Teaching Statement

Kevin K. Banda*

1 Teaching Philosophy

I have four primary goals in mind when I teach. First, I wish to instill in my students the desire and the ability to think critically about the decisions that they will face over the courses of their lives. Critical thinking skills may be the most important thing that educators can pass on to their students because they are applicable to so many facets of one’s life. The ability to analyze the tradeoffs among different policy proposals or the strengths and weaknesses of two or more candidates running against one another in an election is an important skill for politically active citizens to master. Students who attain this skill set should also find it useful in non-political settings in the workplace and when planning their personal and family lives.

My second goal is to help students understand how individual citizens are linked to the political process at large. I do this by engaging in open dialogue with my students about a number of questions. How responsive should the government be to the desires of citizens? How responsive can it be given the relatively low levels of political knowledge and interest expressed by members of the American electorate? How do citizens react to the behavior of politicians and how in turn do the former react to the behavior of the latter? Is a “good” citizen a politically active citizen? Discussing questions like these allow students to become more active learners and should also help them to develop their critical thinking skills.

The third goal of my teaching strategy is to improve my students’ abilities as writers. Writing is an essential skill for a large percentage of the workforce, so it is important for students to become skilled writers if they wish to have successful careers. I assign two or more writing assignment every semester which require students to, for example, carefully consider and analyze the tradeoffs between competing policy proposals. Students must explicate their arguments succinctly and convincingly, a skill which is key to writing in the business world. This goal also reinforces my first goal in that it requires students to develop their critical thinking skills as they weigh the strengths and weaknesses of various arguments and pieces of evidence.

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My final goal is to promote an understanding among my students of how important diversity is to American democracy. Politics is not experienced in the same way by everyone; this experience varies based on where people live, how wealthy their families and peers are, their race, their sex, and any number of other contextual and demographic characteristics. Students need not change their political attitudes and beliefs, but by emphasizing the importance of understanding the beliefs of others, I believe I am encouraging students to form deeper understandings of the importance that open dialogue has to democratic societies.

My teaching style is one that facilitates active rather than passive learning. I attempt to engage students in socratic discussions during recitations and do my best to avoid lecturing any more than is necessary. Ideally, I guide the discussions rather than taking on the role of a lecturer. This allows students to bring up any questions or concerns that they have about the reading material or broader themes of the course and places at least some of the onus on the remaining students to address these concerns. I try to press my students to think deeper about their arguments on a given topic, often asking them why they have come to their conclusions. I believe that this strategy is useful for encouraging the development of the critical thinking skills that are necessary for survival in the professional and academic worlds.

2 Teaching Interests

I have a broad range of teaching interests at the graduate and undergraduate levels. At the graduate level, I am interested in teaching a number of substantive courses such as an American core seminar, mass political behavior, public opinion, campaigns and elections, and political communication. I am also interested in teaching in the graduate methods sequence and would be willing to offer courses on probability theory, time series analysis, experimental methods, scope and methods, linear models, and generalized linear models — a course for which I served as a teaching assistant.

At the undergraduate level, I am interested in teaching several courses like introduction to American politics, state and local politics, mass political behavior, campaigns and elections, public opinion, political communication, political parties, and undergraduate research methods. I am comfortable teaching both introductory and upper level undergraduate courses. I am also open to learning about the needs in your department and I am happy to be flexible in terms of the courses I would offer.

3 Teaching Experience and Evaluations

I have served as a teaching assistant for four different courses at UNC: Introduction to American Politics, State and Local Politics, Analyzing Public Opinion, and a graduate level Generalized Linear Models course. My duties as a TA in undergraduate courses included grading term papers and exams along with leading weekly discussion sections. I wrote my
own syllabi and assigned my own readings in my sections. As a TA for Generalized Linear Models, I taught a weekly lab and graded both exams and assignments. I provided additional lectures designed to supplement students’ understanding of the logic underlying generalized linear models. I also helped students with the various technical problems they encountered while trying to use the models we covered in class.

I have taught Introduction to American Politics as my own independent course three times, State and Local Politics once, and Political Parties and Elections once. I have also served as an instructor and grader for online and correspondence courses for both Introduction to American Politics and State and Local Politics.

