 5, 7

Oral Presentations and Discussion of Papers

Monday, December 11

Final Examination from 7:30-9:30 am