

Political Science 449, The Politics of Gun Control
Fall 2015 Semester
Thursday, 1800-2050

Instructor: Dr. Ken Moffett
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Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 1230-1400, and by appointment.

Course Description: Gun control is a highly contentious issue about which Americans have divided opinions. In this course, we will examine the basis for the Second Amendment, differing perspectives on that part of The Constitution, federal and state gun control laws, public health implications of differing gun laws, the roles that interest groups and public opinion have with respect to our current system of gun control, and compare gun laws in the United States with those of other countries. By the end of the course, you will be able to draw upon all of these sources to understand the current debates surrounding gun control to analyze differing policy proposals using different perspectives.

Assigned Texts: Your books are available at Textbook Rental.

Spitzer, Robert J. 2015. *The Politics of Gun Control*. 5th Ed. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.

Winkler, Adam 2013. *Gun Fight: The Battle Over the Right to Bear Arms in America*. New York City, NY: W.W. Norton and Company

Other course readings and podcasts listed in this document will be provided through the course website, and are marked with an asterisk.

Learning Objectives: By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- 1) Explain the distinction between different interpretations of the Second Amendment;
- 2) Describe the major federal and Illinois state laws about gun control;
- 3) Evaluate the evidence and flaws in arguments for or against different gun laws;
- 4) Evaluate the hypothesized effects of current and proposed gun control laws; and
- 5) Communicate research findings in writing to broader audiences

Course Requirements: I will determine your grade based on a paper, an in-class presentation, a midterm examination, a *comprehensive* final exam, and participation. Your grade breaks down as follows:

Midterm Examination	100 Points
Term Paper	120 Points
Final Examination	180 Points
In-Class Presentation	75 Points
<u>Participation</u>	<u>100 Points</u>
Total	575 Points

Grading Policy: I will use the following cutoffs to determine letter grades for the course: 517 points and above, "A;" 516-460 Points, "B;" 459-402 points, "C;" 401 to 345 points, "D;" below 345 points, "F." All students who have completed thirteen weeks of the course and do not satisfy the requirements for the grades of "NS," "WR," "I," or "UW," will receive one of the aforementioned letter grades for their performance in the class.

“NS” or “no show” grades will only be assigned if a student: 1) was never in class during the semester; or 2) attended class on the first day, but at no point thereafter.

“WR” (or “withdrawal by registrar”) grades will only be assigned if all of the following criteria are satisfied: 1) a student ceases attendance and participation in the course at some point during the semester; 2) the student, his or her designee, or the Dean of Students (or his/her designee) notifies me *prior* to the end of the semester of mitigating circumstances that are beyond the student’s direct control; and 3) these circumstances exist such that a grade of “I” (or “Incomplete”) is not an appropriate option. I reserve the right to require appropriate documentation of mitigating circumstances prior to issuing a grade of “WR.” Students who do not produce this documentation, when requested, will receive a grade of “UW.” I reserve full discretion to determine whether the mitigating circumstances are sufficient to warrant the WR grade.

A grade of “I” (or “Incomplete”) will only be assigned if a student has completed, “...most of the work required for a class but is prevented by a medical or similar emergency from completing a small portion of the course requirements” (SIUE Grading Policy 2012, available at <http://www.siu.edu/registrar/class/grading.shtml>). Before the grade of incomplete is assigned, I require all of the following: 1) the student has completed at least 50% of the course requirements; 2) appropriate written documentation of the circumstances surrounding a request for a grade of “I;” 3) s/he meets with me to determine the timeframe in which the remaining requirements will be satisfied; and 4) s/he signs a written agreement agreeing to this timeframe. Copies of this agreement will be forwarded to the Registrar and to the Chair of the Department of Political Science. Students who do not meet all of these requirements will not be eligible for this grade.

A grade of “UW” (or “unauthorized withdrawal”) will be assigned if both conditions are satisfied: 1) the student has attended more than one day of the course, but stopped attending prior to the end of the thirteenth week of the semester; and 2) s/he did not withdraw from the course prior to the end of the thirteenth week of the semester.

Exams: All exams consist of short essays. At least one week prior to each exam, the complete list of essays from which I will draw to compose your exams will be available from the course website.

If you need to reschedule an exam for *any* reason, you need to notify me prior to the start of that exam. Generally speaking, students who arrive late for an in-class exam are not allowed to take it once another student has finished the exam. I will *only* schedule makeup exams for university-authorized reasons.

In-Class Presentation (Undergraduate Students): You will have a 20 minute, in-class presentation that can be done with one other classmate. These presentations will typically happen at the beginning of class, pursuant to a schedule that will be posted to the course website. I will give you more information about the presentation in a future handout.

