

POLITICAL SCIENCE 110
U.S. GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS
FALL 2008

Dr. Kate Knutson

Department of Political Science * Old Main 204-A

knutson@gustavus.edu * 933-6224

OFFICE HOURS: Mondays & Wednesdays 11:30-12:20 and by appointment

Why in a country such as ours, designed to be responsive to the preferences and demands of citizens, do we see such low levels of political participation? Why are young people, in particular, unlikely to participate in a process that will impact them for years to come? Why are some people so turned off by politics? Throughout this semester, we examine these questions, and more, in detail through readings, discussions, experiential learning, and writing.

This course offers an introductory overview of the institutions and political actors that make up the American political system with an emphasis on political participation. The U.S. Constitution lays out a framework for representative government which has managed to survive over two hundred years with relatively few changes. We examine the role of political parties, interest groups, public opinion, the mass media, and elections in our participatory democracy. We also examine the political institutions of Congress, the executive branch, and the judiciary, as designed by the Constitution with special attention to the ways in which political actors have worked to shape and change these institutions and the ways in which these institutions constrain the behavior of political actors.



In addition to learning about the basic processes of government and political actors, my goals for this course are that you will learn more about many important issues and policies currently in the news, and will establish an interest in, and connection to, politics that will last a lifetime. If you are, or will be, a Political Science major, this class will provide you with fundamental knowledge you will build upon in upper-level courses. If you are taking this course as a requirement for another major or as a general education requirement, I hope this class will provide you with insight into the political world, will furnish the information you need to confidently talk about politics with your friends and family, and will nurture your sense of civic responsibility.

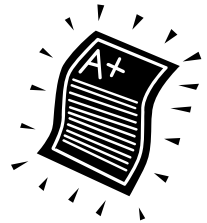
TEXTBOOKS & COURSE MATERIAL

- Karen O'Connor and Larry Sabato, *Essentials of American Government: Continuity and Change* (2008) **Abbreviated "O&S" in the syllabus**
- Martin Wattenberg, *Is Voting for Young People?* (2007)
- Larry Sabato, *Get in the Booth!* (2008)
- Andrea Lunsford, *The Everyday Writer* (for reference on written assignments)
- "National Report" section of the *New York Times*, Monday through Friday

GRADES AND ASSIGNMENTS

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Due Date</u>
Exam #1	15%	Wednesday, October 1
Exam #2	15%	Friday, November 7
Exam #3	20%	Monday, December 15
Current Events Paper #1	15%	Friday, October 17
Campaign Reflection Paper	10%	Friday, November 14
Current Events Paper #2	15%	Friday, December 12
Class Participation	10%	Ongoing

Exams: The exams cover the material presented in the readings and in lectures. The in-class exams are comprised of multiple choice questions, concept definitions, and short answer questions. The purpose of these exams is to assess the extent to which you are familiar with the important events and concepts presented in this class. Helpful study hints for these exams are provided at the end of this syllabus.



Current Events Papers: Throughout the semester, we discuss important issues and policies currently in the news. You will write two analytical papers based on current events reported in the *New York Times*. A fuller explanation of these assignments is included at the end of this syllabus.

Campaign Experience & Reflection Paper: You are required to spend a minimum of 10 hours between now and November 4th (Election Day) volunteering for a political campaign of your choice. You may choose to volunteer for a candidate of any political party running in a local, state, or federal campaign; you may work for a political party; or you may work for an interest group that is active in the campaign. It is your responsibility to identify a campaign with which to volunteer, to contact the campaign about volunteering, and to complete the required volunteer hours before November 4th. I will provide you with a list of suggestions and contact numbers. I will also provide you with an informational form for your campaign supervisor that should be returned to me when you have completed your volunteer hours. You will write a paper reflecting on your experiences working for the campaign. I will discuss this paper in class, and detailed guidelines for this assignment are included at the end of this syllabus

Participation: Your participation is an integral part of this class. Learning requires much more than me simply shoveling information into your open minds. It is an active process that requires you to take the reins in asking questions, seeking out information, working collectively to achieve understanding of complex problems, and critically examining your assumptions about how the world works. My role in this process is to guide and encourage you, but I can not do that without your participation. Participation includes attending class on time (obviously, you can't participate if you're not here), completing the assigned readings, contributing to class discussions with thoughtful comments, and listening attentively to me and to your classmates.

