

POLI 553: Empirical Political Theory

University of British Columbia, Department of Political Science, Term 2 2011-12

<http://www.faculty.arts.ubc.ca/bnyblade/poli553.html>

<http://blogs.ubc.ca/poli553nyblade/>

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Description

This course is a graduate-level introduction to broadly applicable causal mechanisms and other building blocks of causal theories in the empirical study of political science. The topics covered in this course are chosen are common not only across all subfields of political science but across all of the social sciences, thus the course will draw extensively on scholarship from other fields as well as core works in political science. Topics include cognition, learning, desires, beliefs, norms, path dependence, transaction costs, collective action, social dilemmas, bargaining, credible commitment, hierarchy, and delegation.

Course Goals and Structure

This is a participation- and reading-intensive graduate introduction to many general types of causal explanations in political science. The major goals of the course are for (1) students to develop a deeper understanding of the basic building blocks of empirical theorizing in political science and for (2) students to improve their ability to read, write and discuss academic political science at an advanced level.

Students will usually read five articles or book chapters each week, averaging roughly 150 pages per week. Many of the readings are quite technical, using unfamiliar words, symbols and/or methods. However, as Marx wrote “There is no royal road to science, and only those who do not dread the fatiguing climb of its steep paths have a chance of gaining its luminous summits.” I will post a brief guide to each week’s readings which will give suggestions for how to approach the readings, and we will discuss in class strategies for effectively and efficiently managing the wide range of readings.

Not only are students responsible for having done the readings prior to each class, they are responsible for actively participating in discussing the readings both in class and online. Participation is crucial to the success of any seminar, which is why one half of final marks is based on in-class and online participation. The other half of final marks is based on two papers. Students will write two discussion papers during the term, which they will share with their fellow classmates, receive feedback on, and rewrite prior to submitting for a final mark. We will discuss in class the expectations regarding participation and writing, and students will receive considerable feedback throughout the term about their online and in-class participation and their writing.

Participation

The hallmark of a good seminar is high-quality participation by all participants. 50% of final marks will be based on in-class and online participation. Students are expected to actively contribute to discussions, and marks are not based on the quantity of words, but on their quality. It is important to be able to discuss the readings and topics in depth, raise interesting questions, present interesting ideas, and most importantly, engage actively with others' ideas. Consideration will be made for excused absences in assessing participation marks, but there is no intellectual replacement for actually being part of the discussion.

I require that all readings be done before class and that students begin the discussion of the readings online on the dedicated course blog (<http://blogs.ubc.ca/poli553nyblade/>) before class each Monday. One week before each class, I will post on the blog general thoughts and comments on the group of readings for the following week, including a suggested order to do the readings, questions and themes to keep in mind. I will also remind students of who has been assigned the 'lead blog post' for each reading of the week. Students are each responsible for doing five lead blog posts over the course of the term. The lead blog post schedule will be determined the first week of classes, based on students' submission of their preferences amongst the course topics and readings. I will provide examples of lead blog posts on the course blog during Week 1, and also write the lead blog posts for any unassigned readings.

By Friday noon, the lead blog post for each reading for the subsequent week must be posted. Lead blog posts should (1) summarize in your own words the main points of the reading, (2) give your thoughts and reactions to each reading and (3) highlight what you find most interesting, debatable and/or valuable in the reading and (4) discuss the links between the individual reading and the other readings/topics for the week. One paragraph for each of these four points should usually be sufficient, although longer posts are acceptable, and may be useful in some cases, particularly for difficult to summarize readings. As the lead blog posts set the tone for the discussion, they should be taken quite seriously, and each is worth 3% of final marks (15% in total).

All students are expected to post at least one comment per reading sometime between Friday noon and Monday 5pm. The length of these will vary, and should be done as 'comments' to the lead blog post, rather than as new posts. These comments should further discussion about the most interesting aspects of the readings. Before posting, students should read the lead post and previous comments and should build upon them as appropriate, but may also raise new points for discussion. Students should come to class having read all lead blog posts and all comments on the readings posted before Monday 5pm, as the seminar will often involve continuing discussions begun online. Students are also encouraged to continue the online discussion after class (building upon class discussion), and participation marks will reflect not only the quality of students' required posts and comments, but the overall level of engagement and the quality of elective posts.

