

RENEWING AMERICAN DEMOCRACY: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES (PSC 380)

Spring 2022, Concordia College

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Note: syllabus updated on January 26, 2022 to reflect new Final Project instructions. **For your Final Project, you are allowed to interview a fellow student.**

This syllabus is the most important document you'll receive in PSC 380. It represents a contract between student and instructor. By taking this course, you are agreeing to the terms of the syllabus. You should review the syllabus carefully, and refer to it often during the semester.

Below, I describe what you should expect during our class meetings, and what I expect from you. I specify which chapters from the assigned readings we'll be covering each week. I discuss exactly how your final grade will be calculated. I provide guidelines and instructions for your midterm exam and final project. And I outline some important course and College-wide policies.

As the semester proceeds, I encourage you to stop by my Student Hours. During "student hours" (also referred to as office hours), I set aside time to meet with students about your performance in the course, the course material, or anything else you'd like to talk about. To set up an in-person or virtual appointment with me, you can either email me or click on the following link to make an appointment: <https://concordia.campus.eab.com/pal/UGe9GygII5>.

Email (eschmid4@cord.edu) is always the best way to reach me. Note that I don't answer emails after 8:00pm, but I will respond to student emails within 36 hours.

–Dr. Schmidt

Course Overview and Introduction

"It is like democracy is a bottle someone can threaten to smash and do a bit of damage with. It has become a time of people saying stuff to each other and none of it actually ever becoming dialogue. It is the end of dialogue." –Ali Smith (from *Autumn*)

Ten years ago, this class would have seemed premature. It would have struck many as alarmist and irresponsible. It would have taken weeks (rather than minutes) to be approved by the Department of Political Science. American democracy has problems, but hasn't it always? Compared to

earlier eras, hasn't the U.S. improved on many of the metrics associated with democracy – such as near-universal voting rights, the elimination of *de jure* segregation, access to political information, protection of civil liberties, and tolerance for marginalized groups? And hadn't the United States recently elected its first African American president? What is there to renew? Why frighten students?

It's not that easy, of course. Never has been. This class is based on the following premises:

1. On paper, the United States is among the most stable democracies in the world.
2. If the present period of polarization is not reversed, this stability could unravel very quickly.
3. There are signs that American democracy is fraying. The U.S. faces unique challenges that both undermine representative government and threaten the stability of American democracy.
4. As participants in American democracy, we have a responsibility to understand and counteract these trends. For starters, this demands that we *talk* to one another – even (and perhaps especially) when we disagree with each other on almost everything.

With this in mind, *Renewing American Democracy* addresses the principal challenges facing representative government in the United States. The class is divided into two parts. (Think of these like the “A” and “B” sides of a vinyl album.)

In Part I, we'll define the problem. (You'll quickly learn that political scientists disagree about what the problem even is; we'll talk about this too.) To begin, we'll establish that democracies *can* collapse, in subtle or not-so-subtle ways. There is no reason to assume that American democracy is permanent, and recent years have strained our democratic norms and institutions. You'll learn why so many political scientists – regardless of our political attitudes – believe that the presidency of Donald Trump (and Trump's continued presence on the political stage) threatened/threatens democratic stability. More broadly, we'll read about partisan polarization – not just between Republicans and Democrats on Capitol Hill, but between citizens whose group identities and partisanship have become synonymous. Polarization predates Trump by at least fifty years, and political scientists continue to debate its origins and consequences.

In Part II, we'll consider the politics of group identity, and the demands for recognition that identity groups (increasingly) bring to American politics. In particular, we'll ask whether *identity politics* (a term often used but rarely defined) makes it harder to tackle the problems discussed in Part I. After all, polarization (on both the Left and Right) depends on the strength of Americans' group identities and their resentment toward elites that have ignored their concerns. Thus, some maintain that to renew American democracy, we must de-emphasize group identity and embrace what unites us – not just because American democracy demands compromise, but because government is not designed to satisfy an infinite number of identity groups. Others, however, insist that we remain laser-focused on the oppression of marginalized groups – constructing a civic sphere that guarantees reparations for past injustice, and teaching citizens to challenge the vocabulary and effects of marginalization. We'll compare and contrast these viewpoints; it is entirely possible that identity politics is both a symptom *and* solution to what ails American democracy.