I present my average numerical evaluations below along with some sample written feedback from students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructor ratings</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrates enthusiasm about teaching</td>
<td>4.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicates clearly and logically</td>
<td>4.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotes a climate of mutual respect</td>
<td>4.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage student questions</td>
<td>4.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasizes critical thinking</td>
<td>4.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clearly communicates expectations</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides timely feedback</td>
<td>4.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is available when needed</td>
<td>4.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is well-prepared for instruction</td>
<td>4.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall rating of instructor</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All questions on a 1-5 scale with 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree.

Feedback on my role as an instructor

- “Very well organized and logically presented.”
- “A lot of information that is widespread.”
- “Good discussions and teacher is extremely knowledgeable and could easily answer most any question.”
- “Enthusiastic. Knowledgeable.”
- “Good, square, easy-to-understand-for-the-clueless style.”
- “Very knowledgeable on all topics, fun and engaging, and kept the class involved by asking good questions.”
Table 2: Evaluation of Role as Instructor for Introduction to American Government: Fall 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructor ratings</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Challenged me to think deeply</td>
<td>4.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clearly communicates expectations</td>
<td>4.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluated student work fairly</td>
<td>4.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressed ideas clearly</td>
<td>4.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Showed enthusiasm for subject matter</td>
<td>4.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treated students with respect</td>
<td>4.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handles questions well</td>
<td>4.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used relevant examples</td>
<td>4.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used class time well</td>
<td>4.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All questions on a 1-5 scale with 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree.

- “Well-prepared, thorough slides, good use of charts and graphs, logical thought-process, easy to follow along lecture, concern for students learning not simply putting on a good lecture, smart, relatively chill.”

- “The instructor expressed himself clearly and classes were taught in a clear way. When assignments were assigned he clearly expressed what he wanted. He tried to get everyone engaged in the material. He showed that he cared about his students and whether they knew the material or not.”

- “The course was a very good intro course to the field of political science. The instructor was always prepared, well informed, and seemed to care if we were learning the subject.”

- “Well taught with interesting material that keeps one engaged fairly easily.”

- “The course was a excellent learning experience and the instructor was very knowledgeable about the material.”

Feedback on my role as a teaching assistant for Generalized Linear Models

- “Kevin was always available to answer questions (via email or in person). Very helpful.”

- “It was nice to get feedback on questions about the homework, especially if other people had similar problems.”

- “Labs are fun.”

Feedback on my role as an undergraduate teaching assistant

4
Table 3: Evaluation of Role as a TA for Generalized Linear Models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructor ratings</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of materials</td>
<td>4.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clearness of presentation</td>
<td>4.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to lead discussions</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness to questions</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Available for help</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall quality of teaching</td>
<td>4.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Cell entries are means. All questions on a 1-5 scale with 1 = poor, 2 = fair, 3 = satisfactory, 4 = good, and 5 = excellent. Data taken from Fall 2011.

- “TA was very helpful in both looking at what was covered in class and things that were unique to sessions. Was always prepared and had a ‘no-nonsense’ attitude that helped get the important points out without wasting time. Overall, best TA I’ve had at UNC.”

- “You do a good job of furthering class discussion when every student in the class is just sitting silently and staring at you. That takes some effort and I have really appreciated it.”

- “I think you were very well informed on the information discussed in lecture. You’re explanations were very helpful.”

- “I had four recitations this semester and this one was my favorite. Discussions were explanatory and usually helpful. I liked that it was an open discussion but that you didn’t stare at everyone waiting for them to say something because that is the worst. The meeting when we watched the campaign advertisements was really interesting, too.”

- “Really great job, I enjoyed the discussions which were very useful, especially for the essays.”

- “I enjoyed how you lead the class discussions and made everyone think about the assigned material. You’re role in the class prevented us from just repeating the information from the reading and made us give our perspectives on the reading and how we felt about what the author had to say.”

- “I really enjoyed this recitation and the discussions we had. You led discussions really well making sure to cover everything and answer questions. Did a good job making
Table 4: Evaluation of Role as a TA for Undergraduate Courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructor ratings</th>
<th>American Politics</th>
<th>State and Local</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fair grader</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>3.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good job leading discussions</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>3.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well prepared for class</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mastery of the material</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>4.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Available during office hours</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>4.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Made useful comments on papers</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>3.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall excellent job</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>3.51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Cell entries are means. All questions on a 1-5 scale with 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree. Data taken from Spring 2011 and Fall 2010.

people feel that every response - whether wrong or right - mattered so I felt welcome to speak up.”