Writing

Writing clearly and in a compelling fashion is a crucial skill, one that all of us can work to improve through practice and feedback. As such, the emphasis is on providing greater opportunities for feedback and improvement of the two course essays. Students will write two papers (1500 words each), choosing from a series of discussion questions provided at the end of this syllabus. Each discussion paper is worth 25% of students' final marks. Students will choose questions, write draft papers, post the discussion papers online, provide and receive feedback on paper drafts, rewrite and then submit the paper.

Feedback and discussion of papers plays a central role in this process. Students should engage constructively and critically with their fellow students' papers. When providing feedback on papers, students should ensure that the tone of their comments is polite and professional, and the comments discuss the strengths of papers as well as identifying potential areas for improvement. Always remember when providing feedback that the purpose of feedback is to help improve the paper, not to 'knock it down'. Students will be randomly assigned to provide online feedback on drafts by three other students during each feedback period, but are encouraged to read and provide feedback on other papers that are of interest to them as well.

Students will write one paper on a discussion question chosen from Weeks 2 through 6, and one on a question from Weeks 7 through 13. Other questions mutually agreed upon by student and instructor may be acceptable. The papers must present a clear argument, demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of the readings and class discussion on the topic and relate the question to empirical research in political science.

The timeline for the papers are as follows:

Paper 1

Initial Draft Posted Online by: February 15th

Feedback Deadline: February 29th

Submission Deadline: March 7th

Paper 2

Initial Draft Posted Online by: April 4th

Feedback Deadline: April 11th

Submission Deadline: April 18th

Further details regarding the essays and related logistics will be discussed in class and provided online.

Readings

Week 2. Mechanisms and Levels of Analysis

1. Elster, Selection from *Explaining Social Behavior*.
2. Gerring, J. 2007. "The Mechanismic Worldview: Thinking Inside the Box" *BJPS* 37(1): 1-19.
3. Falletti and Lynch. 2009. "Context and Causal Mechanisms in Political Analysis" *CPS* 42(9): 1143-66.
4. Portes, A. 2000. "The Two Meanings of Social Capital." *Sociological Forum* 15(1):1-12
5. Ray, J. 2001. "Integrating Levels of Analysis in World Politics" *J of Theoretical Politics* 13: 355-88.

Week 3. Rationality and Cognition

1. Hume. *A Treatise of Human Nature* Book II, Part III, Section III. (4 pages)
2. Cox, GW. "Lies, damned lies and rational choice analyses." 2006 (17 pages)
3. Quattrone and Tversky. 1988. "Contrasting Rational and Psychological Analyses" *APSR*
4. Jones, BD. 1999. "Bounded Rationality." *Annual Review of Political Science* 2:297-321
5. Boudon, R. 2003. "Beyond Rational Choice Theory." *Annual Review of Sociology* 29: 1-21.

Week 4. Preferences and Desires

1. Aristotle. *Ethics* Book I.i-ix "The Object of Life" (9 pages).
2. Sally, D. 2000. "I, Too, Sail Past: Odysseus and the Logic of Self Control" *Kyklos* 53: 173-200.
3. Monroe, KR. 1994. "A Fat Lady in a Corset: Altruism and Social Theory" *Am J Pol Sci* 38(4).
4. Mondak/Halperin. 2008. "The Study of Personality and Political Behavior" *BJPS* 38: 335-62
5. DellaVigna, S. 2009. "Psychology and Economics: Evidence from the Field" *JEL* 47(2): 315-341 (1&2)

Week 5. Beliefs and Information

1. Descartes' First Meditation "Of the things of which we may doubt" in *Meditations*. (4 pages)
2. Page, S. 2008. "Uncertainty, Difficulty and Complexity" *JTP* 20(2): 115-149.
3. Jervis, R. 2006. "Understanding Beliefs." *Political Psychology* 27(5): 641-63.
4. Rathbun, BC. 2007. "Uncertain about Uncertainty" *ISQ* 51(3): 533-57.
5. DellaVigna, S. 2009. "Psychology and Economics: Evidence from the Field" *JEL* 47(2): 315-341 (3&4)

Week 6. What causes Inertia?