To be clear, this course is not intended to reassure you about the future of American democracy. We will discuss potential solutions, but democracies are not rescued by Special Topics courses. Rather, if there *is* a way to renew American democracy, it begins by knowing our place in history, bringing critical thinking to bear on our historical moment, and – to paraphrase Ali Smith in *Autumn* (see quote above) – making sure that democracy is the beginning rather than “the end of dialogue.”

Moodle

You should familiarize yourself with [the Moodle page](#) for this course. As needed, I'll use Moodle to make announcements and updates. You'll use Moodle to submit your reflection memos, midterm exam, and the essay component of your final project. And you can use Moodle to check your current grade in the class or read my feedback on your written assignments.

Course Readings

This course has **five required books**, all available at the Cobber Bookstore; copies are also available through online vendors like [Amazon](#) and [Book Scouter](#).

- Steven Levitsky and Mark Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die*
- Ezra Klein, *Why We're Polarized*
- Katherine J. Cramer, *The Politics of Resentment: Rural Consciousness in Wisconsin and the Rise of Scott Walker*
- Ibram X. Kendi, *How to Be an Anti-Racist*
- Mark Lilla, *The Once and Future Liberal: After Identity Politics*

Please talk to me as soon as possible if you have any difficulties obtaining copies of the course readings. No later than Week 3 of the semester, I will place copies of the textbooks on Course Reserve at the Carl F. Ylvisaker Library.

Expectations

This is an advanced, upper-level political science class. For most class sessions, you are required to:

- **Read (ahead of time) selections from the textbook, as indicated in the schedule below.** Most weeks, we'll cover about 100 pages from the assigned readings. You should complete the assigned readings by the first class of the week (in most cases, Monday). Four times during the semester (see schedule below), you must submit a short reflection memo on the week's readings – due on Sunday evening prior to the first week of class.
- **Come prepared for difficult but important discussions.** If you've signed up for *Renewing American Democracy*, there's a good chance you're interested in renewing American democracy. This demands that we talk to each other without sugar-coating or dumbing-down vital topics. Virtually all our classes will be round-table conversations. Some of these conversations will be uncomfortable. During the course of the semester, each of us – including your instructor – will struggle to find the right words, get the facts wrong, say something offensive without meaning to do so, or otherwise be human. Be present for these conversations. There's no other option.
- **Keep up with current events by reading a daily national newspaper.** We will have regular discussions of current events, applying what we're learning to real-time political news. The campus library provides students **free online access** to the *New York Times*; [click this link](#) to log-in with your Cobbernet username and password.

Reflection Memos

Four times during the semester, you must write a **Reflection Memo** on the readings for the upcoming week. The memos must demonstrate that you have read the assigned readings, thought critically about the author or authors' questions and arguments, and considered how you might contribute to class discussion.

Memos should be approximately 3-4 paragraphs, although you're welcome to write more than that! Keep the following template in mind:

1. **Identify a specific quotation or passage** from the assigned readings. Don't just pick any random passage; choose something that sparked your interest.
2. **Explain what you found interesting about the passage you selected** – and unpack your thoughts further. For example, do you agree or disagree with the authors' claims? Does the passage (and the assigned readings in general) challenge your preconceived notions about the U.S. political system? Do the authors leave anything out of the conversation that you would like to address in class? Have we read other books or articles that contradict the authors' claims – and if so, how might we reconcile these competing views? Do you bring a different perspective to the conversation – based on your lived experiences, your political attitudes, or your knowledge from another course? Did the passage cause you to think about the course topic in a new or challenging way? Do current events in U.S. (or world) politics reinforce or contradict the authors' points? (**You do not need to answer all these questions!** But some of them might come in handy if you're struggling to collect your thoughts.)

Bottom line: Reflection Memos are an invitation to critical thinking. They are an opportunity to dialogue directly with your instructor and classmates, and to help steer class discussion in interesting (and unexpected!) directions. **I take students seriously as intellectuals.** This means that in class, I will often refer to your Reflection Memos for that week – and invite you to comment further on the insights you raise.