In-Class Presentation (Graduate Students): You will have a 30 minute, in-class presentation that must be done by oneself. These presentations will typically happen at the beginning of class, pursuant to a schedule that will be posted to the course website. I will give you more information about the presentation in a future handout.

Paper (Undergraduate Students): You will have a 12-15 page paper on a topic to be announced. I will give you more information about your paper in a future handout.

Paper (Graduate Students): You will have a 20-25 page paper on a topic to be announced. I will give you more information about your paper in a future handout.

Participation: Students are required to participate actively throughout the course. Participation does not merely consist of attendance, though you must be in class to participate. In fact, a good grade is unattainable if you do not regularly attend class. Participation consists of attendance, doing the readings on time, getting involved in discussions, listening to and respecting your classmates, as well as their opinions. Through negative behaviors, it is possible to lose participation points.

I also expect that each student regularly reads a national newspaper like *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, or *The Wall Street Journal* to follow the national news and class discussions about current events as they relate to the course and developments related to gun control. We plan to informally discuss these developments at the beginning of every other Thursday's class. I expect that everyone will arrive to class with a newspaper, magazine, or web-page clipping to discuss at this time. By no later than 12:00 p.m. *on the day before* we discuss current events, you need to e-mail me the citation of that which you intend to discuss in class on Thursday. Later on that day, I will e-mail the class (via their SIUE e-mail accounts) with the agenda items that we will discuss on Thursday. Five points will be deducted from a student's participation grade per instance in which s/he does not e-mail me a citation by the proscribed date and time. Late citations are not accepted.

Finally, I expect that you do all of the assigned readings before each class starts and be ready to actively contribute to classroom discussions. It is impossible to do your assigned readings immediately before any exam and expect to do well in the class. I will discuss some of the reading in class, but not everything. You will gain much more from the course if you do the readings before class starts, rather than after the fact.

Extra Credit: I reserve the right to assign small extra credit assignments throughout the course.

Lecture Topics and Reading Assignments

August 27: Introduction

Spitzer, Chapter One

Winkler, Chapter One

September 3: Early History of Gun Control (Part One)

Spitzer, Chapter Two

Winkler, Chapters Four through Six

Current Events Discussion #1

September 10: Early History of Gun Control (Part Two)

Presentation Topics Due!

Spitzer, Chapter Two

Winkler, Chapters Four through Six

September 17: Modern History of Gun Control (Part One)

Current Events Discussion #2

Term Paper Topics Due!

Spitzer, Chapters Two and Pages 137-162

Winkler, Chapters Seven through Nine

September 24: Modern History of Gun Control (Part Two)

Spitzer, Chapters Two and Pages 137-162

Winkler, Chapters Seven through Nine

October 1: History of Gun Control in Illinois/Federalism and Gun Control Laws

Grossman and Lee Article (*)

Shipan and Volden (2008) Article (*)

Shipan and Volden (2014) Article (*)

Current Events Discussion #3

October 8: Federalism and Gun Control Laws/Preparation for Midterm Exam

Grossman and Lee Article (*)

Shipan and Volden (2008) Article (*)

Shipan and Volden (2014) Article (*)

October 15: Midterm Exam

October 22: Public Health and Gun Laws (Part One)

Kleck and Gertz Article (*) (Read First)

Hemenway Article (*) (Read Second)

Smith Article (*) (Read Third)

Miller et al Articles (2002, 2009, 2013) (*)

Spitzer, Chapter Three

October 29: Public Health and Gun Laws (Part Two)

Dezhbakhsh and Rubin Article (*)

Hayes Article (Available at <http://www.thecrimereport.org/viewpoints/2013-09-stolen-guns-why-you-should-worry>)

Indicators of School Crime and Safety [Executive Summary Section ONLY], 2014 (Available at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2015/2015072.pdf>).

Spitzer, Chapter Three

Current Events Discussion #4

November 5: Concealed Carry and Castle Doctrine Laws

Cheng and Hoekstra Article (*)

Lott and Mustard Article (*)

Lott, Whitley and Riley Paper (*)

McClellan and Tekin Paper (*)

Spitzer, Chapter Three

November 12: Firearm Acquisition Laws

Centers for Disease Control Report (*)

Ludwig and Cook Article (*)

Makarios and Pratt Article (*)

Rudolph et al Article (*)

Webster and Vernick Article (*)

Current Events Discussion #5

November 19: Interest Groups and Gun Control

Spitzer, Pages 91-123

Term Paper Due!

November 26: No Reading. Happy Thanksgiving!