1. Samuelson and Zeckhauser. 1988. "Status Quo Bias in Decision Making." *J of Risk Uncertainty*
2. Page, SE. 2006. "Path Dependence." *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 1: 87-115.
3. North, D. 1990. "A Transaction Cost Theory of Politics." *Journal of Theoretical Politics*.
4. Lindblom, C. 1982. "The Market as Prison." *Journal of Politics* 44(2): 324-336
5. Kahler, M. 1999. "Evolution, Choice, and International Change." In Lake and Powell, *Strategic Choice and International Relations*, 165-97.

Week 7. Norms

1. Jones, T. 2006. "We Always Have Beer After the Meeting." *Phil of the Social Sciences*.
2. March and Olsen. 2006. "The Logic of Appropriateness." in Moran, Rein, Goodin, *OHPP*.
3. "Social Norms and Economic Theory." *J. of Econ. Perspectives* 3(4): 99-117.
4. Finnemore & Sikkink. 1998. "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change." *IO* 52(4).
5. Anderson, E. 2000. "Beyond Homo Economicus" *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 29(2): 170-200

Week 8. Learning and Persuasion

1. Textbook overview of Bayes Theorem
2. Taber/Lodge. 2006. "Motivated Skepticism in the Evaluation of Political Beliefs." *AJPS* 50(3).
3. Bullock. 2009. "Partisan Bias and the Bayesian Ideal..." *JOP* 71: 1109-24.
4. Wood, W. 2000. "Attitude Change: Persuasion and Social Influence." *Annual Rev of Psych*.
5. Bradley, R. 2009. "Becker's thesis and three models of preference change." *PPE* 8: 223-42.

Week 9. Social Dilemmas

1. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, xiii-xiv "The Natural Condition..." and "The First and Second ..." (9 pages)
2. Rousseau. Selection from Part Two of his *Discourse on Inequality* (7 pages).
3. Skyrms, B. "The Stag Hunt." *Proceedings and Addresses of the Am Phil Association* 75(2): 31-41.
4. Schelling, T. 2010. "Game Theory: A Practitioner's Approach", *Economics and Philosophy*.
5. Martin, L. 1992. "Interests, Power and Multilateralism." *International Organization* 46(4):765-92.

Week 10. Collective Action and Social Welfare

1. Olson, M. 1965. *The Logic of Collective Action*: Selection
2. Ostrom, E. 2007. "Collective Action Theory." Selection from Boix and Stokes, eds., *OHCP*.
3. Hardin, G. 1968. "The Tragedy of the Commons." *Science* 162: 1243-1248.
4. Ostrom, E. 1999. "Coping with Tragedies of the Commons." *Annual Review of Pol Sci* 2:493-535.
5. Moe, T. 1990. "Political Institutions: The Neglected Side of the Story." *JLEO* 6: 213-53

Week 11. Bargaining and Credible Commitment

1. Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, Section 3 Book IX.19-49 (Mytilenian Debate)
2. Fearon, JD. 1995. "Rationalist Explanations for War." *International Organization* 49(3).
3. Cowhey, P. 1993. "Domestic Institutions and the Credibility of Intl Commitments" *IO* 47(2)
4. Alexander/Skyrms. 1999. "Bargaining with Neighbors" *Journal of Philosophy* 96(11): 588-98.
5. Henrich, J. 2000. "Does Culture Matter in Economic Behavior?" *AER* 90(4):973-9.
ALSO, Henrich et al. 2010. "Most People Are Not WEIRD." *Nature* 466(1): 29.

Week 12. Anarchy, Hierarchy and Markets

1. Miller, GJ. 1992. *Managerial Dilemmas*, Selection.
2. Coase, RH. 1937. "The Theory of the Firm." *Economica* 4(16): 386-405.
3. Fligstein, N. 1996. "Markets as Politics" *ASR* 61(4): 656-73.
4. Lake, DA. 2007. "Escape from the State of Nature." *IS* 32(1): 47-79.
5. Taylor, M. 1996. "Good Government: On Hierarchy, Social Capital, and the Limitations of Rational Choice Theory." *Journal of Political Philosophy* 4(1): 1-28.