Note that students are assigned, based on the first letter of your last name, to one of three groups. These groups correspond with weeks for which group members must submit memos to Dr. Schmidt. On weeks that you're scheduled to submit a Reflection Memo, you must **submit your memo on Moodle by Sunday at 7:30pm (CST) prior to the first class for that week.** Be sure to type your memo in the online text box associated with the assignment.

Group A (Last name A-E): memos due Week 2, Week 5, Week 10, and Week 13

Group B (Last name F-H): memos due Week 3, Week 6, Week 11, and Week 14

Group C (Last name L-W): memos due Week 4, Week 7, Week 12, and Week 15

Response memos compose 15 percent of your final grade (3.75 percent each); each memo will receive a maximum of ten points (6 = needs improvement; 8 = adequate; 10 = excellent).

Midterm Exam (Take-Home)

You are required to complete a midterm, take-home exam. The exam will cover material from Klein's *Why We're Polarized*, Levitsky and Ziblatt's *How Democracies Die*, and our class discussion of these readings. The exam will be posted on Moodle; you have three days to write and

submit your exams (see **Course Schedule**, below). Exams should be uploaded to Moodle as a .doc or .docx (Microsoft Word) file.

The exam will contain three (3) essay questions; your response to each question should be about two to three (2-3) double-spaced pages. Exam questions will draw *heavily* on our class discussions – asking you to make a principled, creative argument that engages with the course topic. As such, an “A” exam will demonstrate not just knowledge of course material (*per se*) – but also your unique insights about the challenges facing American democracy and your willingness to consider alternate perspectives. Responses will not be graded on grammar, spelling, or punctuation. However, remember that if your writing is difficult to follow or contains many typographical errors, it might be more difficult to assess whether you understand the course material.

Final Project: Interview with a Political “Opponent”

Rather than complete a final exam, you must (1) submit a substantive, creative writing assignment and (2) prepare a class presentation on your assignment. The assignment requires you to **interview someone that disagrees with you politically** – either in general, or on an issue (e.g., abortion, LGBTQ+ rights, universal healthcare, vaccine mandates) that matters to you. The person you interview *can* be a fellow student (**modified January 26, 2022**). You should begin planning this project right away; detailed instructions are found below.

Step 1: Consult with Dr. Schmidt about your Proposed Interview

Think carefully about who you’d like to interview. Identify at least three possible sources – your first choice, and two back-up options in case your source is unavailable or does not agree to the terms of the interview. For example, you might want to speak with:

- Someone (elected or unelected) working in state or local government
- Someone involved with a local religious institution or nonprofit
- Someone involved with the Clay County **Republican Party** or **DFL (Democratic-Farmer-Labor) Party**
- Someone involved with a local interest group; if you’d like to pursue this option, I can help you determine appropriate groups in the Fargo-Moorhead area
- A faculty or staff member at Concordia (but not Dr. Schmidt)
- A fellow student at Concordia; if you take this route, see notes below

After you’ve identified possible interviewees, you must **meet with Dr. Schmidt no later than Friday, January 28**. Plan to discuss why the source(s) you’ve identified reflect the spirit of the assignment, and how you plan to approach your source(s) to ask for an interview. At this time, I can address concerns about the interview process or final project.

In any event, **I must approve all proposed interview sources**. To ensure that your final project meets the learning objectives for PSC 380, I reserve the right to request that you select someone else to interview. If you can’t find someone to interview, I can help with this too – but I expect you to make a good-faith effort to identify potential sources in advance of our meeting.

Step 2: Schedule Your Interview

Once I have approved your proposal and back-up plans, you should reach out to the source you'd like to interview. Explain the nature of your class project, and provide my contact information (eschmid4@cord.edu) if they have any questions or concerns. If the person that answers your email (or phone call) declines, don't just give up. If applicable, ask whether anyone else in their organization might be willing to speak with you. **You're more likely to get a "yes" if you are polite, persistent, and flexible.**

However, don't be discouraged if you have trouble finding someone to interview. Indeed, **you should expect some difficulties** – both because people are busy and stressed, and because (for reasons we'll discuss in class!) people are reluctant to discuss politics with a stranger. If/when you run into difficulties, I will help you navigate them.