• “I really felt like this was the best recitation section I’ve had in my first year at Carolina.”

• “Kevin was a very helpful TA when we needed a question answered for our papers or had a question about the material. He asked us a lot of though-provoking questions which urged us to understand the material more deeply. I personally benefited a lot from going to talk to him about my papers during office hours. Overall very competent and intelligent.”

• “Very good job overall. Good at leading discussions and bringing up interesting points.”

• “Kevin was effective in teaching this recitation. I felt he was direct and to the point and did not waste my time with unnecessary material. He was effective at creating discussion about the material and graded fairly.”

4 Example Teaching Materials

Next, I present a sample syllabus, midterm, and writing assignment.
Course Description

This course is designed to provide students with an introduction to politics and government in the U.S. While it is not possible to adequately cover all important topics in a single survey course, this course will offer a broad overview of how the political system functions in the U.S. The course will focus primarily on mass behavior (how citizens behave and interpret the political world) and political institutions (the rules and constraints placed upon political actors operating in the three branches of government), though we will also briefly touch on American political development. Keep in mind that this is a political science class, not a course on civics. Because of this, we will move beyond simple description of how the government operates and will attempt to learn why it functions the way it does. The most important goals of this class are to provide students with: (1) a foundation that will allow them to continue to study politics scientifically and (2) the analytical skills to think critically about various political and social phenomena.

Required Textbooks

The required reading materials are as follows and are available at the university bookstore. You should be able to buy both books bundled together at a significant savings.


Grading

Your grade in this course will be determined by each of the following components:

1. 20% – First midterm exam
2. 20% – Second midterm exam
3. 20% – Final exam
4. 15% – In class quizzes
Below is a description of UNC’s grading system.

A Mastery of course content at the highest level of attainment that can reasonably be expected of students at a given stage of development. The A grade states clearly that the student has shown such outstanding promise in the aspect of the discipline under study that he/she may be strongly encouraged to continue.

B Strong performance demonstrating a high level of attainment for a student at a given stage of development. The B grade states that the student has shown solid promise in the aspect of the discipline under study.

C A totally acceptable performance demonstrating an adequate level of attainment for a student at a given stage of development. The C grade states that while not yet showing any unusual promise, the student may continue to study in the discipline with reasonable hope of intellectual development.

D A marginal performance in the required exercises demonstrating a minimal passing level of attainment for a student at a given stage of development. The D grade states that the student has given no evidence of prospective growth in the discipline; an accumulation of D grades should be taken to mean that the student would be well advised not to continue in the academic field.

F For whatever reasons, an unacceptable performance. The F grade indicates that the students performance in the required exercises has revealed almost no understanding of the course content. A grade of F should warrant questioning whether the student may suitably register for further study in the discipline before remedial work is undertaken.

The table below describes this course’s grading scale. I will round grades to the nearest percentage point. Grades will be posted on Sakai. I will return tests, essays, and quizzes to you as quickly as possible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92</td>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>60-66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>0-59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Expectations and Procedures

In Class Quizzes

I will give six unannounced quizzes over the course of the semester. Each will cover the reading material that was supposed to be completed that day. If you come to class after a quiz has been administered (if we have any), you will receive a zero on it, so don’t be late. I will drop your lowest quiz grade.
Discussions and the participation grade

The in class discussions we will have are designed to explore a topic in greater depth than in the lecture. I expect everyone to be well-prepared and respectful to one another during these discussions. Your participation grade will be based on both the quantity and the quality of your contributions to our discussions. It is incumbent upon students to finish the daily reading before class begins so that we may have fruitful discussions.

Analytical Reaction Papers

You will write ten short reaction papers for this course, each of which should be approximately one page in length, not counting headers and footers. The text should be double spaced and in 12 point Times New Roman font. Please justify your text; justified text is easier for me to read. You should use margins of either 1 or 1.25 inches. I expect you to use parenthetical citations each time you cite material from a reading. If you only use readings that I have assigned to you, there is no need for you to include a works cited page in the paper you give me. If you choose to use other sources, you will need to submit a properly formatted works cited page. Do not include direct quotes from the readings in your papers.

Each reaction paper should be about one of the assigned readings from either the Principles and Practice book or from the course’s Sakai page. I want you to critique the arguments contained in these readings. What do you find compelling or troubling about them? Be sure to tell me why you think the arguments are well founded or baseless. Can the authors’ arguments be applied to the real world? Why or why not? Do not summarize the article you are writing about. I know what they’re about; I want to know what you think about the arguments contained within the reading.

