

Political Science 449, The Politics of Gun Control  
Spring 2018 Semester  
Tuesday and Thursday, 1400-1515

Instructor: Dr. Ken Moffett  
Class Location: 0413 Peck Hall  
Website: <http://bb.siue.edu>

Office Location: 0415 Peck Hall  
Office Phone: (618) 650-2649  
E-mail Address: [kmoffet@siue.edu](mailto:kmoffet@siue.edu)

Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 1220-1350, and by appointment.

**Course Description:** Gun control is a 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 these sources to understand the current debates surrounding gun control to analyze differing policy proposals through multiple lenses.

**Assigned Texts:** Your books are available at Textbook Rental.

Spitzer, Robert J. 2015. *The Politics of Gun Control*. 5<sup>th</sup> 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 and Presentation	300 Points
Final Examination	100 Points
In-Class Presentation	75 Points
<u>Participation</u>	<u>100 Points</u>
Total	675 Points

**Grading Policy:** I will use the following cutoffs to determine letter grades for the course: 607 points and above, "A;" 606-540 Points, "B;" 539-472 points, "C;" 471 to 405 points, "D;" below 405 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 a series of take-home essays. These essays will be due two weeks after they are assigned. No late exams are accepted, except for University-authorized reasons.

In-Class Presentation: 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.

Paper: You will have a 20-page paper on a topic to be announced. I will give you more information about your paper in a future handout. This paper will also be presented on April 12 during class time in the Missouri Room at the Morris University Center as part of an event open to the University community.

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.

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**

January 9 & 11: Introduction

First Day Introductory Podcast (on Course Website)

Spitzer, Chapter One

Winkler, Chapter One

January 16: Empirical Research in Political Science

Gerring Article (\*)

Przeworski and Teune, Chapter Two (Available at

[http://online.sfsu.edu/sguo/Renmin/June1\\_logic/The%20Logic%202\\_Prezworski.pdf](http://online.sfsu.edu/sguo/Renmin/June1_logic/The%20Logic%202_Prezworski.pdf))

**Term Paper Topics Due!**

January 18: Empirical Research in Political Science (Continued)

Gerring Article (\*)

Przeworski and Teune, Chapter Two (Available at

[http://online.sfsu.edu/sguo/Renmin/June1\\_logic/The%20Logic%202\\_Prezworski.pdf](http://online.sfsu.edu/sguo/Renmin/June1_logic/The%20Logic%202_Prezworski.pdf))

January 23: Early History of Gun Control (Part One)

Spitzer, Chapter Two

Winkler, Chapters Four through Six

**Presentation Topics Due!**

January 25: Early History of Gun Control (Part One-Continued)

Spitzer, Chapter Two

Winkler, Chapters Four through Six

January 30 & February 1: Early History of Gun Control (Part Two)

Spitzer, Chapter Two

Winkler, Chapters Four through Six

February 6 & 8: Modern History of Gun Control (Part One)

Spitzer, Chapters Two and Pages 137-162

Winkler, Chapters Seven through Nine

February 13: Modern History of Gun Control (Part Two)

Spitzer, Chapters Two and Pages 137-162

Winkler, Chapters Seven through Nine

February 15: Modern History of Gun Control (Part Two-Continued)

Spitzer, Chapters Two and Pages 137-162

Winkler, Chapters Seven through Nine

**Midterm Exam Distributed!**

February 20: History of Gun Control in Illinois

No Reading

February 22 & 27: Federalism and Gun Control Laws

Coates and Pearson-Merkowitz Article (\*)

Grossman and Lee Article (\*)

Shipan and Volden (2008) Article (\*)

Shipan and Volden (2014) Article (\*)

March 1: 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, 2013) (\*)

Spitzer, Chapter Three

**Midterm Exam Due!**

**March 6 & 8: No Class. Enjoy Spring Break!**

March 13: 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, 2013) (\*)

Spitzer, Chapter Three

**Term Paper Rough Draft Due!**

March 15 & 20: Public Health and Gun Laws (Part Two)

Dezhabksh and Rubin Article (\*)

Freskos Article (Available at [http://www.stltoday.com/news/national/gun-theft-from-legal-owners-is-on-the-rise-quietly/article\\_73e10a94-b97e-55f6-b202-471ae54816a7.html#tracking-source=home-top-story-1](http://www.stltoday.com/news/national/gun-theft-from-legal-owners-is-on-the-rise-quietly/article_73e10a94-b97e-55f6-b202-471ae54816a7.html#tracking-source=home-top-story-1))

Indicators of School Crime and Safety [Executive Summary Section ONLY], 2016 (Available at <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2017/2017064.pdf>).

Spitzer, Chapter Three

March 22 & 27: Concealed Carry and Castle Doctrine Laws

Barati Article (\*)

Cheng and Hoekstra Article (\*)

Lott and Mustard Article (\*)

Lott Paper (Available at [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=3004915](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3004915))

McClellan and Tekin Article (\*)

Siegel et al Article (\*)

Spitzer, Chapter Three

March 29 & April 3: Firearm Acquisition Laws

Centers for Disease Control Report (\*)

Gius Article (\*)

Makarios and Pratt Article (\*)

Rudolph et al Article (\*)

Webster and Vernick Article (\*)

April 5 & 10: Interest Groups and Gun Control

Reich and Barth Article (\*)

Richards Article (\*)

Spitzer, Pages 91-123

**April 12: Poster Presentation in the Missouri Room in the Morris University Center.**

**Term Paper Final Draft Due!**

April 17 & 19: Public Opinion and Gun Control

Barry et al Article (\*)

Blackman and Baird Paper (\*)

Spitzer, Pages 124-134

Wozniak Article (\*)

April 19: Public Opinion and Gun Control (Continued)

Barry et al Article (\*)

Blackman and Baird Paper (\*)

Spitzer, Pages 124-134

Wozniak Article (\*)

**Final Exam Distributed!**

April 24 & 26: Gun Control Laws: A Comparative View

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

Masters Article (Available at <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2016/01/worldwide-gun-control-policy/423711/>)

**May 3 (Thursday): Final Examination Due, 1200-1340**

### **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.

Draft Copies of Student Work: I am willing to read a single, complete draft of each student's assignment prior to submission for a grade provided that it is submitted no later than three days prior to the relevant due date. Multiple draft copies of the same assignment from a student will not be read. Draft copies must be e-mailed to me.

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.

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: If a student has a documented disability that requires academic accommodations, please go to Disability Support Services (DSS) for coordination of your academic accommodations. DSS is located in the Student Success Center, Room 1270. You may contact them to make an appointment by calling (618) 650-3726 or sending an email to [disabilitysupport@siue.edu](mailto:disabilitysupport@siue.edu). Please visit the DSS website located online at <http://www.siu.edu/dss> for more information.

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 20% grade penalty 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.