Ultimately, the person you interview must agree to speak with you for about 30-60 minutes. Interviews can be conducted either in-person or over Zoom. Obtain permission to record the conversation and/or take notes, and to prepare a class project (including an oral presentation) on your interview. **You must also provide your interviewee an official letter, signed by both Dr. Schmidt and yourself, promising to destroy all audio or video files of the interview at the end of the semester;** I will provide tailored letters once you have scheduled an interview. To ensure that you have enough time to write your final project, **I strongly encourage you to schedule an interview no later than Friday, April 1.**

A Note about Interviewing Fellow Students

You are allowed to interview a fellow student (updated instructions, effective January 26). If you go this route, refer to the guidelines below:

1. **Please don't interview a close friend.** Of course, I can't police this request. But the assignment will be more challenging (and useful) if you talk with someone with whom you're not close.
2. **Consider getting in touch with either the College Democrats or the (newly formed) campus chapter of Young Americans for Freedom.** Both chapters have volunteers that might help you complete this assignment. In addition, *The Concordian* regularly publishes opinion pieces from students from across the political spectrum. You might touch base with their Editorial Board.
3. **I still expect you to adhere to the interview procedures for the assignment.** Even if you interview a fellow student, they must agree to be recorded. You must destroy all .mp4 (audio or video) files of the interview at the end of the semester. The person you interview must agree to be the subject of your final paper and in-class presentation. And they must sign an official letter agreeing to the terms of the assignment.
4. **Please still meet with me ASAP;** it's important that we touch base. I must sign-off on your planned interview, even if you interview someone you already know.

Step 3: Conduct Your Interview

At your interview, you should ask as many of the following questions as possible. Feel free to rephrase the questions to fit into the flow of the conversation. Don't be afraid to skip around; aside from the

first question, the questions can be asked in no particular order.

- Politics aside, what are the most important things I should know about you?
- What are the most important things to know about your political attitudes? Describe your political views, and explain why you hold these views.
- (Explain your political perspective to the interviewee; go into as much detail as you want.) What do you think people on my side of these issues get wrong? What are we missing?
- I'm conducting this interview for a class entitled *Renewing American Democracy*. What do you think it means to *renew* American democracy? Do you agree that American democracy needs to be renewed?
- Why do you believe that the United States has become so polarized? When do you think the present period of polarization began? What (or who) started it?
- Which party – the Democrats or the Republicans – do you believe is most at fault for the current climate of polarization? Why do you say that?
- Where do you get most of your news about national politics? Why do you select these sources rather than others?
- What's the biggest misconception about people that share your political perspective? Do you think that your side has done anything to promote this misconception?
- Think back over the past ten years. When were you the angriest about something that happened in national, state, or local politics? Why were you so angry?
- Increasingly, Republicans and Democrats see each other as mortal enemies, rather than people that happen to disagree on important matters of public policy. Why do so many Republicans and Democrats *hate* each other – and what could be done to lessen this hatred?

Step 4a: Write Your Final Project

Once you've conducted your interview, you must write an essay about your experience. Imagine that you are a journalist assigned to write a "human interest" story about the person you chose to interview. You're not just describing what the person *said* to you; you're helping your readers understand what it was like to interview this person:

1. **Describe your conversation.** What did you learn about the person you interviewed? How did they answer your questions? Did they teach you anything about politics that you didn't know before? What questions were they most (or least) eager to discuss – and why do you think that was? (You may quote your respondent, but the majority of your essay should be your own writing.)
2. **Explain how the interview made you feel.** Was your conversation awkward? Scary? Did anything the interviewee say offend you? How did you handle that? Did anything else bother you – like the interviewee's mannerisms or feelings about the interview itself? Alternately, was your experience more positive than you anticipated? If you could conduct your conversation all over again, would you have done anything differently? If so, what?

3. **Discuss how (or whether) the interview helped you understand both the challenges facing American democracy and the lived experiences of people that disagree with you.** With respect to our course, what were the key “takeaways” from your interview? Did you learn anything new about people on the opposite side of the political spectrum? Did you learn how your side might better communicate with people that disagree? (For example, by interviewing working-class whites in Wisconsin, Katherine J. Cramer learned that support for Scott Walker was motivated by rural identity and resentment toward public-sector workers – rather than support for small government and conservative ideology.) Just as importantly, did your conversation help identify either the root causes of polarization or possible ways that polarization might be reduced?