- I consider your completion of the assigned readings to be your ticket of admittance to class. You cannot participate meaningfully in a discussion of the readings if you have not completed them. In the event that you have not completed the readings, I may ask you to leave and you will be counted as absent for the day.

- Your contribution to class discussion will come in many forms: active participation (leadership) in small group activities, asking questions about the course material in class, contributing meaningful comments and observations in large group discussions, answering questions I pose to the class, etc.
- Listening is a valuable skill. It is important that you learn to hear and respond to the comments made by your classmates as well as to my comments, so always look for ways you can engage with comments from a previous speaker. This means that you should not be talking when other people are speaking.

COURSE POLICIES & GUIDELINES

Attendance: You are an adult and therefore, you do not need to notify me when you miss class and you do not need to explain your absences to me. Please do not send me an email asking if you “missed anything important in class”! If you miss class for any reason, it is your responsibility to contact a classmate for notes. If you have any questions about your notes, please see me during my office hours. Missing more than *two* classes during the semester *will negatively affect your participation grade* regardless of the reasons for the absences. Missing more than *five* classes during the semester may result in an F for the course.

Academic Honesty: Gustavus Adolphus College standards for academic honesty apply in this class. If you have questions about these standards, please consult the College Honor Code. Your decision to remain enrolled in this class will serve as your agreement to abide by the following statement for each assignment you submit: *“On my honor, I pledge that I have not given, received, or tolerated others’ use of unauthorized aid in completing this work.”* Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Any thoughts or ideas that are not your own, even if you are not directly quoting a source must be attributed to their source through in text citations. Plagiarized work will be given a zero, cases will be reported to the dean, and the incident may be grounds for failing the course.

Cell Phones: Please turn off your cell phone before class. If a cell phone rings during class time, the owner will be asked to bring a treat to share with the entire class during our next meeting to compensate us for the distraction.



Grade Dispute: Any grade disputes must be submitted in writing to me no later than one week after the assignment is returned.

Special Accommodations: If you have a physical, psychiatric/emotional, medical, or learning disability that may have an effect on your ability to complete assigned course work, please contact Laurie Bickett, the Disability Services Coordinator, in the Advising Center. She will review your concerns and decide with you what accommodations are necessary. Upon receipt of documentation from her, I will be happy to work with you.

The Writing Center: At the Writing Center, you’ll work with a peer tutor one-on-one: you can talk frankly about your writing concerns and receive on-the-spot feedback. The Writing Center is not a proofreading service; rather, it is a peer teaching facility that helps you clarify your thinking, structure your papers, develop evidence, hone your style, and practice self-editing skills. Please call x6027 for hours and locations.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1: Introduction to American Government and Politics

Wednesday (9/3)

Topic: Introduction to the course

Friday (9/5)

Topic: Founding of the nation

Read: O&S 1

Week 2: Founding Documents

Monday (9/8)

Topic: The Declaration of Independence

Read: The Declaration of Independence (in O&S)

Wednesday (9/10)

Topic: The U.S. Constitution

Read: O&S 2

Friday (9/12)

Topic: The U.S. Constitution

Read: The U.S. Constitution (in O&S)

Week 3: Federalism

Monday (9/15)

Topic: Federalism

Read: O&S 3

Wednesday (9/17)

Topic: Federalism

Read: Federalist 51 (in O&S)

Friday (9/19)

Topic: Campaign work

Week 4: Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

Monday (9/22)

Topic: Civil rights and civil liberties

Read: O&S 4 (pgs 107-120)

Wednesday (9/24)

Topic: Civil liberties

Read: O&S 4 (pgs 121-136)

Friday (9/26)

Topic: Civil rights

Read: O&S 5 (pgs 137-150)

Week 5: Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

Monday (9/29)

Topic: Civil rights
Read: O&S 5 (pgs 151-163)

Wednesday (10/1)

Exam #1: Founding, Federalism, Civil Rights, Civil Liberties

Friday (10/3)

Topic: Political campaigns
Read: Sabato 1 & 8

Week 6: Campaigns, Voting, and Elections

Monday (10/6)

Topic: Elections and Voting
Read: O&S 12 (p. 351-373)

Wednesday (10/8)