Your grade for each reaction paper will be determined by (1) the completeness of your argument, (2) the strength of your analysis, and (3) the strength of your writing. Hard copies of your reaction papers are due in class on that day that they appear on the syllabus. For example, if you choose to write about Principles and Practice section 1-1, your paper will be due on 1/12. I will not accept late reaction papers. You must turn in at least three reaction papers to me by the date of the first midterm and at least three more between the first and second midterms. I will only accept a maximum of four reaction papers between the second midterm and the final exam. I will do my best to return your reaction papers to you by the next class period.

Exams

There will be three exams in this class: two midterms and a (somewhat) cumulative final. Approximately half of the points in each test will come from the readings while the remainder will come from my lectures and our discussions.

Technology

Silence your phone’s ringer or turn it off entirely. I know what it looks like when students attempt to text during class, so do not bother trying to hide it. If I see you texting during class, your participation grade will suffer. You will be able to access my slides on Sakai.
You are free to bring your laptops, but be aware that I will not allow them if they become a distraction to either me or to your classmates.

Disabilities

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should (1) contact the office of Learning Disabilities at UNC (http://www.unc.edu/depts/lds/index.html) and (2) bring a letter to the instructor (me) indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done during the first few days of class.

Research Participation

All students enrolled in POLI 100 are required to participate in research studies conducted in the Political Science Department. These will usually be research experiments. The total time commitment should not exceed 3 hours. Students who object to participating in these studies will have the opportunity to satisfy the research requirement in another way, usually by writing an additional paper. Failure to complete the requirement will result in a grade of I (Incomplete). That said, research studies are not performed every semester. I will notify you if and when one comes along requiring your participation. Otherwise, if you hear nothing from me about this, do not worry about fulfilling this requirement.

Honor Code

You may not give or receive any assistance while taking any examinations or completing any of the class assignments. Sentences, ideas, etc. cannot come directly from the Internet or any other reference material unless they are properly cited. For further details, please refer to the University Honor Code at http://honor.unc.edu/.

Communication

I make every effort to communicate to you my expectations, your responsibilities, and the substantive information covered in this course. I will send e-mails to the entire class. I maintain a Sakai site for the class, and I will make announcements and issue some reminders in class. Note that I will only send e-mail out to your UNC e-mail accounts as listed on the course roster in Sakai. I will not keep track of any other e-mail addresses that you might use. I am also very easy to reach if you need to communicate with me. Come to my office hours or even better, send me an email. It is important for you to stay in touch, particularly if any problems arise.

I don’t like to change exam schedules. If a situation arises where I need to give a make-up exam, I reserve the right to give it during the final week of the semester. I reserve the right to give a make-up exam that differs substantially from the normal exam in order to protect the integrity of the exam process. I or any instructor will be much more understanding if you just communicate with us early and up front.
Course Outline

• 1/10: Course introduction; What is politics? I
  – Begin Logic chapter 1: The Logic of American Politics

• 1/12: What is politics? II; collective action problems
  – Finish Logic chapter 1: The Logic of American Politics
  – Principles and Practice sections 1-1 and 1-3

• 1/17: The Constitution I
  – Start Logic chapter 2: The Constitution
  – Principles and Practice section 2-1

• 1/19: The Constitution II
  – Finish Logic chapter 2: The Constitution
  – Principles and Practice sections 2-2, 2-3, and 2-4

• 1/24: Federalism
  – Logic chapter 3: Federalism
  – Principles and Practice section 3-3

• 1/26: Civil Rights and Civil Liberties I
  – Logic chapter 4: Civil Rights
  – Principles and Practice section 4-1

• 1/31: Civil Rights and Civil Liberties II
  – Logic chapter 5: Civil Liberties
  – Principles and Practice section 5-1

• 2/2: Congress I
  – Begin Logic chapter 6: Congress
  – Principles and Practice section 6-1

• 2/7: Congress II
  – Finish Logic chapter 6: Congress
  – Principles and Practice section 6-3

• 2/9: Review

• 2/14: Midterm 1

• 2/16: No class (conference)
  – Start Logic chapter 7: The Presidency
- *Principles and Practice* section 7-1

- **2/21**: The Presidency
  - Finish *Logic* chapter 7: The Presidency
  - *Principles and Practice* section 7-3