Your essay must be 7-9 double-spaced pages (standard, 12-point font); essays are due on Moodle (in .doc or .docx format) on **Friday, April 29 at 7:30pm CST**.

Step 4b: Prepare a Class Presentation

Alongside your final papers, you must prepare a short class presentation that describes your project and what you learned. Presentations should be approximately 15-20 minutes; slides or visual aids might help you organize your thoughts, but these are not required. Be sure to leave 5-6 minutes to answer questions from your instructor and classmates.

Ultimately, your presentations should *teach* the class about your experience conducting your final project. Tell us about the person you interviewed, and why you chose to interview them. Describe the major takeaways from your interview – and link them back to our conversations throughout the semester. What insights – about renewing American democracy, about the causes of polarization, about people on particular sides of an important issue – did you gain? Don’t feel compelled to stick to a particular format; help us understand what *you* found most interesting or relevant about your experience. Presentations will be graded on delivery, organization, and relevance to the course topic.

Course Schedule

PART 1: DEFINING THE PROBLEM: WHAT AILS AMERICAN DEMOCRACY?

Week 1 (Friday, January 7): Course introduction and overview.

- **Read:** Course syllabus. (Remember that **syllabi are contracts** between the student and instructor; you are responsible for **carefully** reading this syllabus, reviewing the course requirements, and asking your instructor to clarify anything that is unclear.)

Week 2 (Monday, January 10 - Friday, January 14): Levitsky and Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die*, pp. 1-71; reflection memos due from group **A**.

Week 3 (Monday, January 17 - Friday, January 21): Levitsky and Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die*, pp. 72-144; reflection memos due from group **B**.

- **Note:** Monday, January 17 is Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. **Class will reconvene at campus events to honor the legacy of Dr. King.**

Week 4 (Monday, January 24 - Friday, January 28): Levitsky and Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die*, pp. 145-232; reflection memos due from group C.

Week 5 (Monday, January 31 - Friday, February 4): Klein, *Why We're Polarized*, Introduction, pp. 1-102; reflection memos due from group A.

Week 6 (Monday, February 7 - Friday, February 11): Klein, *Why We're Polarized*, pp. 103-196; reflection memos due from group B.

Week 7 (Monday, February 14 - Friday, February 18): Klein, *Why We're Polarized*, pp. 197-268; reflection memos due from group C.

Week 8 (Monday, February 21 - Friday, February 25): Exam Review; Take-Home Midterm Exam

- On Monday, February 21, we'll hold an **exam review session**. Ideally, the review session will put you in the strongest possible position to write your Take-Home Midterm Exam.
- On Wednesday (Feb. 23) and Friday (Feb. 25), we won't meet in-person. You should use our regularly scheduled class time to work on your take-home exam. **The exam is due on Friday, February 25 at 7:30pm CST.**

Your TAKE-HOME MIDTERM EXAM will be posted on Moodle on Tuesday, February 22 at 12:00pm CST. The exam will cover all the material through Week 7.

Exams are due on Friday, February 25 at 7:30pm CST. You must submit your complete exam on Moodle in .doc or .docx format.

Week 9 (Monday, February 28 - Friday, March 4): Spring Interim; no class.

PART 2: IDENTITY POLITICS: SYMPTOM, SOLUTION, OR BOTH?

Week 10 (Monday, March 7 - Friday, March 11): Cramer, *The Politics of Resentment*, pp. 1-110; reflection memos due from group A.

Week 11 (Monday, March 14 - Friday, March 18): Cramer, *The Politics of Resentment*, pp. 111-226; reflection memos due from group B.

Week 12 (Monday, March 21 - Friday, March 25): Kendi, *How to Be an Anti-Racist*, pp. 1-106; reflection memos due from group C.

Week 13 (Monday, March 28 - Friday, April 1): Kendi, *How to Be an Anti-Racist*, pp. 107-200; reflection memos due from group A.

Week 14 (Monday, April 4 - Friday, April 8): Kendi, *How to Be an Anti-Racist*, pp. 201-238; Lilla, *The Once and Future Liberal*, pp. 1-54. Reflection memos due from group **B**.