No Class: Nobel Lectures

Friday (10/10)

Topic: Campaigns (Journeys with George)
Read: O&S 12 (p. 374-388)

Week 7: Campaigns, Voting and Elections

Monday (10/13)

Topic: Campaigns (Journeys with George)

Wednesday (10/15)

Topic: Campaigns (Journeys with George)

Friday (10/17)

Topic: Public opinion
Read: O&S 10 (p. 277-294)
Due: Current Events Paper #1

Week 8: Media and Political Parties

Monday (10/20)

No Class: Fall Break

Wednesday (10/22)

Topic: Mass media
Read: O&S 10 (p. 295-314); Sabato 9 & 10

Friday (10/24)

Topic: Political parties
Read: O&S 11 (p. 315-334), Sabato 2 & 3

Week 9: Interest Groups and Political Participation

Monday (10/27)

Topic: Interest groups
Read: O&S (p. 335-350); Federalist 10 (in O&S)

Wednesday (10/29)

Topic: Political participation
Read: Wattenberg Introduction-2

Friday (10/31)

Topic: Political participation
Read: Wattenberg 3-5

Week 10: Political Participation

Monday (11/3)

Topic: Political participation
Read: Wattenberg 6-7

Wednesday (11/5)

Topic: Election discussion

Friday (11/7)

Exam #2: Campaigns, Elections, Voting, Public Opinion, Media, Political Parties, Interest Groups, Political Participation

Week 11: Congress

Monday (11/10)

Topic: Congress

Wednesday (11/12)

Topic: Congress
Read: O&S 6

Friday (11/14)

Topic: Congress
Read: Sabato 11
Due: Campaign Reflection Paper

Week 12: The Presidency and Bureaucracy

Monday (11/17)

Topic: The presidency
Read: O&S 7

Wednesday (11/19)

Topic: The presidency
Read: Sabato 4

Friday (11/21)

Topic: The bureaucracy
Read: O&S 8 (p. 221-233)

Week 13: The Bureaucracy

Monday (11/24)

Topic: The bureaucracy
Read: O&S (p. 233-244)

Wednesday (11/26)

No Class: Thanksgiving Break

Friday (11/28)

No Class: Thanksgiving Break

Week 14: The Judicial System

Monday (12/1)

Topic: The courts
Read: O&S 9 (p. 245-256)

Wednesday (12/3)

Topic: The courts
Read: O&S 9 (p. 257-261)

Friday (12/5)

Topic: The courts
Read: O&S 9 (p. 262-275)

Week 15: Public Policy

Monday (12/8)

Topic: Domestic policy
Read: O&S 13

Wednesday (12/10)

Topic: Domestic policy
Read: Sabato 5-7

Friday (12/12)

Topic: Conclusions
Due: Current Events Paper #2

Week 16: Final Exam

Monday (12/15): 3:30-5:30 pm

EXAM GUIDELINES

Exam Format:

This class features three in-class exams consisting of multiple choice, concept definitions, and short answer questions. Questions come from the reading, lectures, and current events covered in the time since the previous exam. The exams are not cumulative, but they each cover a lot of material.

How to Study for the Exams:

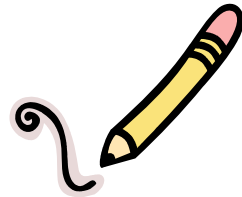
Key concepts and terms are indicated in bold in the textbook and listed at the end of each chapter—you should know what these terms mean and why they are important in the study of government and politics. Much of your exam grade is based on your grasp of important terms and concepts (tested via the concept definition and multiple choice questions) and therefore you should devote a considerable portion of your study time to familiarizing yourself with important terms and concepts. You may find it useful to use the textbook website to help you study (www.longmanamericangovernment.com). The textbook website allows you to take practice multiple choice and fill-in-the-blank quizzes to allow you to assess how prepared you are for the exams.

Some questions will come from supplemental readings (the You Decide reader, Wattenberg, Declaration of Independence, Federalist 10, etc). You should be familiar with the main arguments / ideas presented in these readings as well as any key concepts mentioned in the reading. I will provide you with the author(s) name and the title of each work in any question I ask regarding supplemental readings.

