

American Political Culture

Political Science 160 and CES 160

Winter Quarter 2015

Credits 5

Instructor: Dr. Leena Shah

Email: lshah@bellevuecollege.edu

Office hours by appointment only.

Please keep cell phones switched off in class

Course Description

This is a course on the culture of politics in the U.S. How do Americans think about government, political parties, social welfare, immigration civil right and liberties and on the other topics of politics? How do they define themselves as a nation? How does our political culture differ from that found in other countries? Where did it originate? Is there a single political culture or several? How do our ideas about politics influence politics?

These are the questions that shall occupy us over the course of the quarter.

Course objectives

By the end of the quarter students should be able to

1. clearly define political culture and its relationship to politics
2. state how politics is shaped by culture
3. state how it is influenced and interpreted by various other disciplines
4. evaluate underlying assumptions presented by other authors
5. discuss the development of political culture in a variety of situations
6. apply this concept to the contemporary world

Requirements

We don't have a required book for the class but you will be asked to research topics that I will announce in class. In addition, there are specific readings with each topic included in the syllabus.

Students are required to do all the readings and stay abreast of current events on a day to day basis.

Expectations

I love these expectations set forth by a Loyola Marymount professor so I will use them here.

1. You have made an informed decision to be here. You have read the syllabus and know the workload required. On average, you will spend an hour and half on your own (reading, studying making notes working on assignments etc.) for every hour you are in class.
2. You will do the required reading. This means that you will often have to read something more than once in order to fully understand it.
3. You will share your personality, knowledge, skills and special expertise with the rest of us throughout this quarter.

Assumptions you can make about me

1. I will give you the respect that I ask you to give me and other members of this class.
2. I will do my best to help you but I cannot learn the material for you.
3. I will encourage and be receptive to constructive comments about my teaching.

Class Presentation

Students will work in a group of three students. They will explore and trace differences between American political culture and other countries. This will be a comparative study. You can choose one or two people to work with. You can choose any country of your choice. You should research the similarities and differences between America and these selected country. For example you can look at death penalty between the two countries and examine how they stand on it. The presentation will be done as a group with each student discussing what they found. Each student will spend at least seven minutes discussing what they came up with. The group together will spend about 15 to 20 minutes presenting this to the class. It will be open

to questions by the rest of the class. The presentation will be worth 5 points. The students will be graded on substance, creativity, clarity and how well they answered the questions. These presentations will begin on Jan 26th. We will discuss the sequence of the presentations in class. They will be presented every Monday. The presentation is worth 5 points.

1. Substance (Power Point)
2. Creativity (YouTube Video)
3. Clarity (well organized) not jumping from one topic to another and clearly explained

Attendance

Even though as college students I expect you to be responsible and regular to class, I will be taking attendance randomly. At the end of the quarter if you have perfect attendance, I will give you extra credit of 2 points. If you are going to be absent, please let me know by email.

Class Discussions

On every Wednesday we will discuss current events. NO SPORTS ARTICLES PLEASE. Current events will be an integral part of our course on Political Culture. Students are asked to bring a relevant political article either from a valid website or a hard copy from a newspaper with them to class. **They are required to read and select an article before coming to class.** It should be related to politics. We will discuss these in class. Current events will be an integral part of our course. You will be divided into groups and each student will discuss their article with the group. Then each group will choose 1 to 2 articles to discuss with the rest of the class. Please choose articles that are worth discussing with the class. If a topic has been discussed once, please make sure that you do not bring it up for discussion again, for example if we have had a class discussion on gun rights, the same topic cannot be discussed twice for current events. Failure to bring in a article will result in loss of class participation points. This current event discussion will be worth 5 points. Each student will write a one page summary of the article (without help from cell phones or hard copies of articles) in class and submit it for discussion points. This will be done before the discussion begins.

In addition, since this is a hybrid class, we will do weekly online discussions. Every week I will post an article for you to discuss on Canvas. Each student will give their opinion on what they think about the article and then respond to at least 2 other student's response. It is not sufficient to say "I agree or disagree" In about 10 lines tell me why you agree or disagree with the other two students. Develop your ideas to the fullest. These discussions will be worth 5 points. Please make sure you check the **Announcement, Discussion and the Assignment Page on a daily basis.**

-

Extra Credit

There will be opportunities for 10 points of extra credit. Every week the most discussed article will receive 1 point of extra credit. I will also announce opportunities for other extra credit in class.

