

**What's the Matter with Kansas**  
LA&S 101 30186  
T 2:30-3:20  
Spencer Research Library 350

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The goal of the course is twofold. First, I hope to have this course serve as somewhat of an introduction to KU and thriving in a collegiate setting. There is also the intent to engage the course material as it stands on its own. I hope, with your help, to work through that material as well as help expose you to different types of experiences you will undergo as an undergraduate at KU. I designed the assignments and the overall structure of the class with this broader idea in mind. So, do not freak out, do not be scared, this should be a place where you can mess up and be unsure. Be brave.

The second goal of the course is to delve intellectually and culturally into sensitive political and personal arenas; many would say the personal (as well as the classroom) is political. We should strive to reach an understanding or toleration of differing political views. To that end, we aim to establish an open environment of discussion and critical-thinking.

Silence as well as berating tactics will not be tolerated. We wish to interrogate issues of polarization and partisanship in American politics, not to further the distance and drop into the vulgar dialogue of modern political discourse.

The goal is neither to shock nor convert; it is to help you know yourself and others, to sharpen your skills, and to enlist your participation in the republic of ideas. Interest is crucially important to life, but we would be very narrow and poorly educated if we were never pushed or pulled out of our accustomed orbit. If we simply follow our nose at every crossroad, we will never be prepared for a fork in the road.

Ideas matter and how we engage them matters.

This syllabus is up for revision based on thoughts from students, unexpected turns the semester may take and my own whims.

<b><u>Grading:</u></b>	Discussion/Participation	20%
	Position Papers	30%
	Presentations	10%
	Research Prospectus	30%
	Attendance	10%

## **Discussion/Participation**

Participation means speaking and listening. As you move through your studies you will be required, especially in your upper-level courses to be an active member of class.

It is my firm belief that learning is an interactive process. Part of this process is being able to express your views both written and orally. You are expected to add to the class discussion and to bring new ideas to the group, you are expected to be **respectful** of the viewpoint of your classmates, and you are expected to take chances. Be creative.

Remember, having the ideas is great, communicating them, however, is the other half of the battle. Whatever form you choose, it has to be accessible and understandable. If you are shy and reserved, please come see me and we can talk about those issues. Not contributing to discussion will negatively affect your grade.

You should come to class prepared to speak intelligently about the assigned text. This means having read the assignment, having thought about the assignment, and being prepared to share your impressions. At times, we may stray far from seemingly relevant material, I expect this, but we should always keep the broader goals of the course in mind.

## **Position Papers (4 required) 1-2 pages**

### **Reading reports**

Short discussion papers, journals and position papers are often a part of advanced coursework. These are assigned for a number of reasons, but foremost is to encourage the reading and to force you to have some thoughts put together for class. Class does not begin and end when you are in a designated room. You should be wrestling with ideas before you enter, these papers are a way for you to start the process and a way for me to judge how much forethought you are putting into class.

I will provide a reading report sheet that I want you to use as a guide for these papers and all of the questions should be answered. The format to which you answer those questions is up to you.

These papers will be graded qualitatively. I expect these papers to engage the text and cite it directly. From there, you have freedom to employ the text directly, relate the text to outside resources (other courses, newspaper article, political blogs, etc...) and/or use the text to interrogate a current cultural or social situation.

**Position Paper #4** should be a bit more involved, **3-5 pages**, and should concern an outside text (book or journal article) that is either directly or tangentially involved with this course. Looking at the notes is a good way to find this piece. I am mostly interested in current events in this respect. You should be bringing outside ideas and interests into this class and using them as a way to pose questions to your classmates and frame the assigned material.

This should be interesting and somewhat fun. Do not give me mundane regurgitated thoughts. You do not want to write them, and I do not want to read them. You should not treat these papers as term papers, you should allow for some nascent thoughts and questions. Also, use this as opportunity to bring in ideas from other courses. **THIS IS NOT** an excuse to turn in sloppy, underdeveloped work.

Each student is responsible to turn in a total of 4 papers throughout the semester. If you choose, you may turn in more and I will consider the 4 best for this portion of your grade.

### **Presentations**

Each member of the class will be responsible for leading a class discussion either by themselves or with another member of the class. Again, this is a format that will be relied upon heavily in your upper-level courses. Gathering the thoughts, parsing the information and presenting it orally in a coherent manner is central to what we are doing here.

You will be responsible for beginning our class discussion, presenting a quick (2-3 minute) summary of the work, investigating the outside sources the author presents (read the notes) and posing questions to the class. I will be here to help, but the beginning of the class will be your responsibility. It would be helpful to utilize your position papers and reading reports for this portion of the class.