Sample question multiple choice question based on supplemental readings:

In Federalist, No. 51, James Madison makes a case for

- a. the inclusion of a bill of rights in the Constitution.*
- b. the constitutional separation of powers.*
- c. states' rights.*
- d. his view that human beings are virtuous.*



You should know the main points presented in lecture (I consider points that are specifically mentioned on power point slides or written on the board to be “main points”). I will not ask you for minute details like dates (when was the Bill of Rights ratified?) or specific numbers (how many African Americans serve in the 109th Congress?) so don’t spend your study time memorizing these things unless you just like political trivia. Focus instead on the larger concepts and themes as well as our topics of discussion. Remember that the power point slides will feature only brief outlines of the day’s topic. In order to have enough information to answer the exam questions, you will need to take notes on the lecture/discussion beyond what is written on the slides.

Finally, you should be familiar with issues and events that are currently in the news (the Monday through Friday National Report section of the *New York Times*), especially those we discuss in class. Knowledge of current events will be assessed primarily through multiple choice questions.

CURRENT EVENTS PAPER GUIDELINES

Due Dates: Friday, October 17 and Friday, December 12

You will write two 3-5 page papers based on a current event reported in the “National Report” section of the *New York Times*. The purpose of these writing assignments is to help you learn about current political issues, apply the information presented in the class to a real world situation, clarify your views on important issues, and improve your writing skills. The papers should include a summary of the article and issue, and an application of relevant course topics and concepts.

Finding a Topic

- Find an article appearing in the Monday-Friday “National Report” section of the *New York Times* that relates to a topic covered during the relevant section of the course. This will be much easier for you to do if you are a regular reader of the *Times* rather than trying to do a search of back issues.
- Make sure that you understand what is happening in the article. Do background research on the people, groups, agencies, policies, and problems as needed.

The Paper

In the paper you will:

- Summarize the main points of the article. Do not simply repeat the article to me, but instead, work on highlighting the main themes to emerge in the article. The goal in this section is for you to explain to me what is happening and why it is important to know about.
- Explain how the article illustrates a concept or topic from the class. Be sure to fully explain the concept or topic you select in your own words (pretend I am not a professor of Political Science) and then connect it to the issue discussed in the article.
- Articulate your viewpoint on the issue discussed in the article. If the article is dealing with a very specific aspect of a larger issue, you are welcome to generalize beyond the specific aspect in order to explain your viewpoint. Be sure, though, that you connect the specific topic of the article with the larger issue on which you state your opinion.

The paper should have an introduction (including a thesis that connects the issue to a course concept or topic), a well organized body, and a conclusion.

Paper Guidelines

- Attach a copy of the newspaper article to your paper
- I expect you to use outside sources in your paper to provide the necessary background information, so include a works cited page (see Lunsford for details)
- Your paper should be logically and thoughtfully organized, well written, and carefully proofread for factual, grammar, and spelling errors. Remember that this is a formal writing assignment and so your language and style should reflect this (avoid contractions, slang, passive voice, and all of the “Twenty Most Common Errors” listed in section 3 of the Lunsford style guide).
- Papers should be typed, 3-5 double-spaced pages (not including title page (with a title!) and works cited page) with standard (1”-1.25”) margins, font type (Times New Roman) and size (12 point). I will not read beyond page 5 so be sure to stay within the allotted pages. Staple your paper.

Getting Help: If you are having difficulty at any stage of the process (selecting a topic, writing, revising, proofreading) there are many places you can turn to for help:

- Come see me during office hours or set up an appointment to meet with me. I am happy to talk to you about your paper at any stage of the process.
- Set up an appointment with the tutors in the Writing Center. They can help you at any stage of the writing process.

- Talk with a classmate or exchange papers with a classmate for help revising, editing, and/or proofreading.

Grading: Your grade for the papers is based on four components:

- Your ability to accurately summarize the article
- Your ability to explain how the article relates to course concepts or topics
- Your ability to articulate your position on the issue
- Your writing style, including grammar, spelling, word choice, organization and overall presentation

Late Paper Penalty: Papers will be penalized a letter grade (i.e. B- to a C+) for each day (or portion thereof) they are late.

