

POLS 240: Political Activism
Fall 2026
Xavier 150
MWF 9:30-10:30

Instructor: Michael Artime, PhD
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Office Hours: TBD

Overview

This course is designed to help students identify ways that they might contribute to the betterment of the communities for which they are a part through engagement with the political process. In addition to working on their own social action work, students will engage with the long history of political activism in this country and the ways that that previous work has shaped the contemporary political landscape.

Assignments

Using the work of Sociologist Dr. Scott Meyers-Lipton as a model, we will be using this class to connect our academic work to meaningful social action. Students will work as part of a group to consider, plan, and implement a social action plan. Students will have control over which issue(s) they are interested in and will not be evaluated based on the ideological direction of their project. The goal is to help students to realize their potential to navigate structures of power and, in so doing, to discover their own power. In the end, politics is the study of power and the best way to see that is through direct experience.

There are three main, graded components of this project:

1. The portfolio: As students work in their group, they will be writing individual responses to prompts provided by the instructor. The goal with this project is to help students make the connection between the readings and the work that they will be doing for their social action activity.
2. The binder: This is a collection of all the materials used by the group so that future groups could take on the project and continue the work. This will include communication with various stakeholders, poster/media designs, literature, timelines, responses to the campaign, and other relevant material.
3. The presentation: At the end of the semester each group will have the opportunity to share their project with the class and to reflect on their experience. The presentation assignment will be explained in more detail as we get close to the end of the course.

As you consider due dates, readings should be finished on the first day of class for the week and any other assignments are due on the final day of class for the week.

Textbook

Change! A Student Guide to Social Action (Second Edition) by Scott Myers-Lipton. Published by Routledge (2023)

Political Science Learning Objectives

Convey substantive knowledge in the central theories and concepts in the discipline by demonstrating excellent disciplinary knowledge. *Students will examine the contribution of the discipline to our understanding of political activism.*

Demonstrate communicative excellence through research and writing competence. *Students will engage in extensive written evaluation of their campaigns and will translate their work to portfolios for use by future groups.*

Demonstrate methodological excellence by exhibiting analytical skills in interpreting data. *Students are introduced to various methodological techniques and will begin to think about how they might pursue answers to important political questions using one or more of these techniques.*

Exhibit excellence in citizenship by demonstrating critical, independent thinking about politics and public life. *Through the social action assignment students will have the opportunity to think about their role in their respective communities. They will see the way that the discipline of political science can inform the way that we orient ourselves to the important issues, debates, and controversies in local, national, and international politics.*

General Education Learning Objectives: Examining Self and Society (ES)

Students will explore methods and models for understanding human behavior within a variety of cultural, social, or structural contexts, both contemporary and historical.

- **Students will analyze the social, political, and economic institutions or systems that shape human behavior.** *Students will gain an understanding of how social and political institutions shape society and, in particular human behavior. This is an essential component to thinking about how social action might disrupt that process and push institutions in a more just direction.*
- **Students will draw conclusions about human behavior in relation to social, structural, or group contexts.** *Students will need to develop a theory for change that explains how to build movements and change systems. This requires learning about individual and collective human behavior.*

Grading

Assignment	Weight
Portfolio Responses	40%
Group Binder	40%
Engagement	10%
Reading Quizzes	10%

Grading Scale

A	94-100	C	74-76
A-	90-93	C-	70-73
B+	87-89	D+	67-69
B	84-86	D	64-66
B-	80-83	D-	60-63
C+	77-79	E	59 or lower

DATE	Topic	Reading	Assignments
Week 1 (9/9-11)	Issue Development	Myers-Lipton Chapter 1	
Week 2 (9/14-18)	Issue Development		Issue Development Portfolio Questions

Week 3 (9/21-25)	Setting the Tone	Myers-Lipton Chapter 2	Setting the Tone Portfolio Questions
Week 4 (9/28-10/2)	Change Theory	Myers-Lipton Chapter 3	Change Theory Portfolio Questions
Week 5 (10/5-9)	Building Power	Myers-Lipton Chapter 4	Building Power Portfolio Questions
Week 6 (10/12-16)	Research	Myers-Lipton Chapter 5	Research Portfolio Questions
Week 7 (10/19-23)	Group Dynamics	Myers-Lipton Chapter 6	Group Dynamics Portfolio Questions
Week 8 (10/26-30)	Strategy and Tactics	Myers-Lipton Chapter 7	
Week 9 (11/2-6)	Strategies and Tactics	Myers-Lipton Chapters 8 & 9	Strategy and Tactics Portfolio Questions
Week 10 (11/9-13)	Campaign Kickoff		Campaign Kickoff Portfolio Questions
Week 11 (11/16-20)	Launch Campaign		
Week 12 (11/23-27)	Campaign		
Week 13 (11/30-12/4)	Campaign	Myers-Lipton Chapters 10 & 11	
Week 14 (12/7-11)	Presentations		Campaign Binder Due