Week 13. Delegation and Representation

1. Kiewiet and McCubbins. 1991. *The Logic of Delegation*, ch. 2, pp. 22-38.
2. Miller, GJ. 2005. "The Political Evolution of Principal Agent Models" *ARPS*: 203-25.
3. Strøm, K. 2000. "Delegation and Accountability in Parliamentary Democracies." *EJPR* 37(3): 261-89.
4. Brennan and Hamlin. 1999. "On Political Representation." *British J of Political Science* 29:109-27.
5. Mansbridge, J. 2009. "A 'Selection' Theory of Political Representation." *JPP* 17(4): 369-98.

Where do I find these readings?

Links to all readings will be made available on the course blog, but the links may require that students be logged in with a UBC IP Address or using the UBC Library's *EZproxy* or *MyVPN*. If there are any difficulties downloading the readings, drop me an email. Storage is cheap, so I usually recommend downloading all the articles early during the term to avoid last minute technical difficulties.

Discussion Paper Question Prompts

Week 2. Mechanisms and Levels of Analysis

The first class began with a general discussion of different approaches to the study of political science and started our course-long discussion of the nature of explanation in the social sciences, with a particular focus on understanding the ‘mechanismic’ approach to causal theorizing and associated challenges.

Questions

1. ‘Mechanismic’ approaches to social science carve out a middle ground between arguments about universal ‘covering laws’ and scholarship that eschews any generalization. Defenders of this approach argue that a mechanismic focus holds many of the strengths of both of the other approaches to scholarship, while critics argue that it inherits the weaknesses of both. In your essay, explain the mechanismic approach to social scientific explanation and analyze its strengths and weaknesses compared to covering law and non-generalizable scholarship.
2. To what extent does social scientific explanation require ‘micro-foundations’?
3. Research in political science often treats collective actors (complex systems in their own right) as if they were unitary. As systematically as possible, explain the circumstances in which you believe such ‘aggregation’ is appropriate and useful, and when it is problematic.
4. Some have suggested that unwarranted aggregation and excessive reductionism are the Scylla and Charybdis of political theorizing. How can we avoid both dilemmas and find the appropriate level of analysis for research in political science?

Week 3. Cognition and Reasoning

The debates about “rational choice theory” in political science have been vociferous. From Weeks 3 to 5 we examine three key pieces of atomistic rational decision-making: cognition, preferences and information. Our goal is to go beyond overly simple characterizations that sometime occur in these debates and consider what rationality actually means and how it can be used and abused as part of social science explanation. In week three we consider the ‘hard-core’ rationality assumption of utility maximization and more sophisticated models of cognition and reasoning that we might use as a replacement (or complement).

Questions

1. What does rationality mean? Why might it be useful in theorizing about politics? Is the concept particularly prone to misuse because “one can rationalize anything”?
2. Given that people are not truly rational, is there a value to using rational choice theory in political science? Is it possible to simply to use rational choice theory with “scope

conditions”? If it is not, are there other general theoretic models should scholars use in place of rational choice theory?

3. Beyond certain limited subfields in the study of public opinion, public administration and international relations, psychological models have had relatively little impact in political science. In what other areas of political science might such models be fruitfully applied?

Week 4. Preferences and Desires

What explains political actors’ desires? To what extent are people driven exclusively by self-interest in the realm of politics? To what extent are they altruistic or driven by preferences over what is right or good for society rather than themselves? To what extent can we say that what people prefer is consistent—at any moment and over time?

Questions

1. “It is impossible for any Man to act upon any other Motive than his own Interest ... in the larger Sense of the Word.” Trenchard and Gordon, *Cato’s Letters*. Discuss.
2. Altruism is a phenomenon that has been fairly well-established empirically and is oft-theorized. However, altruism comes in many forms, and may express quite different desires on the part of the altruistic person. What types of altruistic behavior are most politically relevant? What systematic theories can help us understand non-self-interested political behavior?
3. What is the political relevance of the idea that individuals’ self-interest can be inconsistent (both temporally and in other fashions)?

Week 5. Beliefs and Information

There is much that people don’t (or can’t) know: people lack sufficient knowledge to have informed opinions on many issues, and there is always uncertainty as to what tomorrow will bring. What are the consequences of the fact that people don’t always have correct beliefs or information? Does it matter that people’s beliefs about the world are often incorrect? Beliefs and information may have dramatic social and political consequences and form a crucial part of understanding how people act. Information asymmetries provide certain people with power or other advantages and belief systems may dramatically condition political behavior. The core readings for this week draw extensively from sociology and also build on psychological understandings of why people believe what they do.