- **Note:** Wednesday, April 6 is Concordia's Celebration of Student Scholarship (COSS). On Wednesday, **class will reconvene at the COSS**; I encourage students to check out your classmates' original research – and to think about original research that you might conduct during your academic career at Concordia.

Week 15 (Monday, April 11 - Wednesday, April 13): Lilla, *The Once & Future Liberal*, pp. 55-140; reflection memos due from group **C**.

Easter Recess runs from Friday, April 15 to Monday, April 18.

Week 16 (Wednesday, April 20 - Friday, April 22): Final Projects, Presentations

- Each student should prepare a 15-20 minute presentation on your final project. Group **A** will present on Wednesday; group **B**, on Friday. See the assignment instructions for more information.

Finals Week (Monday, April 25 - Friday, April 29): Presentations (continued); Final Papers Due on Friday

- On **Monday, April 29** (our last day of classes), we'll hear final presentations from Group **C**.
- During Finals Week, you are responsible for completing and submitting the essay component of your final project. Essays are due **Friday, April 29 at 7:30pm CST**.

Your FINAL PROJECT (essay component) is due on Friday, April 29 at 7:30pm CST. You must submit your paper on Moodle in .doc or .docx format.

Course Policies

Grading

Your final grade will be weighted as follows:

- **Reflection Memo 1**, 3.75 percent
- **Reflection Memo 2**, 3.75 percent
- **Reflection Memo 3**, 3.75 percent
- **Reflection Memo 4**, 3.75 percent
- **Midterm Exam**, 20 percent

- **Final Project, Essay Component**, 35 percent
- **Final Project, Class Presentation**: 15 percent
- **Participation**, 15 percent.

– I will recognize good-faith efforts to participate in class discussions. **Moreover, I will encourage participation with structured opportunities for students to collect their thoughts.** Frequent in-class writing exercises will help me gauge students' level of preparation for class. Just as important, these impromptu exercises will give *you* ideas for comments, insights, and questions. (If you have questions about the quality of your class participation, please see me during my Student Hours.)

Please note that **there will not be opportunities to earn extra credit** in this course.

Student Hours

Regardless of your performance in this class, I encourage you to stop by my Student Hours. During this time, I will certainly help students that might be struggling in PSC 380 – or who need clarification about the course material. However, I am also interested in your professional and intellectual development. Please see me as a *resource* (and ally) as you progress through your academic careers.

My Student Hours are **each Tuesday from 9:30-11:30am and Thursday from 1:00-3:00pm**, in Old Main 311 (or virtually). Priority will be given to students with scheduled appointments. To make either an in-person or virtual appointment, click the following link:

<https://concordia.campus.eab.com/pal/UGe9GygII5>. Remember to wear a mask to any in-person appointments; for virtual appointments, you'll receive the Zoom link after you sign up.

Attendance Policy

Concordia College requires students to attend all classes as scheduled; I will take attendance at each class session. Note that while you won't be graded on attendance (*per se*), it is difficult to obtain participation credit if you aren't in class.

Students will be excused from class in cases of illness, family emergency, or religious observance. Generally, students should provide documentation of illness (e.g., a valid doctor's note) to be excused from the participation requirement for missed classes. **However, I recognize that due to COVID-19 mitigation measures, it is not always practical (or safe) to obtain a doctor's note**; in these cases, please keep open communication with your instructor to ensure you are not penalized for health circumstances beyond your control.

In addition, **Concordia students will not be penalized for missing class due to participation in a co-curricular activity.** Students should notify their instructors of scheduled absences at the beginning of the semester, or as soon as that information is available to them.

Deadlines

Students must complete assignments (including the Midterm Exam and Final Project) by the specified deadlines. Late assignments will only be permitted in cases of illness (if appli-

cable, provide a valid doctor's note), family emergency, religious observance, or participation in a co-curricular activity. Otherwise, late assignments will be penalized ten (10) percentage points for each day late.

Expectations Regarding Academic and Personal Integrity

All students are expected to make a personal pledge to uphold Concordia's and general professional standards on academic honesty and integrity. For more information, see the College's [Student Handbook and Academic Policies](#).

As the instructor-of-record for this course, **I am required to report academic integrity violations to the Office of Academic Affairs.** Depending on the severity or deliberateness of the offense, penalties for academic misconduct may include: an automatic zero (0) percent on the assignment in question, an automatic failing grade (F) for the course, or (at the administrative level) suspension from the College.