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

First Assignment: Critique

There is a one article that you will be asked to critique. It should be 2 pages long, double spaced. The due date is February 12th. In the critique you will summarize the article, cite other authors who have written on this subject, evaluate the article and give your perspective. It will be worth 5 points.

The article to be critiqued is " **Is College Worth it?**" by **David Leonhardt**.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/27/upshot/is-college-worth-it-clearly-new-data-say.html>

Summarize the article, cite other authors who have written on this subject, evaluate the article and give your perspective. It will be worth 5 points. MLA style should be adopted to write this paper. Make sure you cite your references. Regular font of 12pt should be used for papers. The critique should be minimum 2 pages long, double spaced and is due on Feb 12th . **No Late Papers will be accepted. This is worth 5pts. There are detailed guidelines at the end of the syllabus.**

If a student is absent the day an assignment is due they may have the paper turned in for them by a friend or via email. Students submitting by email must turn in a **HARD COPY of the assignment** upon their return to class. Failure to do so will result in the assignment not being graded.

2nd assignment: Citizenship Questions

First you will take the citizenship test (50 questions) yourself. This is the website for taking the test. (Copy and paste)

http://www.800citizen.org/us_citizenship_test/citizenship_practice_test/

The 2nd part of the assignment will entail taking any 10 citizenship questions from these 50 questions and interviewing 5 students randomly at the college. You will discuss your findings with other students on the discussion board. You will post what your questions were and what responses you got from other students. You will complete this on the 13th of January.

3rd Assignment will be a geography quiz/interview. You will take the quiz yourself. I will list 15 countries and will mark them on this blank map. In addition you will ask 5 students randomly on campus to mark the same countries on a map. You will then post online how you and how the students your interviewed fared. This will be conducted on the 14th of January.

<http://www.bing.com/images/search?q=blank+map+of+the+world&id=3D72BED7A49FF6DC2450C4664049C5A3F352D64E&FORM=IQFRBA> (Links to an external site.)

Class Participation

I strongly recommend class participation and have valued it at 5 points. This will include discussion and class participation.

Changes

If you are absent, please make sure you check with me or a classmate about any change. I may change certain dates and readings as we go along. Therefore it is important that you keep abreast of all the changes.

Class Participation

I strongly recommend class participation and have valued it at 5 points. This will include attendance and interest in the course even though you may be too shy to speak up.

Make-up exams

Make-up exams will be given only if there is an emergency or if the student has informed me in advance of their inability to take it.

How to get in touch with me

The best way to contact me is through email. I will check it a couple of times a day. However, I will not be checking it on weekends.

Exams

There will be 3 exams in the quarter. The first and second exam will be worth 20 points and the last and final exam will be worth 25 points. The exams will consist of multiple choice and 1 essay question. Scantrons and blue books required. They are available in the bookstore. The last exam will be comprehensive. The first half of the questions will be taken from the old tests and the other half will be from the new section.

The grades will be broken up as follows:	
1 st exam	20 points
2 nd exam:	20 points
3 rd exam:	25 points
Class Presentation	5 points
Class participation:	5 points
Critique	5 points

Current event discussion	5 points
Online discussions	5 points
Citizenship interview	5 points
Geography interview	5 points
Total	100 points

Grades will be assigned on a percentage basis

A 95 and above(4.0)

A- 90-94(3.7)

B+ 87-89(3.3)

B 84-86(3.0)

B- 80-83(2.7)

C+ 77-79(2.3)

C 74-76(2.0)

C- 71-73(1.7)

D+ 67-70(1.3)

D 64-66(1.0)

F Below 64 (0.0)

Readings and lectures

January 5th to the 29th,

We will cover these topics What values are important to us? (in class discussion)

Introduction

What is political culture? Are we unique as Americans? Where do we get it from?

Eric Foner <http://www.ericfoner.com/articles/012013monreview.html>

Read <http://www.commentarymagazine.com/article/who-are-we-by-samuel-p-huntington/>

Classical Liberalism

Reading at the end of the syllabus for this

John F. Kennedy's inaugural speech 1961

Systems of Government(Research)

European and Japanese institutions a comparison with the American institutions

Public Policy

Education

<http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/139113/jal-mehta/why-american-education-fails>

For this site (Foreign Affairs) you will be asked to subscribe. It for free so go ahead and do it in order to read the entire article.

<http://www.usnews.com/news/college-of-tomorrow/articles/2014/09/22/op-ed-change-is-critical-to-the-future-of-higher-education>

<http://www.usnews.com/news/stem-solutions/articles/2014/02/13/op-ed-a-strong-education-for-a-strong-economy>

Class discussion on "Waiting for Superman." Discuss the argument made in the film. In addition what you gathered from it about American Political culture. How does the movie impact political culture? Does the film continue to have relevance in understanding important American political values?