### **Research Prospectus**

Prospectus: A formal summary of a proposed venture or project.

A prospectus is nothing more than a research proposal. Your best professors will demand these of you. Research is a long process and one that is negotiated in many ways between many people. It serves as a way to make sure you are moving along in your assignments and also a way for professors/editors/colleagues to rein in strange ideas and to provide feedback. Nothing is done in a vacuum, research is an interactive endeavor.

For your final project, you will put together a prospectus for a research project that you would like to pursue in the future. The prospectus should be no more than one written page double-spaced and should include an annotated bibliography or no less than 10 sources.

You are required to use the Spencer Research Library for this project. The Kansas Collection and Wilcox Collection are excellent resources and should be considered.

For the final portion of this assignment, we will meet individually for 15-30 minutes and you will propose your research question to me. You must be able to explain how this project is related to the course, why you wish to pursue it and what you hope to gain from it.

## **Class Policies**

### **Attendance**

We will meet 15 times in the semester, at what I feel is an agreeable time. If you are going to be absent let me know before class. Attendance is considered and counts as 10% of your grade—there are certain ideas that are best expressed, understood and interrogated in a discussion format; missing sessions means you are missing a critical aspect of this class. There is no substitute for this. And attendance goes beyond simply showing up. **Be here when you are here.** Having more than two unexcused absences or four total will cause you to lose your attendance points.

### **Deadlines**

My policy on late papers is this: In order to get credit for a paper you turn in late, you must **make arrangements with me ahead of time**: just own up. If you think you cannot write a decent paper by the due date, talk to me, set an alternative due date. I want the papers to be considered, developed and crafted, not simply something you just get done.

### **Paper Format**

All assignments must be turned in *typed, double-spaced, using no larger than 12-point font* (“Times” or “Times New Roman”). Margins are to be one inch on all sides, and the heading (your name and the assignment title) should be single-spaced. Assignments not typed will *automatically be reduced by one letter grade*. Papers more than one page long must be stapled. If you do not have access to a computer in your residence hall, you may use the computer labs at the Multicultural Resource Center, Budig Hall, or the Kansas Union, 4<sup>th</sup> floor.

### **Academic Misconduct**

**All forms of academic misconduct**—including, but not restricted to, cheating, fabrication and falsification, plagiarism, carrying firearms, facilitating academic misconduct, and tampering with smoke detectors, grades, or records—**carry severe penalties**. Students are encouraged to consult the appropriate university documents for information on their rights and responsibilities relative to academic misconduct.

In addition, the issue of digital plagiarism has raised concerns about ethics, student writing experiences, and academic integrity. KU subscribes to a digital plagiarism detection program called turnitin.com, which may be used to check papers submitted in this course. You may be asked to submit your papers in a digital format so that your paper can be checked against web pages and databases of existing papers. Although you may never have engaged in intentional plagiarism, many students do incorporate sources without citations.

### **Special Accommodations**

The staff of the Academic Achievement and Access Center (AAAC), 22 Strong Hall, 785-864-2620, coordinates special accommodations and services for KU courses. If you have a disability for which you may request accommodation in KU classes and have not contacted AAAC, please do so as soon as possible. In addition, see me to discuss any

accommodations necessary to ensure full participation and facilitate educational opportunity.

**Final Thoughts**

I want to be challenged; I want to have to think. I don't want to leave this class, and I hope you don't either, bored. We all are going to be here, we might as well make something out of it.

Come with open-ended thoughts. Allow yourself to be persuaded or poked with a classmate's idea. This doesn't however give one license to cower.

Be respectful. Sometimes in a class like this, things can get suddenly or overtly personal. Be wary of this and respect each other emotionally and intellectually.

8/23	Introductions/Syllabus/Expectations	
8/30	Introduction/Chapter 1	
9/6	Chapter 2	
9/13	Chapter 3&4	
9/20	Chapter 5	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Position Paper Due</b>
9/27	Chapter 6	
10/4	Chapter 7	
10/11	Chapter 8	
10/18	Chapter 9	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Position Paper Due</b>
10/25	Chapter 10	
11/1	Chapter 11&12	
11/8	Epilogue/Afterword	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Position Paper Due</b>
11/15	What is the Matter with Kansas?/Outside Texts Presentations	
11/22	Allan Cigler, Professor of Political Science	
11/29	Final Projects/Research	<b>Final Position Paper Due</b>
12/6	Last Day of Class	
12/6-12/16	Research Prospectus	<b>By Appointment</b>

The Kansas Christian Right, The evolution of Republican Politics, Joslyn, Loomis, Cigler

The Christian Right and American Politics John Green, Rozell, Cly Wilcox Georgetown University Press