Questions

1. “Information is costly.” What are the political consequences of this fundamental fact?
2. To what extent and under what circumstances is political actors’ lack of information a problem, and when might it be ameliorated through the use of heuristics, the creation of institutions or other means?

3. The consequences of limited knowledge are vast in political science – they can affect not only the optimality of individual choices, but distributions of power, and individuals' preferences and desires. Analyze, with concrete examples, the possible political implications of limits of human knowledge on the design of political institutions and the distribution of political power.

Week 6. Inertial Forces

While Weeks 3-5 of this course focused on the traditional building blocks of atomistic rational decision-making (cognition, preferences and information), Week 6 considers a broader set of factors that may cause inertia (status quo bias) in decision-making.

Questions

1. Newton's First Law (The Law of Inertia): *Corpus omne perseverare in statu suo quiescendi vel movendi uniformiter in directum, nisi quatenus a viribus impressis cogitur statum illum mutare*. Is there a political equivalent of this law? What leads to inertia in political behavior?
2. "There is no preservation of the past which is not a transformation of the past." Discuss in light of inertial forces in politics.
3. "Although political scientists, like most humans, are more intrigued by change than inertia, they have been more successful at explaining inertia than change." What methods of theorizing are most promising for explaining both political inertia and change?

Week 7. Norms

The traditional distinction made between sociological and economic theories is that economic theories build on forward-looking actors that maximize their utility in light of their beliefs, whereas sociological theories build on actors being driven by socially constructed norms and identities. Another way of phrasing this difference is that some theories have individuals motivated by a 'logic of consequences' while other theories have individuals motivated by a 'logic of appropriateness'. Whereas the first few weeks provided the building blocks of rationalist models, this week focuses on how norms, conventions and rules and their non-instrumental logic. Students may find it useful to glance over their notes from Week 3 on rationalist theorizing as they do this week's readings on norms.

Questions

1. To what extent can (should) norms-based theories of political action be theoretically reconciled with instrumental theories? Are certain sorts of political actions better explained by norms-based theories while other actions by instrumental theories?
2. Some scholars suggest that certain theories are better at explaining change rather than stability (or vice versa). How do norms-based theories explain both political change and

stability? How do these explanations of political change differ from instrumentalist approaches?

3. Some scholars have suggested that evolutionary perspectives may help unify instrumentalist and norms-based theorizing in the social sciences. Critically assess this proposition.

Week 8. Learning and Persuasion

If preferences and beliefs, as well as norms and conventions are not fixed, how can we explain their change? This week focuses on two key ways they change: through learning and persuasion. Both topics are too vast to cover in detail, but it is useful for everyone to have an understanding of the basic rationalist model of learning, as encapsulated in Bayes' Rule, as well as the most important ways in which learning and persuasion have been shown to behave in a manner consistently different from Bayes' Rule.

Questions

1. Compare and contrast 'neutral' models of learning (such as Bayesian Updating) to 'biased' models, such as those building on conceptions of cognitive dissonance or motivated skepticism. Are some models absolutely superior, or is there a time and place for each?
2. Much of the literature on learning and persuasion in political psychology is distinct from the more sociological literature on norms and conventions. In what ways might they be usefully integrated?
3. Political philosophy traditionally was tied closely to the study of rhetoric, however recent scholarship is more divorced from the scholarship on political learning and persuasion. How might these literatures fruitfully speak to each other?

Week 9. Social Dilemmas

While the previous weeks have focused on the factors that determine individuals' decision-making, much of the empirical study of politics focuses on collective choices and actions. The final five weeks of this course focus on collective decision-making and political relationships. This week begins by focusing on simple examples of social dilemmas in which individuals make choices that are best for them individually but lead them to the worst collective outcome. These dilemmas play a crucial role in the development of social contract theory and in contemporary political science these dilemmas are often modeled using game theory. We examine them in both contexts in the readings this week.

Questions

1. Consider briefly the differences between the dynamics of the stag hunt, discussed by Rousseau, and the classic prisoner's dilemma. What sort of political situations might be better modeled as one or the other?
2. Although rational choice analyses are frequently used to present social dilemmas through various games, some have suggested that many of the actual responses people make when

faced with analogous situations are based on socially constructed or non-rational factors. Discuss this in light of concrete examples of political situations that have been analyzed using game theory.