A Reminder Concerning Plagiarism: Plagiarism—using the words or ideas of someone else without attribution--will not be tolerated under any circumstance. Any thoughts or ideas that are not your own, even if you are not directly quoting a source must be attributed to their source through in-text citations. When in doubt, over-cite. If you are unsure what constitutes plagiarism, consult pages 172-175 in the Lunsford handbook or come and talk to me. Plagiarized work will be given a zero, cases will be reported to the dean, and the incident may result in failure of the course.

A sample of my grading rubric for current events papers:

Current Events Paper

Student Name: _____

	Superior	Good	Average	Poor	Very Poor
Article / Issue Summary					
Summary of main themes					
Explanation of issue context					
Appropriate article (NYT, National Report, M-F)					
Connection to Course Concept					
Accurate and thorough explanation of concept					
Accurate application of concept to article					
Concept related to appropriate section of the course					
Supported with evidence and research					
Articulation of Personal Viewpoint					
Connection to current event					
Connection to course concept					
Supported with evidence and research					
Clarity of written assignment					
Thesis					
Organization					
Writing style (language, tone, etc.)					
Writing mechanics (spelling, grammar, etc.)					
Proper citation method and bibliography					

This grid is designed to help you identify general areas for improvement in future papers. Please refer to my comments within your paper for more specific feedback.

CAMPAIGN VOLUNTEERING GUIDELINES

“I learned that politics makes an enormous difference in our lives and that politics is not neutral. It is something you can either take an interest in or ignore. Eventually it will help or harm you, or both. I learned that ignoring it simply ignores a driving force in our lives” (Thomas Volgy, from Politics in the Trenches: Citizens, Politicians, and the Fate of Democracy, pg. 15)

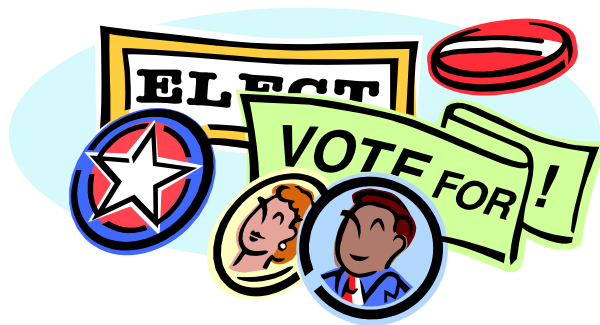
Elections are the defining marker of American democracy. America elects more representatives and has more elections than any other country in the world. In this course, you have the opportunity not only to observe this hallmark of American democracy, but to participate in the process. Your job is to select one campaign for which you would like to volunteer.

The campaign you choose to volunteer with may be for a candidate of any party running for a local, county, state, or federal office. You may also choose to volunteer for a political party or interest group active in the campaign. You have freedom to choose a candidate or organization that most interests you or most closely reflects your political opinions and values.

You will spend a minimum of 10 hours volunteering with the campaign before the November 4th election. Your volunteer work may include making phone calls, stuffing letters, talking with voters, working at campaign events, or a number of other activities with which the campaign needs help.

Where to Start:

- Identify a campaign with which you would like to work
- Contact the campaign. Most campaigns have a volunteer coordinator who will be happy to talk with you. Remember that they are pretty busy right now, so be persistent if they don't return your call right away.
- Communicate to the campaign that you would like to donate 10 hours of labor to the campaign and be sure to let them know if you have any particular interests (maybe you *love* making phone calls!) or any particular limitations (you can only work on Saturdays, or you don't have access to transportation).
- On your first day of volunteering, give your supervisor a copy of the informational form I will give you. They will sign the form after you have completed your 10 hours of service and you will return the form to me to get credit for your work.
- Have fun being a part of history in the making! Save up lots of great stories from the campaign trail to share with us in class and to share with me in your Reflection Paper.



CAMPAIGN REFLECTION PAPER GUIDELINES

Due: Friday, November 14 in class

This writing assignment provides you with an opportunity to reflect on the hours you spend volunteering with a campaign this semester. I am interested in reading about what you did as part of your volunteer work and, more importantly, how this experience impacted or enriched your life either in terms of your own understanding of politics or in terms of your future vocation. You do not need to complete any outside research for this reflective essay; however you should carefully and critically evaluate your experience in light of the questions posed below in constructing your essay. As a word of caution, beginning this essay the night before it is due is not a good strategy for writing a strong paper. Allow yourself time to process through your experience and to proofread your paper before handing it in.

