

INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN POLITICS

Political Science 202

Bellevue College

Fall 2015

M-F 11:30am-12:20pm in L221

INSTRUCTOR

Instructor: Larry Cushnie, PhD
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Office Hours:
Tuesday 2:30-3:30, Wednesday 10:15-11:15,
Thursday 10:15-11:15 & appointment

DESCRIPTION

This course explores American politics, institutions, and political thought from the colonizing of indigenous lands to the modern era. We will focus upon a collection of American thinkers and academics expanding the boundaries of thought and practice. Beginning with the early invaders, we explore the work of individuals who left the beaten path of political thought, and innovated to change the discussions and situations of the American state and its peoples. These individuals understood the available channels of change and protest as unacceptable and set their own rules for challenging the status quo. Areas of focus include: the American Revolution, state-building, founding ideology, abolitionism, civil rights, law, civil liberties, media, and social movements. Themes of the class include: freedom, equality, protest, legitimacy, and democracy to name a few.

MODE OF INSTRUCTION

Substantial parts of lecture will be dedicated to large-group discussion. Participation is strongly encouraged. Students are expected to complete the assigned reading prior to the lecture for which it is assigned. They are also expected to bring the readings to lecture.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To obtain a specialized knowledge of the history of American politics from the American Revolution to the present, and acquire a sense of the historical trajectory of American ideas about freedom, equality, protest, legitimacy, and democracy during that period.
2. To enlarge our political vocabularies, so that we may engage each other in political argument with greater force, flexibility, intelligence, and exactitude.
3. To conduct political dialogue with sympathy, critical attention, passion, and respect.
4. To strengthen our command of English prose through careful writing.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Attendance & Participation - 25%
Current Events - 10%
Midterm #1 - 15%
Midterm #2 - 20%
Final Exam - 30%

Participation will be graded through involvement during in-class discussions, debates, short (5-10 minutes) in-class writing assignments, and participation in post-lecture activities.

Each student will be required to provide current event topics for one Friday discussion. They need to be submitted by 8am Friday on Canvas. Please come to class prepared to discuss your topic in some depth. I encourage you to use the week's subject matter to inspire your search of current events. Your submission should be 2 pages in length and discuss the relationship of the event to course material of the week, your analysis, and your opinions about the subject.

Midterm #1: Friday, October 9th

Midterm #2: Friday, November 13th

Final Exam: Tuesday, December 8th (11:30am – 1:20pm)

TEXTS

The majority of the readings are available on Canvas.

COURSE POLICIES

Expectations

This is a college-level course, which means you are responsible for your own learning. Expectations include: completing assignments by the date/time listed in the syllabus; coming to class prepared to discuss the day's readings; bringing reading materials to class; participating in classroom discussions; fulfilling course requirements missed during absences; and taking initiative to answer questions about content and assignments.

Rules of Engagement

This course involves discussion of controversial political issues. We will be respectful of each other and avoiding inflammatory, derogatory and insulting words, phrases, and labels. I encourage robust discussion of contentious issues, however be prepared to support provocative claims with evidence. Please note that all electronic devices are prohibited in the classroom during class time unless necessary to note taking. If an overwhelming need to check the interwebs persists, please leave the classroom to do so. Students engaging in extracurricular electronic usage will lose participation points for the day's class. You may or may not be informed of this deduction at the time, due to the distraction it causes to the class.

Missed Exams and Assignments

All major due dates are indicated in the attached course schedule. Late work will be penalized 5 points a day. Please note that all missed exams will receive a grade of 0 and make-up exams will not be administered unless you receive prior permission from me or you can document a true catastrophe.

Grade Dispute Policy

- 1) Wait 24 hours to contact me about disputing a grade
- 2) Submit your reason for contention in writing (at least 500 words) within 5 days
- 3) I reserve the right to change grades (higher or lower) after considering your comments

Disability Resources

The Disability Resource Center serves students with a wide array of learning challenges and disabilities. Please visit the DRC if you have any questions about classroom accommodations. If you are a student who has a disability or a learning challenge for which you have documentation or have seen someone for treatment and if you feel you may need accommodations in order to be successful in college, please contact the DRC staff as soon as possible. The DRC office is located in B132 or you can call the reception desk at 425-564-2498. Deaf students can reach the DRC by video phone at 425-440-2025 or by TTY at 425-564-4110. Please visit the DRC website for application information into the program and other helpful links at www.bellevuecollege.edu/drc. If you are someone who has either an apparent or non-apparent disability and requires assistance in case of an emergency situation, such as a fire, earthquake, etc, please meet with me to develop a safety plan within the first week of the quarter.

