

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA ASHEVILLE
FACULTY SENATE

Senate Document Number SD0923F
Date of Senate Approval 12/07/2023

Statement of Faculty Senate Action:

APC Doc 5 (POLs): **Adding new course, POLS 313, US Census: The Politics of Counting**

Effective Date: Fall 2024

1. Add: On page 274, new course, **POLS 313:**

313 US Census: The Politics of Counting (4)

Explores the politics behind and around the US Census, the process by which the US government counts the number of people living in the United States every ten years. In this course, we will discuss who gets counted, how the process is conducted, and why the official count misses so much of the population. We will also dig into the implications this process has for redistricting & representation, federal funding allocations, the provision of government services, and how we think about race, ethnicity, and identity in American politics. The course will particularly focus on the most recent past census and upcoming population counts as lenses by which to understand the politics around this critical but flawed government process. See department chair.

Impact Statement: The addition of this course will have no anticipated negative impact on the Political Science major or minor or on university requirements. Instead, the course will serve as an additional elective course in Political Science, which make up the bulk of the POLS major and minor requirements, thus giving students more choices in the courses they can take toward their degree. We believe that this course can help students outside the Political Science Department, as well. The first time the course was offered (as a Special Topics elective), it had a Service Learning (SL) designation; SL courses are an asset for any student interested in hands-on experiences in the community and in high-impact practices. Further, they also help students seeking the Community Engaged Scholar distinction. We intend to offer this course as a SL once again, as the next population count approaches and there arises a community need. In addition, since Summer 2020, it has been taught with a Diversity Intensive (DI) designation and thus contributes to the Liberal Arts Core. The course is approved as a DI course until Spring 2025, at which point we plan to seek re-approval. Table 1 provides more information on the designations the course has had over the past few academic years. In addition, we think this course can help students (both inside and outside the POLS major/minor) in other ways too. This course has been taught as both an in-person and an online asynchronous course (see Table 1 for more detailed information), meaning the modality of the course can easily change based on student needs and demands. It has also been taught

during the normal academic year, as well as over the summer. This flexibility allows the department to easily offer a summer course when student needs arise and can help reduce time to graduation. In recent years, it has been the only POLS summer class regularly offered.

Regardless of the modality of the course, it is designed as a seminar style course, where students interact with and debate one another on important political topics. On top of the Student Learning Outcomes associated with the SL and DI designations, the course asks students to critically evaluate and analyze the Census based on its intended purpose and its unintended consequences and to understand the role that the Census plays in shifting the power dynamics in American politics. It is designed as a 4-credit & faculty-workload hour course with 200+ minutes of scheduled class time per week. No specialized spaces or materials are needed for the course, and it is not part of the UNC Common Numbering System.

Further, the addition of the course is not expected to affect the department’s staffing needs, as a version of it (POLS 374: Census 2020: The Politics of Counting) has already been offered as a special topics course five times since the Spring 2020 semester, including summer terms (again, see Table 1). At present, Ashley Moraguez is the sole faculty member who has taught the course. However, given the Political Science Department’s core faculty in American politics, it could easily be taught by others in the department, including Giovanni Pleites-Hernandez and Rob Shrode. The content of the course is complementary to both of their research and teaching interests. We anticipate offering the course every other year, and perhaps more frequently if there is student demand for summer courses. The expected enrollment would be 15-20 students during the academic year (though, this might vary in the summer terms—past enrollment numbers are included in Table 1). The addition of the course should not affect our ability to offer the existing curriculum or to meet our commitments to the LAC. As noted above, the course has already been on offer regularly and has not come at the expense of other Political Science courses. If anything, it has enhanced our ability to contribute to the LAC and other university programs and priorities.

Table 1: Recent Offerings of POLS 374: Census 2020: The Politics of Counting

Semester/Term	Course Designation	Enrollment	Method/Mode of Delivery
Spring 2020	SL	16/15	In-person
Summer 2020	DI	17/20	Online, Async
Summer 2021	DI	16/20	Online, Async
Summer 2022	DI	12/20	Online, Async
Summer 2023	DI	12/20	Online, Async

Rationale: The inclusion of POLS 313 will make a substantive addition to the department’s course offerings and will facilitate our ability to contribute to the missions of both the department and the university. The course was first offered in Spring 2020 to coincide with the onset of the 2020 decennial census cycle; the goal was to have students learn about this important government function and get involved in the process themselves. However, as the semester progressed, it became clear to both the faculty and the students how foundational this course was to the understanding of *all* parts of American politics, not just the population count. As such, the main impetus behind this course is to reflect timely political developments and faculty and student interest. Students in the course, over the five times it has

been offered, have rated it quite highly relative to other courses in American politics. In addition, we believe the course can benefit students outside the POLS department, as noted above, given its past offerings as a both a SL and DI course. These designations also indicate that the course can contribute to the shared mission between the University and the department to foster engaged service and civic leadership and help us live up to the core values of diversity and inclusion. Given that the class has been offered regularly in recent years, seems to be popular, and is always relevant to the operation of American politics, we believe it is worth adding as a permanent class in the catalog. We also think the flexibility in the modality of the course and its success as a summer class, as noted above, may allow us the ability to meet students' needs more easily and potentially to reduce time to graduation for some students.