

For Immediate Release -- September 12, 2011

Alumni Launch Book Campaign to Save UNC Course
Chapel Hill, NC

In the past two weeks, a group of UNC alumni have begun petitioning the University of North Carolina to reinstate a course in an unusual way: they are sending the Dean a copy of their favorite book assigned from class.

The class in question, *The Elements of Politics*, has been offered at UNC since 1993 and has won teaching awards in 2001, 2003, and 2010. Though it involves reading difficult works of philosophy, history, and literature -- and in large quantities -- the course has had a waiting list every semester it has been offered, and students are often turned away.

But in May, the UNC Honors Program decided to cut the course by 50%, reducing the number of students who could enroll and disrupting the natural design of the course. It normally involves one Ancient and one Modern section per semester, but the Associate Dean for Honors cut the course to only one section per semester, even though there are enough students enrolled now to fill three sections per semester.

After the professor's offer to teach without pay was refused, students and alumni launched an online petition urging UNC to restore the course -- the petition now has 200 signatures, and 35 students have posted testimonials about their experience in the course. The testimonials are from current students as well as alumni who graduated 15 years ago.

In August, current students and alumni sent the petition to the Associate Dean for Honors and the Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences. Both declined to revisit the decision. So, students launched a letter-writing campaign -- to date, 18 letters have been sent, all receiving an identical reply claiming that there is insufficient funding, and adjunct instructors cannot be permitted to teach without pay (although the professor has been allowed to teach without pay multiple times in the past). Requests for more information about how Honors budget decisions are made, and for the budget itself, went unanswered.

The campaign to restore the course has been covered in the Daily Tar Heel and WCHL, and it has been the subject of a DTH editorial chastising the University for abandoning such a popular and exemplary course -- it regularly attracts students who bring honor to the University (e.g. six of the last eight Rhodes Scholars are *Elements* alumni). In the face of bureaucratic intransigence, the *Elements of Politics* Alumni Board has recently launched a more personal appeal. In order to share with the university the students' favorite part of *Elements of Politics* -- the assigned reading -- each alumni will buy the UNC College of Arts & Sciences a copy of a book from the course syllabus, and then send it to the Dean with a hand-written message inside about why the book was meaningful and important in the student's education.

So far 15 books have been sent, whose covers and notes can be viewed in an online Gallery. The authors include Plato, Descartes, Homer, Shakespeare, Swift, Arendt, and Dante. The Alumni Board hopes that this personal appeal will distinguish their cause from the other budget-prompted complaints they surely hear.

More information about the campaign and the course can be found at <http://elementsofpolitics.com/>. Images of the books that have been sent can also be viewed on the updates page of this website. To speak to a member of the *Elements* Alumni Board, please call 575-2966 at area code three-three-six, or email doctorgoldbergstudents@gmail.com