Academic Integrity

Cheating and plagiarism (using the ideas or words of another as one's own without crediting the source) are violations of the Student Code of Conduct at Bellevue College (http://bellevuecollege.edu/policies/2/2050P_Student_Code_%28Procedures%29.asp). Such behavior will result in a grade of 0 for the assignment/exam in question. Please note that these are serious offences, which can result in possible probation or suspension from Bellevue College. If you have questions about academic integrity, please familiarize yourself with BC's Student Code of Conduct and/or come talk to me during my office hours.

Cases of suspected cheating and plagiarism will be referred to the dean and an Academic Honesty Violation Report will be filed. University policies and guidelines regarding cheating and plagiarism will be followed strictly. Please see the Academic Honesty Policy for specific information about what constitutes plagiarism.

The instructor reserves the right to amend this syllabus over the course of the quarter.

CLASS SCHEDULE

- 1) Monday, September 21 – Introduction and Syllabus Review
No readings
- 2) Tuesday, September 22 – Indigenous Past & Colonial Foundation
John Winthrop: *A Model of Christian Charity* (1630)
- 3) Wednesday, September 23 – Indigenous Past & Colonial Foundation
Howard Zinn: “Columbus, the Indians, and Human Progress” in *A People’s History of the US* (1980)
- 4) Thursday, September 24 – Indigenous Past & Colonial Foundation
Ward Churchill & Jim Vander Wall: Selections from “Why Pine Ridge?” in *Agents of Repression* (1990)
- 5) Friday, September 25 – Current Events
Film: *A Good Day to Die*
- 6) Monday, September 28 – Ideological Foundation
John Locke: *Second Treatise of Government* - Chapter 2 (1690)
- 7) Tuesday, September 29 – Ideological Foundation
John Locke: *Second Treatise of Government* – Chapter 5 (1690)
- 8) Wednesday, September 30 – Ideological Foundation
John Locke: *Second Treatise of Government* – Chapter 9 (1690)
- 9) Thursday, October 1 – Ideological Foundation
Montesquieu: Selections from *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748)
- 10) Friday, October 2 – Current Events
Film: *Liberty! The American Revolution*
- 11) Monday, October 5 – Revolution to Constitution
Thomas Paine: Selections from *Common Sense* (1776)
- 12) Tuesday, October 6 – Revolution to Constitution
Thomas Jefferson: *Declaration of Independence* (1776)
- 13) Wednesday, October 7 – Revolution to Constitution (Midterm Review)
Federalists Papers: #10 & #51 (1787)
- 14) Thursday, October 8 – Revolution to Constitution
Constitution of the United States of America (1787)
Mark Graber: Selections from *Dred Scott and the Problem of Constitutional Evil* (2006)
Podcast: *Radiolab* – Sex, Ducks, & the Founding Feud
- 15) Friday, October 9 – Midterm #1
- 16) Monday, October 12 – Law & Order
Abraham Lincoln: *Address to the Young Men’s Lyceum* (1838)