- **2/23**: The Bureaucracy
  - *Logic* chapter 8: The Bureaucracy
  - *Principles and Practice* section 8-1

- **2/28**: The Judiciary
  - Start *Logic* chapter 9: The Federal Judiciary
  - *Principles and Practice* sections 9-3 and 9-4

- **3/1**: Public Opinion I
  - Begin *Logic* chapter 10: Public Opinion
  - *Principles and Practice* section 10-3

- **3/6**: No class (spring break)

- **3/8**: No class (spring break)

- **3/13**: Public Opinion II
  - Finish *Logic* chapter 10: Public Opinion
  - *Principles and Practice* section 10-4

- **3/15**: Political Participation I
  - Start *Logic* chapter 11: Voting, Elections, and Campaigns
  - *Principles and Practice* section 11-1

- **3/20**: Political Participation II
  - Finish *Logic* chapter 11: Voting, Elections, and Campaigns
  - *Principles and Practice* section 11-2

- **3/22**: Review

- **3/27**: Midterm 2

- **3/29**: Campaigns and Elections I
  - *Principles and Practice* section 11-3

- **4/3**: Campaigns and Elections II
  - *Principles and Practice* section 11-4
• 4/5: Campaign Advertising
  – Start *Logic* chapter 12: Political Parties
  – *Principles and Practice* section 12-1
  – Watch political advertisements in class

• 4/10: Political Parties
  – Finish *Logic* chapter 12: Political Parties
  – *Principles and Practice* section 12-2

• 4/12: The News Media
  – Start *Logic* chapter 14: The News Media
  – *Principles and Practice* section 14-1 14-3

• 4/17: Watch *Journeys With George* in class
  – Start *Logic* chapter 14: The News Media
  – *Principles and Practice* section 14-3

• 4/19: Interest Groups and Social Movements
  – Start *Logic* chapter 13: Interest Groups
  – *Principles and Practice* section 13-1

• 4/24: Review for the final exam
  – Finish *Logic* chapter 13: Interest Groups
  – *Principles and Practice* section 13-2

• 5/1: Final exam - 8:00 AM
1. Which of the following is true about belief systems?

(A) Some ideas are concrete while others are more abstract
(B) Beliefs are to some degree constrained or consistent
(C) Belief systems can be wide, meaning that they are used to form attitudes about a large number of issues, or they may be narrow, meaning that attitudes are formed on a few issues.
(D) All of the above
(E) None of the above

2. An independent press plays an indispensable role in maintaining a representative democracy for which of the following reasons:

(A) Because it is typically run by the journalistic elite, who are better equipped to know for whom to vote than the average citizen
(B) Without reliable information about the performance of officeholders, citizens would be hard pressed to monitor their agents, and politicians would find it difficult to communicate with their constituents
(C) Because otherwise consumers have few opportunities to be exposed to commercial print ads
(D) Because the government has elaborate authority to initiate prior restraint

3. Evidence suggests presidents view ________ as a viable alternative to negotiating with the opposition on Capitol Hill.

(A) Suspending habeas corpus
(B) Going public
(C) The line-item veto
(D) Using the necessary and proper clause to suspend acts of Congress

4. The most accurate statement about the differences in political attitudes between party activists and average citizens is which of the following:
(A) Party activists are more ideological, whether conservative or liberal, than average citizens
(B) Party activists are less ideological, whether conservative or liberal, than average citizens
(C) Regular citizens are more likely than party activists to consistently take the positions of their chosen parties
(D) There are no differences in their opinions

5. The Bill of Rights limits the ability of the government to impose _________ on those individuals and minorities whose views differ from those of the majority.

(A) Agency loss
(B) Transaction costs
(C) Conformity costs
(D) Focal points

6. According to James Madison, which actor in government was expected to serve as the primary guardian of civil liberties?

(A) Congress
(B) The President and executive agencies
(C) The Supreme Court
(D) Citizens

7. Which of the following best describes the concept of incorporation?

(A) The Supreme Court’s extension of the guarantees of the Bill of Rights to state and local governments through its various interpretations of the Fourteenth Amendment
(B) A judicial rule prohibiting the police from using at trial evidence obtained through illegal search and seizure
(C) A Fourteenth Amendment clause guaranteeing all citizens equal protection of the laws. The courts have interpreted the clause to bar discrimination against minorities and women
(D) A clause found in both the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution protecting citizens from arbitrary action by the national and state governments

8. The unitary executive argument states that presidents can do all of the following actions except:

(A) Alter the compensation of subordinates in the executive branch
9. Which of the following enhances the risks of agency loss that Congress faces when it delegates authority to the president?

