

17 March 2020, updated with corrections on 25 March

Dear students in POLI 203

I'm sure you're all concerned about many things right now, and one of them is our class. I hope all your other concerns are manageable. I'm going to do my best to make POLI 203 as successful as possible, given the circumstances, and manageable for all of you as well.

The situation remains quite fluid, as we really don't know how long any social distancing measures are going to have to remain in place. In particular, I don't feel I can make a decision at this point about the final exam. I will, of course, do so and let you know the final arrangements as soon as I can. I can announce these changes:

1. I am going to cancel the group presentations originally scheduled for the weeks of April 6 and April 13. That is very disappointing to me as I wanted you all to learn about the books the other students read. However, I don't see how to make the logistics work.
2. Considering that those presentations were to account for 10 percent of your final grade, I am going to ask you to write a slightly longer second paper. Your paper was supposed to be 1500 words (5 pages), and count for 20 percent of the grade, according to the syllabus. Given that the cancelled assignment was 10 percent of the final grade, I'd like to simply ask that you write a paper roughly 2,250 words (7.5 pages). Your TA's will give you new prompts for these papers, given that they are a little more extensive. Your papers will now be due by the end of the day Friday April 10.
3. (If by some miracle of advance planning and academic zeal you have already written your second paper, congratulations! No need to re-write it. See your TA and you can work out an alternative assignment equivalent to the extra assignment.)
4. I have cancelled all the speakers events and in-class speakers. The evening events had to be cancelled in accordance with University policies, and the in-class speakers really can't participate, I think, in a pre-recorded lecture with limited opportunities for engagement.
5. All grades for the speaker series are up to date in Sakai. Please check the Sakai page to ensure there are no errors. If you attended a speaker event and were marked absent, please email unc.poli203@gmail.com, and explain what happened and give whatever evidence you can, such as a selfie, to verify your attendance.
6. Officials at Central Prison have cancelled all the prison visits for the month of March. I expect that the prison will also cancel those in April as well, but they have not yet done so. Please review your sign-ups on the google sheets and delete your name if you know you will not be able to go.
7. I'll be recording my lectures and have them available for you to view at any time after the scheduled lecture date. Given the size of this class and the limitations of remote technology tools, I'm not going to require that you all be on-line at any given time, for the main lecture. Rather, I'll be recording the lectures and making them available to you to watch at any time.
8. I'll be generating a series of quizzes. These quizzes will require you to engage with the factual and interpretive material from the course. I'll distribute them on Wednesdays and they will be due by the end of the day Friday, with no extensions; you'll need to keep up each week. Some will relate to the week's lecture and reading, and some will cover

material from previous weeks in the semester. Keep in mind that I have no way of mandating that these be done closed-book, so I'll keep that in mind when compiling them. Please work alone, on your honor. These will be through Sakai.

9. I'll be organizing office hours by Zoom, and will distribute the link soon. Also please feel free to email me, though for some questions your TA may be a better resource.
10. Your TA's will be in touch with you about adjustments to their schedules as well.

As I mention, I cannot yet announce changes about the final exam, but depending on where the University is by May 5, changes may be required.

I know these are stressful times for all of us, and I apologize for the disruption in this class. Frankly, I do not believe the educational value will be what it would have been. You are missing out on some fantastic speakers, and there is no way I can replace that. I also think listening to a lecture live is more effective than doing so on line. (Call me old-fashioned.) When you do watch and listen to the lectures, please do me a favor and do not multi-task. Give the class your full attention; the material will reward you.

Of course, given the fact that there will be no presentations during the weeks of April 6 and April 13, I'll be giving some additional lectures, and I think I will focus on the death penalty here in North Carolina. If you have ideas or suggestions for material that you want me to cover, or cover a second time because you did not understand it the first time, please let me know.

Good luck to all of you, your families and loved ones, as you stay safe during this period. Together we will try to make the best of a very bad situation. I hope all of you will remain well, safe, and engaged with the material we'll be discussing. Of course, if you need any special accommodations because of the current situation, please let your TA's know and we'll see what we can do.