- 17) Tuesday, October 13 – Justified Resistance
Henry David Thoreau: Selections from *Civil Disobedience* (1849)
- 18) Wednesday, October 14 – Slavery & Abolition
Frederick Douglass: Selections from *What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?* (1852)
- 19) Thursday, October 15 – Slavery & Abolition
John Brown: PBS Document Bundle
- 20) Friday, October 16 – Current Events
Film: *The Abolitionists*
- 21) Monday, October 19 – Reconstruction & the Black Experience
W.E.B. DuBois: “Of Our Spiritual Strivings” from *The Souls of Black Folk*
- 22) Tuesday, October 20 – Reconstruction & the Black Experience (No class)
W.E.B. DuBois: “Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others” from *The Souls of Black Folk*
- 23) Wednesday, October 21 – Reconstruction & the Black Experience
W.E.B. DuBois: “Of the Coming of John” from *The Souls of Black Folk*
- 24) Thursday, October 22 – The Judiciary
Mark Whitman: “Plessy v. Ferguson” in *Removing a Badge of Slavery*
- 25) Friday, October 23 – Current Events
Film: *Freedom Riders*
- 26) Monday, October 26 – The Judiciary
National Archives: “Brown v. Board” (<http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/brown-v-board/>)
Herb Altschull: “Brown v. Board of Education: Here’s What Happened in 1954 Courtroom”
- 27) Tuesday, October 27 – The Civil Rights Movement
Martin Luther King Jr.: *Letter from Birmingham Jail* (1963)
- 28) Wednesday, October 28 – The Civil Rights Movement
Martin Luther King Jr.: *Letter from Birmingham Jail* (1963) cont.
Malcolm X: *The Ballot or the Bullet* (1964)
- 29) Thursday, October 29 – The Civil Rights Movement
Malcolm X: *The Ballot or the Bullet* (1964) cont.
- 30) Friday, October 30 – Current Events
Podcast: *This American Life* – House Rules #512
Film: *The Black Power Mixtape 1967-1975*
- 31) Monday, November 2 – Black Power
Stokely Carmichael: *Toward Black Liberation* (1966)
- 32) Tuesday, November 3 – Black Power
The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense: *Ten-Point Program*

- 33) Wednesday, November 4 – Civil Liberties & Government Surveillance
Dan Berger – “An FBI Bust...” in *Outlaws of America*
- 34) Thursday, November 5 – Civil Liberties & Government Surveillance
Scott Bomboy – “Understanding Snowden and the Espionage Act in Three Minutes” (2013)
Glenn Greenwald – “On the Espionage Act Charges Against Edward Snowden” (2013)
- 35) Friday, November 6 – Current Events
Film: *Citizenfour*
- 36) Monday, November 9 – War Resistance
Bernardine Dohrn et al – “Introduction” & “The Bombing of the Capitol” in *Sing the Battle Song*
- 37) Tuesday, November 10 – Foreign Policy, Militarism, & War
John Kerry: *Congressional Testimony – Vietnam Veterans Against the War* (1971)
- 38) Wednesday, November 11 – Veteran’s Day (No class)
- 39) Thursday, November 12 – Foreign Policy, Militarism, & War
Martin Luther King Jr.: *Beyond Vietnam – A Time to Break Silence* (1967)
- 40) Friday, November 13 – Midterm #2
Film: *The Weather Underground*
- 41) Monday, November 16 – The Politics of Media
Neil Postman: “Forward” & “The Age of Show Business” in *Amusing Ourselves to Death* (1985)
- 42) Tuesday, November 17 – The Politics of Media
Nicholas Carr: “How Social Media is Ruining Politics” in *Politico* (2015)
- 43) Wednesday, November 18 – The Presidency
Katznelson et al: “The Presidency”
- 44) Thursday, November 19 – The Presidency
Katznelson et al: “The Presidency” cont.
- 45) Friday, November 20 – Current Events
Film: *Outfoxed*
- 46) Monday, November 23 – Elections & Participation
Rick Shenkman – “Gross Ignorance” in *How Stupid Are We?* (2008)
- 47) Tuesday, November 24 – Elections & Participation
Floyd Abrams & Burt Neuborne – “Debating ‘Citizens United’” (2011)
- 48) Wednesday, November 25 – Current Events
Film: *Big Sky, Big Money*
- 49) Thursday, November 26 – Thanksgiving Holiday
- 50) Friday, November 27 – Thanksgiving Holiday

- 51) Monday, November 30 – Social Movements & Political Resistance
Students for a Democratic Society: Selections from *The Port Huron Statement* (1962)
- 52) Tuesday, December 1 – Social Movements & Political Resistance
Martha Shelley: *Gay is Good* (1969)
- 53) Wednesday, December 2 – Social Movements & Political Resistance
Sean Parson: *Understanding the Ideology of Earth Liberation Front* (2008)
- 54) Thursday, December 3 – Social Movements & Political Resistance
Ta-Nehisi Coates: “Barack Obama, Ferguson, and the Evidence of Things Unsaid” (2014) & “Nonviolence as Compliance” (2015)
- 55) Friday, December 4 – Final Exam Review
Film: *If A Tree Falls*
- 56) Tuesday, December 8 – Final Exam (11:30-1:20)