(A) The presidential veto, which gives presidents the ability to resist congressional control
(B) Separate election of the president and members of Congress
(C) Frequent episodes of divided government
(D) All of the above
(E) None of the above

10. Relations between the president and Congress during periods of divided government are characterized by ________ with presidents tapping a variety of ________ to accomplish policy objectives.

(A) conditional party government; coalition strategies
(B) gridlock; unilateral powers
(C) the imperial presidency; emergency powers
(D) the unitary executive; veto threats

11. The presidential veto power is used most effectively when which of the following occurs?

(A) The president and Congress have sharply different policy preferences
(B) Congress favors a more drastic change in policy than does the president
(C) The president favors a more drastic policy change than does Congress
(D) The president and Congress have nearly identical policy preferences

12. Which of the following statements is most true of the ideological disposition of the U.S. electorate as a whole?

(A) The electorate is mostly made up of moderates
(B) The electorate is mostly made up of people with extremely liberal or extremely conservative ideologies
(C) The electorate is mostly made up of liberals
(D) The electorate is mostly made up of conservatives
(E) The electorate is symbolically conservative and operationally liberal
13. Which of the following support the claim that reports of the parties’ demise have been greatly exaggerated?

(A) The number of independents is on the rise
(B) Candidates rarely win state or federal offices without being nominated by a party
(C) Partisan differences in presidential approval are on the rise
(D) Both B and C

14. Which of the following are not functions performed by political parties in the United States?

(A) Channel and constrain political conflicts
(B) Revise outmoded provisions of the Constitution, state constitutions, and local charters
(C) Train leaders, foster participation, and teach citizens democratic practices
(D) Organize citizens and leaders into electoral and policy coalitions

15. Which of the following helps explain why American elections continue to be characterized by two-party competition?

(A) Under plurality voting rules, there is no benefit to running third in any contest
(B) Most voters would rather support an acceptable candidate who has a chance to prevail than an exceptional candidate who has no chance of winning
(C) State legislatures dominated by the two major parties have erected legal hurdles to organizing third parties
(D) All of the above
(E) None of the above

16. In which of the following ways does federalism contribute to the enduring pattern of two-party competition?

(A) Different factions can work together to elect national leaders while going their own way on state and local issues
(B) Most of the important policy disagreements arise within state parties rather than between them
(C) Party rules give national party leaders the authority to bring wayward factions within the party into line
(D) All of the above
(E) None of the above
17. Why do relatively uninformed citizens learn more from a television report than from a newspaper account on the same subject?

(A) The amount of detail contained in a television report typically exceeds what is found in a newspaper account
(B) Surveys of the American public find that citizens trust television over all other news sources
(C) The target audience of a network news show is broader than the readership of any single newspaper
(D) For relatively uninformed viewers, a simpler presentation of new information is often more useful than a newspaper article packed with details and context

18. Which of the following factors weighs heavily in decisions about which stories to include in newspapers and broadcasts?

(A) The authority and status of the source
(B) The level of controversy a story involves
(C) Whether the news being reported is negative or positive
(D) All of the above
(E) None of the above

19. Why might a government official “leak” information to a reporter?

(A) To make the official look good
(B) To make another official look bad
(C) To discreetly gauge public reaction to a potential policy change
(D) All of the above
(E) None of the above

20. Which of the following is the most likely consequence when very few politicians hold sought-after information?

(A) The politicians will have more power to control the final news product
(B) The press will attempt to gather the desired information through its own independent research
(C) The press will have more power to control the final news product
(D) The reporters will elect not to present the information to the public
Short answer instructions: Answer five of the following seven questions. Your answers should be as complete and as concise as possible. Feel free to draw pictures if you think doing so will help you make your argument, but be sure to fully describe the significance of the picture. Each question is worth 10 points.

1. Conventional wisdom suggests that we see changes in the partisan control of government in large part because of dramatic shifts in the ideological disposition of the citizens. Assess this bit of conventional wisdom based on what you’ve learned in class; are individual citizens ideological? Why are they or why aren’t they? How do we know?

2. Describe both Downs’ proximity model and the directional model of voting. How do people decide which candidate to support? What do voters need to know according to each model (in other words, what are the models’ assumptions)?