Avoiding plagiarism is essential for anyone at any stage of their academic career. **In my experience, however, most cases of plagiarism are not deliberate;** rather, students are not aware that what they are doing constitutes plagiarism.

There are multiple ways to plagiarize, but here's a good rule-of-thumb: plagiarism means that you have copied from another text – without appropriate citation – **any intellectually unique sequence of three or more words.** There are obvious exceptions to this rule; proper nouns (e.g., “National Republican Convention,” “Senator Amy Klobuchar”), technical terms (e.g., “party in the electorate”) need not appear in quotations, nor do phrases likely to appear in most academic writing on your topic (e.g., “In the United States”). But if you keep the “three words” rule in mind, it will be *extremely* hard to accidentally plagiarize. If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, feel free to ask me and/or refer to the College's guidelines on academic integrity (see above).

COVID-19

As campus continues to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic, keep the following considerations and policies in mind:

- As of January 6 (start of spring semester), **Concordia College requires that students be vaccinated against COVID-19.** This comes after the Food and Drug Administration's full approval of Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine. Vaccines remain the best way to keep yourself and others safe. To find walk-in sites, make an appointment, or find sites that offer a specific vaccine, you can visit the following link: <https://vaccineconnector.mn.gov/en-US/>. For more information about the College's (ongoing) COVID-19 response, you can visit <https://www.concordiacollege.edu/about/covid-response-planning/>.
- **If you are enrolled in PSC 380, you must wear a mask during our class sessions.** If you come to class without a face covering or refuse to comply with this policy, I will politely ask you to leave. If you miss class because you refuse to comply with class policy on masking, your absence will count against your participation grade for that week. Students seeking an exemption from either the campus-wide or class policies should contact Matthew Rutten in the [Counseling Center and Disability Services Office](#).

- **To facilitate contact tracing in case of COVID-19 infection, I will circulate an assigned seating chart on the first day of classes.** For the duration of the semester, plan to sit in your assigned seat (i.e., the seat that you chose on the first day of class).
- **I expect students to stay home from class if you are ill.** If you experience COVID-19 symptoms or test positive for COVID-19, it is important that you receive prompt medical attention – and that you self-isolate to protect others from infection. In this event, **I will ensure that you are not penalized for health circumstances beyond your control.**
- **If you are unvaccinated and exposed (close contact) to someone that tests positive for COVID-19, you must quarantine according to campus mitigation measures – and contact the COVID student helpline at (701) 730-8304.** If you are vaccinated and have no symptoms after a close contact exposure, you should continue to monitor your health – but do not need to quarantine unless you develop symptoms. If you are vaccinated and develop symptoms after a COVID-19 close contact exposure, you should call the COVID student helpline and stay home until you receive further instruction. **In these circumstances, I will again ensure that you are not penalized for following the campus’s specified COVID-19 mitigation measures.**
- **Campus resources are in-place to help students affected by COVID-19.** Students who find it difficult to complete course work are expected to contact the course instructor and the Center for Student Success (success@cord.edu). Students who have technology issues are expected to contact ITS (pcsupport@cord.edu). Students who miss class for an extended period should reach out to Center for Student Success (success@cord.edu).

Concordia’s Diversity Statement

Concordia College aspires to be a diverse community that affirms an abundance of identities, experiences, and perspectives in order to imagine, examine, and implement possibilities for individual and communal thriving. Critical thinking grounded in the liberal arts compels us to participate in intentional dialogue, careful self-reflection, and honest interactions about difference, power, and inequity. As responsible engagement in the world calls us to recognize worlds that are familiar or unfamiliar, visible or less visible, Concordia will act to increase and support diversity in all areas of campus life.

Value of Diverse Perspectives, Backgrounds, and Identities

As your instructor, I am committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion at Concordia. Ultimately, **inclusion is a quality-of-life issue.** Students are unlikely to succeed in (let alone enjoy) an educational environment where their contributions are neither valued nor noticed. More than ever, liberal arts education must celebrate students with under-represented racial and ethnic backgrounds, sexual orientations or gender identities, religious beliefs, and socioeconomic statuses. Students with physical or learning disabilities must be fully included in campus life. And instructors must proactively *and quickly* address discrimination in all its forms.