December 3: Public Opinion and Gun Control

Barry et al Article (*)

Blackman and Baird Paper (*)

Spitzer, Pages 124-134

Wozniak Article (*)

Current Events Discussion #6

December 10: Gun Control Laws: A Comparative View/Conclusion

Library of Congress Report (Available at <http://www.loc.gov/law/help/firearms-control/firearms-control.pdf>), Pages 1-15 and ONE Country of Your Choice

PBS Article (Available at <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/rundown/gun-policy/>)

December 17 (Tuesday): Final Examination, 1830-2010

Classroom Policies and Procedures

Academic Misconduct: Students are responsible for knowing when and learning how to cite material using the *Style Manual for Political Science* (APSA Style) for all assignments and the final examination. A student is expected to appropriately cite whenever s/he uses content or ideas that come from a source other than oneself. This expectation includes anything that comes from class notes, PowerPoint slides, or the course website, as these materials are the instructor's intellectual property. For more information, please refer to the Plagiarism Frequently Asked Questions handout at the end of this document.

The APSA style is the only accepted method of citing material in this course. Failure to abide by course or university policies with respect to academic integrity may constitute cheating and/or plagiarism.

I have zero tolerance for cheating and plagiarism and will deal with every instance to the maximum extent allowed by university policies and procedures. Normally, this means that someone who cheats and/or plagiarizes will fail the course and be reported to the Provost for additional disciplinary action.

Cellular Phones, Pagers and Similar Electronic Devices: Please turn these off before the start of this course as they distract me and your classmates. If one has an emergency that necessitates using one or more of these devices during class time, please talk to me before class starts. Finally, students are asked to refrain from using electronic devices to send text messages during class time as such conduct disrespects me and your classmates.

E-Mail Expectations: Students are expected to regularly check their SIUE e-mail accounts, as important information about the course is disseminated in this fashion.

E-Mail Hours: I respond to student e-mails within 24 hours of the time and date that they were sent. If you do not receive a reply within this time frame, please follow-up with me.

E-Mail Limitations: I will not respond to any e-mails related to the contents of an exam on the same day as any test, nor do I provide an answer via e-mail to questions about expected grades in this course. Federal privacy laws and university policies do not allow me to e-mail any information about your grade in the class to you.

Leaving Early: If you must leave early for any reason, please notify me before class starts as doing so is much appreciated.

Senior Assignment: Students who are political science majors or plan to become a major are well advised to keep their term paper from this course as it is a vital component of their senior assignment.

Sexual Harassment: I do not tolerate any such conduct as it is prohibited by law in addition to university policies and procedures. For more information, please see Southern Illinois University's Policy on Sexual Harassment (at <http://www.siu.edu/policies/2c5.shtml>).

Student Conduct: Pursuant to university policies and procedures, I reserve the right to remove from class, reduce the course grade, and/or assign an "F" for the course to any student who defies directions from the instructor and/or commits behaviors that manifest a lack of respect for others or their learning objectives during class. Examples of such behaviors include, but are not limited to, disrespectful, hostile, racist, disruptive, or demeaning behavior during class. For a more complete discussion of what constitutes such behavior, please refer to the Cougar Creed (at <http://www.siu.edu/parents/cougar-creed.shtml>), Student Conduct Code (at <http://www.siu.edu/policies/3c1.shtml>), and the Student Academic Code (at <http://www.siu.edu/policies/3c2.shtml>).

Students with Disabilities: Students who need special academic accommodations and have documented disabilities should make an appointment with me to discuss these accommodations. At this appointment, you need to display an identification card from Disability Support Services (DSS) that lists the accommodations that you

need. If you need accommodations that are not listed on the DSS Identification Card, please contact me and the DSS office as soon as possible so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

User-Edited Websites: Students are not allowed to use any user-edited, mirror, information aggregating, or social networking websites as a source on any assignment or examination. Examples of such sources include, but are not limited to, Answers.com, Congresspedia, Diffen.com, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Wikipedia. Students are responsible for knowing whether an internet-based resource is prohibited under this policy, and are strongly encouraged to ask me about any specific website that might fall under the auspices of this policy. Any student who uses such sources will receive a zero on that assignment and/or paper, if s/he cites the material in question.

Final Considerations

The schedule laid out in this document is tentative. Accordingly, I reserve the right to modify the syllabus and will post any changes on the course website. You are responsible for all of the information presented in this document, and anything discussed during class, on the course website, as well as, any podcasts that are posted to the course website. If you have any questions or concerns about anything in this class, please see me as soon as possible. We can more easily resolve such matters sooner rather than later.