Important Dates/Deadlines from the Registrar's Office:

Registrar's Deadlines

- the last day to add a class without a fee, 9/11/26; the last day to drop a class without a fee, 9/21/26
- the last day to withdraw, 12/11/26
- the last day to file for pass/fail, 10/23/26

Religious Accommodations

As a university rooted in the tradition of **Lutheran Higher Education** – enacting a **mission** of critical inquiry, service, leadership, and care, and committed to **Diversity, Justice, and Sustainability** – PLU values the many religious and spiritual traditions and practices within our campus community and supports faculty, staff, and students in living them out. This also includes supporting community members in the process of exploration and asking critical questions with regard to faith and spirituality.

Therefore, I will make every effort to provide reasonable accommodations for any of you who, because of religious observances, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments, or attendance in our class. To help me in doing this, please review the course schedule at the beginning of the semester to see if there are any dates when you would need accommodation. Then, complete **this brief form** at least three weeks before the date when you need an

academic religious accommodation. (Ideally, you would complete the form at the beginning of the term.) After you've submitted the form, you'll be connected to our University Pastor Jen Rude who will provide you with further guidance, including meeting with me to share the details of your request. You can also find more information about **resources and other religious accommodations you can request** related to employment, athletics, etc.

Academic Honesty and the Use of Artificial Intelligence

PLU's expectation is that students will not cheat or plagiarize and that they will not condone these behaviors or assist others who plagiarize. Academic misconduct not only jeopardizes the career of the individual student involved but also undermines the scholastic achievements of all PLU students and fails to reflect the mission of this institution. Students are responsible to do their own work, thereby ensuring the integrity of their academic records. The most common forms of dishonesty are cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes, but is not limited to submitting material that is not yours as part of your course performance, such as copying from another student's exam, allowing another student to copy from your exam. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to directly quoting the words of others without using quotation marks or indented format to identify them. Because plagiarism involves a misrepresentation of principles and processes fundamental to the integrity of the university, matters of plagiarism are taken very seriously. If you are unsure about something that you want to do or the proper use of materials, please ask me for clarification.

If you intend on using artificial intelligence to create material for the course, you must seek advance approval from the instructor. I am inclined to permit the use of this tool for design support (i.e. assistance in producing images, posters, organizing material) and will be skeptical of any attempt to use these kinds of tools to produce written content that I need to review in order to assess your understanding of the course content. Any use of AI without prior approval from the instructor will be considered a violation of the previously articulated expectations for academic honesty.

Title IX

As your instructor, and within the context of this course, there may be opportunities for you to share information related to your past or current experiences. This may take place during our classroom discussions or in written work and one-on-one meetings. While I will seek to keep information you share private to the greatest extent possible, you should be aware that all PLU employees, including me, are required to report any disclosures of sex discrimination, sexual harassment, or sexual misconduct to PLU's Title IX Office. The report will not automatically generate a conduct response, but you will receive outreach from that office offering support and further discussion. If you do not wish for the university to have knowledge, there are confidential staff on campus who are not required to report. For confidential support, you can reach out to PLU's Counseling, Health, and Wellbeing Services <https://www.plu.edu/wsr/>; Pastor Jen Rude in Campus Ministry (rudejl@plu.edu or 253-535-7465); and Magdalena Stickel, PLU's Confidential Advocate (mks@plu.edu or 253-535-8204).

Respectful Learning Environment & Accessibility

Above all, I care about your success and want to do all I can to help you learn. I believe in universal learning, which means I am committed to all of our learning spaces — course material, the Sakai forum [or other online tool], and other places we engage with one another — being inclusive and equitable. This means I expect that we do our work together with mutual respect,

collegiality, and the willingness to consider others' perspectives fairly and generously. If there is anything I can do to help you in your learning, please let me know; you may also contact the Office of Accessibility and Accommodation at 253-535-7073 or oaapl@plu.edu, and we can collaborate on any arrangements to assist you in successful learning. [Adapted from Grand View University statement]