Just as importantly, if you feel under-valued and unnoticed in class, this is probably not your fault. Rather, it is your instructor’s responsibility to promote an inclusive learning environment. During the semester, I will do my utmost to promote diverse perspectives, backgrounds, and identities in

the classroom. But if I ever fall short, please let me know. Like everyone at Concordia, I am still learning; like everyone, there are “blind spots” in my cultural sensitivity and awareness. For this reason, I value *any* feedback that makes my classroom more inclusive – and would consider it a privilege to learn from you.

Pronouns and Identity

Class rosters are provided to us with the students’ legal names. Because all people have the right to be addressed in accordance with their personal identity, the instructor will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please let him know how you would prefer to be addressed as soon as possible.

Concordia’s Interfaith Cooperation Statement

Concordia College practices interfaith cooperation because of its Lutheran dedication to prepare thoughtful and informed global citizens who foster wholeness and hope, build peace through understanding, and serve the world together.

Religious Accommodations

Students from all faiths and religious backgrounds (and no or uncertain faiths) are welcome in this classroom. If a religious holiday precludes your class attendance, please make arrangements with the instructor in advance for retrieving information and turning in class assignments. If you are entitled to religious accommodations for spring 2022, I strongly encourage you to contact me as soon as possible. [Click here](#) to read the College’s Religious Accommodations Policy.

Concordia’s Sexual Misconduct Policy

Concordia College takes sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, stalking, and sexual harassment **seriously**. All faculty members, including myself, are mandatory reporters, which means that if I learn about any form of sexual misconduct, I must report it to the Title IX coordinator. For more information, I strongly encourage students to access both the [College’s Title IX Resources](#) and [Sexual Misconduct Policy](#).

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Concordia College values diversity and inclusion. We are committed to providing students with access to mental health services and equitable access to learning opportunities.

The Counseling Center and Disability Services Office (Old Main 109A) is the campus office that helps students find solutions and relief through talk therapy, and reasonable accommodations. [Additional Community and Online Resources](#) are also available on Cobbernet.

- If you feel stressed, anxious, worried, or lonely, please consider contacting a staff member in the Counseling Center and Disability Services Office to learn more, or to set up an appointment with a counselor. All appointments are free and confidential and can be arranged by emailing

counseling@cord.edu, or calling (218) 299-3514, or by stopping in Lower Level, Old Main, room 109A.

- If you have, or think you may have, a disability (e.g., mental health, attention, learning, autism spectrum disorders, chronic health, traumatic brain injury and concussions, vision, hearing, mobility, or speech impairments), please contact the Director of the Counseling Center and Disability Services Office to arrange a confidential discussion regarding equitable access and reasonable accommodations. Appointments can be arranged by emailing counseling@cord.edu, or calling (218) 299-3514, or by stopping in Lower Level, Old Main, room 109A.
- Accommodations can be coordinated with the staff in the Counseling Center and Disability Services Office. To receive reasonable and appropriate accommodations in your course(s), you will need to share your Letter of Accommodation (LOA) with your class instructor(s) as soon as possible so necessary arrangements can be made. **Accommodations can start only after the LOA has been shared with your instructor, and accommodations are not retroactive.** Your information will be kept confidential.
- For additional information on accommodations (e.g., accommodation petition process or appeal process for accommodation plans) please see the Policy for the Accommodation of Students with Disabilities in the Concordia College Course Catalog.

Please contact me if you feel there are aspects of my instruction, or design of this course, that could better support your learning.

Mental Health

It is very important that your first priority this semester be to take care of yourself. Monitor and take care of your own health and well-being. It is important to recognize stressors you may be facing, which might be personal, emotional, physical, financial, mental, or academic. Sleep, exercise, balanced nutrition and connecting with others are great strategies to help you flourish at Concordia. If you are having difficulties maintaining your well-being, feel free to contact me and/or pursue other campus resources, such as the Counseling Center. Contact the Counseling Center to learn more, at counseling@cord.edu, (218) 299-3514, or stop in Lower Level, Old Main, Room 109A. All appointments are free and confidential.