Week 10. Collective Action

This week's readings follow on naturally from the previous week, exploring various social dilemmas that arise when individuals need to act collectively. But instead of focusing primarily on simplified two-actor social dilemmas, we consider more broadly the issues of collective action and the tragedy of the commons.

Questions

1. What is the basic collective action dilemma? Does it come in different varieties? What are important political examples or consequences of this? What are the major mechanisms of overcoming it?
2. Collective action problems are often linked to the under-provision of public goods and the under-representation of certain interests in political processes. What do the various mechanisms that groups use to overcome collective action problems suggest about the potential for robust, fair interest representation?
3. Scholars frequently identify political and economic institutions as coming about to solve collective action problems, and as such could potentially be beneficial to everyone involved. However, such institutions frequently allocate power and resources in a fashion to make certain people worse off. Are there solutions to collective action problems that do not risk adverse distributive consequences?

Week 11. Bargaining and Credible Commitment

Political actors frequently seek not only to act jointly for common purpose—the focus of the last two weeks—but also seek to get things they want from each other. This week explores simple bargaining theory and issues of credible commitment. Scholars have suggested that actors in some cases are better off in bargaining when they can tie their own hands, thus creating interesting dilemmas. Although bargaining theories often assume egoistic rational actors, there is also evidence that social preferences (esp. aversion to inequality) matter in explaining bargaining outcomes, a topic we also consider.

Questions

1. Models of bargaining come in two types—those in which we can assume any agreement will be enforced, and those in which we must problematize compliance. What sort of political situations fall into the two types? What mechanisms exist for credible bargains to be struck without a third-party enforcer?
2. Explain several political examples of credible commitment problems and potential solutions. Discuss both the costs and benefits of the credible commitment mechanisms.

Week 12. Hierarchy, Anarchy and Markets

Given the challenges of non-hierarchical relationships and organization discussed in the previous three weeks, the final two weeks of this course focus on hierarchical organizations and relationships. Scholars in political science frequently contrast anarchic and hierarchical systems, with some scholars suggesting that the state of nature, the international system and markets can be seen as anarchic. This week we consider economic, sociological and political perspectives on issues of hierarchy, anarchy and markets.

Questions

1. “All power corrupts, but we need the electricity.” Why are almost all political systems organized in a hierarchical manner? What might explain variation in the hierarchies built?
2. To what extent can we justify describing political markets and the international system as anarchic? Is there a relationship between (lack of) credible commitment and anarchy?

Week 13. Delegation and Representation

“Even God delegates” begins one review of the literature on delegation, and as we conclude this course it is worth noting that challenges of delegation and representation occur at all levels of political (and non-political) life. This week focuses in particular on applications of principal-agent theory in political science, considering both its strength and weaknesses.

Questions

1. In discussing the challenges of delegation scholars often focus on selection and sanction mechanisms to handle the two general issues of ‘moral hazard’ and ‘adverse selection’. Aside from these two problems, what other challenges to effective political delegation exist, and how can they be overcome?
2. Principal-agent models are frequently used and (arguably) misused in political science. Discuss the basic assumptions of P-A theory and its limitations. How should P-A theories be used in political science?
3. Are there important aspects of political representation that cannot be captured in principal agent theory? If so, identify at least one aspect and explain alternative methods of theorizing representation that are more fruitful. If not, explain the key dimensions of the challenge of representation according to principal-agent theory, and make an argument about which is most important in contemporary representative democracies.

Legalese

Classroom and Online Conduct. Students are responsible for helping create a positive atmosphere and are expected to treat each other with respect. Students should expect a certain degree of disagreement, criticism of arguments and debate in this class— debate is a central part of the academic enterprise. However, disagreement should be respectful, thoughtful and not personally directed.

Plagiarism. Students should be aware of their responsibilities in regards to academic integrity as they apply to this and all other courses they take here at UBC. For more information, check out the VP Academic website (<http://www.vpacademic.ubc.ca/integrity/>).

Late Assignments. As most of the deadlines in this course affect your fellow students' learning experience, deadlines will be strictly enforced. Unexcused late assignments will receive a 10 percentage point penalty if they are submitted within 48 hours of the deadline. After that no unexcused late assignments will be accepted.