Welfare,

Read: <http://spectator.org/articles/55875/five-reasons-reform-welfareagain>

http://mobile.nytimes.com/2015/01/01/opinion/social-programs-that-work.html?_r=0

Healthcare

Read "Globalization and Healthcare "Economist, August 14th 2008

<http://www.economist.com/node/11919622>

Read <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/10/27/us/is-the-affordable-care-act-working.html>.

Read <http://www.forbes.com/sites/dougschoen/2014/09/05/healthcare-reform-and-overpaying-for-care/>

Read <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/11/opinion/dont-homogenize-health-care.html>

Environment

Global Warming,

Read

<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/10-solutions-for-climate-change/>

<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/12/opinion/wobbling-on-climate-change.html>

<http://www.aproundtable.org/tps30info/globalwarmup.html>

-

Exam 1: January 29th

-

-

Read <http://www.natureworldnews.com/articles/7971/20140709/carbon-emissions-world-isnt-doing-enough-un-report.htm>

Readings from January 29th to 26th February

Civil Liberties, (Bill of Rights)

Why do Americans think the way they do

Read the 1st 10 Amendments of the constitution (At the end of the syllabus)

Immigration Issues,

Read <http://www.cato.org/publications/economic-development-bulletin/poor-immigrants-use-public-benefits-lower-rate-poor?gclid=CN-JxLPN8cICFYVafgodvoYAVg>

Read <http://publicreligion.org/research/2014/12/religion-politics-tracking-survey-december-2014/>

Read <http://www.wsj.com/articles/in-immigration-debate-business-can-trump-politics-1419971756>

Litigation (find cases on uncalled for litigation, research 1point EC)

Read Lexington's "Law V Common Sense" Economist January 15th 2009
<http://www.economist.com/node/12932224>

Security of the Nation

Read <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/16/us/politics/democratic-senators-warn-about-use-of-patriot-act.html>

Read <http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-watch/wp/2014/10/29/surprise-controversial-patriot-act-power-now-overwhelmingly-used-in-drug-investigations/>

Exam 2: February 26 th

Race and Gender

Supreme Court decisions on Contemporary civil rights issues, Sexual harassment Title VII

Affirmative Action

https://alumni.stanford.edu/get/page/magazine/article/?article_id=43448

http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/11/opinion/nicholas-kristof-what-if-whites-were-the-minority.html?_r=0

Implications

<http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2014/04/22/supreme-court-upholds-michigan-affirmative-action-ban-in-college-admissions>

Exam3: March 19 th

Please note this is the last day of classes. The duration of the test will be the same as a regular class 50 minutes.

General Information

- Students should always make and retain copies of their assignments and exams until the end of the semester as an insurance against loss by you or me.
- Disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Students failing to comport themselves will be asked to leave class. Please make sure you are respectful of everyone's opinion and do not make any personal attacks on the other students.
- All papers even extra credit ones must be typed and meet the minimum criterion for college level work.
- All papers (except blue books) must meet the basic style guidelines (MLA)
- Your most important assignment is to keep up with the readings and come prepared to class to be involved in an active discussion.
- Make sure your papers are not plagiarized. Most cases of plagiarism can be avoided by citing the sources. Simply acknowledging that the material is borrowed and providing the source is usually enough to prevent plagiarism. For more information see http://www.plagiarism.org/plag_article_what_is_citation.html)

No Classes

Martin Luther King Day	January 19
Professional Development Day (See note)	February 6
Professional Development Day (See note)	February 16
College Issues Day (See note)	March 10

Guidelines for writing the papers

The FIRST part of the assignment is to summarize the author's basic ideas. This should be about one page. Do not quote from the article, do not simply paraphrase the article, INSTEAD take the main arguments and ideas and explain what they are writing and attempting to communicate. Identify and summarize three or four main points and explain them in your own words.

The SECOND part of the assignment is to evaluate the arguments you identified in your first section and this too should be one page. Examine the article's logic and explain if you think the author is making a solid case. Is the article logical and easy to understand? Do you think the explanations support the main ideas. Can you identify arguments and conclusions you think are right? Wrong? In addition look at other authors and what are they saying about the topic. Make sure you cite them in your references. You are more likely to get full points if you follow these steps. Also use the MLA style of writing the papers. Minimum is 2 pages but you can go over that as sometimes its hard to analyze in 2 pages.