The Assignment:

In addition to describing your duties as a volunteer on the campaign, your reflection essay should answer one of the following two questions.

1. How has your experience as a campaign volunteer influenced your understanding of, or interest in, political campaigns, elections, voters, and/or citizenship? What lessons have you learned in regard to these concepts as a result of your experience as a volunteer?
2. If you are taking this course as a requirement for another major (education, for example), how could your experience as a campaign volunteer contribute to your future career? In other words, in what ways might your specific experiences on this campaign be useful in a workplace setting? (Think of benefits broadly such as skills learned, connections made, or examples/stories created, etc.)

Paper Guidelines:

- 3-4 pages in length
- Typed, double-spaced, with standard margins
- 12 point, Times New Roman font (or similar font)
- This paper assignment calls for a more informal style than your research paper assignment. As such, you are welcome to use a more colloquial tone. However, keep in mind that you are still writing for a college professor. Even though this assignment is more informal, I am still interested in your ability to write clearly, concisely, and with style. Your paper should be well organized and carefully proofread for errors in spelling, grammar, word choice, organization, and overall presentation.

Grading Criteria:

The best reflective essays will display the following criteria:

- Thorough explanation of the tasks you performed as a volunteer
- Thorough answer of one of the two questions listed above
- Evidence of serious reflection on question of politics or vocation
- Clear and accurate writing (no spelling, grammar, or stylistic mistakes)

Failure to Complete Volunteer Hours Penalty: Students who fail to complete the required 10 hours of volunteer service will be penalized 10% (out of 100%) for each hour missed. For example, a student who completed only 7 hours of volunteer service could earn a maximum grade of 70% on this assignment. The reason for this severe penalty is that it is difficult to write a reflective essay on an incomplete experience.

Late Paper Penalty: Papers will be penalized a letter grade (i.e. B- to a C+) for each day (or portion thereof) they are late.

Getting Help: If you are having difficulty at any stage of the process (processing through your experience, writing, revising, proofreading) there are many places you can turn to for help:

- Come see me during office hours or set up an appointment to meet with me. I am happy to talk to you about your paper at any stage of the process.
- Set up an appointment with the tutors in the Writing Center. They can help you at any stage of the writing process.
- Talk with a classmate or exchange papers with a classmate for help revising, editing, and/or proofreading.

A Reminder Concerning Plagiarism: Though you are not expected to conduct any outside library research for this assignment, remember that standards for academic honesty still apply. Plagiarism—using the words or ideas of someone else without attribution--will not be tolerated under any circumstance. Any thoughts or ideas that are not your own, even if you are not directly quoting a source must be attributed to their source through in-text citations. For instructions on how to cite personal communication appropriately, see page 419 in Lunsford. Plagiarized work will be given a zero and cases will be reported to the dean.



GRADING SCALE FOR WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

A or A-: Superior development of original ideas. These papers organize arguments logically, present credible supporting evidence, and communicate the information without stylistic or mechanical errors. These papers present a significant and well-argued position that is both convincing and thought-provoking. I reserve this grade for papers that are truly excellent, and A grades, in particular, are rare.

B+, B, or B-: Good development of thesis. These papers organize arguments in a logical way, find credible supporting evidence, and communicate the information without distracting stylistic or mechanical errors. These papers reflect a clear understanding of both the assignment and the course material, however, they lack the sophistication and polish of A papers.

C+, C, or C-: Average development of thesis. These papers lack strong development of arguments and/or credible supporting evidence, and include distracting stylistic or mechanical errors. This grade often reflects a lack of time or effort in researching, writing, revising, editing, or proofreading.

D+ or D: Poor development of thesis (may not even have a thesis). These papers fail to organize arguments in a logical way (you may not have supporting arguments or any sort of organizational structure), find credible supporting evidence (you may not have the right kind or amount of evidence or you may not be citing that evidence properly), or communicate the information without distracting stylistic or mechanical errors. These papers reflect poor-quality college-level work with little time or effort put into the writing process.

You can earn an F if you do not turn in a paper, plagiarize your paper in any way, do not answer the question, and/or do such a poor job in writing your paper that it is impossible to understand what message you want to communicate with the paper.

COURSE GRADE SCALE

A	95-100
A-	90-94
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	65-69
D	60-64
F	<59