3. Describe and then compare and contrast Converse (nonattitudes) and Zaller’s (considerations) arguments about why we observe instability in the political attitudes expressed by individuals.

4. Describe priming and framing. Give one brief example (fictional if necessary) of each. How are they similar and how are they different from one another? How are these concepts related to politics and why are they important?

5. What kinds of advantages do incumbents have that tend to dissuade high quality challengers from running against them in Congressional elections? What do challengers need to do in order to win?

6. What is a presidential honeymoon? Why do most presidents experience one? Why do honeymoons end? Last, many observers of American politics have noted that presidential honeymoons have been getting shorter for more recent presidents. Why might this be?

7. What tends to happen to public policy mood when a Democrat is president? What about when a Republican is president? Why? What does it mean to say that Americans are operationally liberal and symbolically conservative?

Extra credit: Each question is worth as many points as marked.

1. True or false: The front page of a daily newspaper typically contains more words than the script of the average evening network news broadcast? [1 point]

2. Is the Tea Party a political party? Why or why not? [1 point]
Essay 1

Due: In section the week of February 28th – March 4th

Prompt: In this essay, you should address several important normative questions. First, what is the function of campaigns in a democratic society? What roles should citizens, candidates, and the media play? After discussing this ideal, consider empirical reality. How do modern campaigns in the U.S. conform to your ideal model? How do they fail? Be sure to identify why you think this is. Last, how might we improve campaigns so that they may approximate the ideal you laid out at the beginning of your paper?

Tone: This should be an analytical essay in which you clearly and succinctly make an argument. Identify what you are going to argue and why very early (preferably in the first sentence or two) via your thesis statement. Then build your paper around defending your thesis. If a sentence/argument/paragraph does not advance your argument, you should not include it. While there is clearly a normative component to this essay, your argument should be based on the science that you have been exposed to both through the lecture and the readings that you have been assigned. Be careful to avoid overt partisanship; I do not care which (if either) party you identify with and if I can tell which you are by the tone of your essay, it will be reflected in your grade. That said, a normative question about the proper role of campaigns in a democratic society seems unlikely to encourage students to write a partisan screed.

Format: Twelve point Times New Roman font, justified text (look at the text at the margins in this document; this is what justified text looks like), double spacing, and one or 1.25 inch margins. There should not be an extra space between your paragraphs. Word 2007 seems to do this by default. Don’t let it. Speaking of contractions, do not use them. Your papers should be approximately five pages long. If you write appreciably more than five pages, be aware that I may stop reading at the end of the fifth page. Do not use an enormous header and do not allow it to repeat on each page; just write your name and which section you are in. Number your pages. You do not need a cover page. Do not use any direct quotes. Include a title.

Citations: Cite any work you reference using in text citations like this (Smith, 2011). You do not need to include a works cited page if you do not reference any material that was not either assigned to you in section or in the lecture, but do be sure to cite them in the text of your essay. If you use sources that were not assigned in class or in section, your paper will need a works cited page.

Sources: If you choose to use outside sources, be sure that what you use is credible. Do not under any circumstances cite Wikipedia, Yahoo! Answers, or anything else like them. If you choose to use something that was published by an ideologically driven think tank (CATO, Brookings, etc.), think twice. Remember that these organizations have an incentive to shape our perceptions of reality to best suit themselves.
Common mistakes (in no particular order of importance)

1. Failure to include a thesis statement.
2. The inclusion of direct quotes.
3. Failure to adequately cite the works students should reference.
4. Failure to address **ALL** of the questions contained within the prompt.
5. Failure to answer the “why” question (why is the most important question; answer it in addition to all of the questions you see in the prompt. You should always tell me/your audience why you are making your argument).
6. Failure to adequately proofread a paper.
7. Turning in a first draft (unless you are the greatest writer of all time, I will notice).
8. Failure to capitalize “Democrat/Democrats/Democratic” and “Republican.” Note that “a democratic system” is not capitalized while “the Democratic Party” is capitalized.
9. Writing “Democrat” when you mean “Democratic.” There is no such thing as the “Democrat Party.”
10. Speaking of party, you should capitalize it if you type the Democratic Party or the Republican Party.
11. The use of contractions (do not do this in formal writing).
12. The use of “impact” as a verb; it is only a verb in colloquial language.
15. Failure to read the formatting guide and other related instructions.