

American Government

Political Science 202

Fall 2014

Credits 5

Instructor: Dr. Leena Shah

Tue and Thurs

Email: lshah@bellevuecollege.edu

Office hours by appointment only

No Cell phones Please

Laptops can only be used for typing notes

Course Description

This is a course on American government and politics. The course is designed to familiarize you with the basic elements of the American system. We will look at how the three branches of government work. We will study their powers and role in American government. We will also discuss federalism, civil rights and civil liberties, the difference between the two and their impact. In addition we will try and gain an understanding of the media and its role. We will also look at the bureaucracy, interest groups and political parties. We will briefly examine foreign policy especially in the current environment. Lastly we will apply everything to current events. Thus making it easier to understand how politics works in the daily context. 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

the concept of democracy and the role and influence of the interest groups

integrate this knowledge for a personal understanding of how the political process works

evaluate underlying assumptions presented by other authors

clearly define and identify the three branches of government

analyze authors

discuss the role of the media

apply this concept to the contemporary world

Requirements

Textbook

AMGOV 2013-14 by LOSCO AND BAKER

In addition you will be asked to research topics that I will announce in class.

Students are required to do their readings and keep abreast of current events on a day to-day basis. For this you will need to have access to a newspaper or journal. Bring in a relevant article every Thursday. If you are taking it off the net please make sure it is a well known publication site.

Expectations

I love these expectations set forth by a professor at Loyola Marymount University, so I am going to use them here.

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.

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.

You will share your personality, knowledge, skills and special expertise with the rest of us throughout this quarter.

Assumptions you can make about me

I will give you the respect that I ask you to give me and other members of this class.

I will do my best to help you but I cannot learn the material for you.

I will encourage and be receptive to constructive comments about my teaching.

Class Presentation

You will do a presentation only once in the quarter. Students will work in a group of three or more. You can choose any topic of your choice related to American Government. You should research the topic and present the pros and cons. For example you can look at death penalty and examine how we compare with other countries. 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

1. substance (power point)

2 creativity, (youtube video)

3. clarity (well organized) not jumping from one topic to another and clearly explained

and how well they answered the questions. We will discuss the sequence of the presentations in class. They will be presented every Tuesday starting on the 7th of October. The presentation is worth 5 points.

Attendance

As college students I expect you to attend classes on a regular basis. I will be taking roll call randomly and hope that you will make it a point to attend classes. Since this is a 2hr class, I expect you to attend the full class in order to get participation points. In case you need to leave early please be sure to inform me of your absence. You will be evaluated on the quality and quantity of participation. In case of an emergency please email me. At the end of the quarter if you have not missed any classes, I will give you an extra credit of 2 points.

Class Discussions

On every Thursday, for the first half of the class we will discuss current events. 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. NO SPORTS ARTICLES PLEASE. 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 students response. Its 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.

Extra Credit

There are extra credit opportunities worth 10 points. You will be quizzed on the class presentations. In addition I will assign extra credit opportunities.

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT (5 Points)

All written assignments will be submitted on the due date in class as hard copies.

Critique of Article

The article to be critiqued is "Why poor students struggle" Vicki Madden, NyTimes, 22nd September 2014.

http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/22/opinion/why-poor-students-struggle.html?_r=0

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 the 23rd of October . 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 7th of October.

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 you interviewed fared. This will be conducted on the 14th of October.

<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.

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 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.

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.plaigiarism.org/plag_article_what_is_citation.html (Links to an external site.))

Grades

The grades will be broken up as follows:	
1st exam	20 points
2nd exam:	20 points
3rd 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

The dates and chapters for the reading can change at any time

From 23rd Sept to Oct 16th

Chapter 1 Citizenship in our changing Democracy

Chapter 2 The Constitution http://www.pbs.org/tpt/constitution-usa-peter-sagal/watch/#.UzzXBPjn_IU (Links to an external site.)

Chapter 3 Federalism

Chapter 4 Civil Liberties (part of chapter 4)

Exam 1: 16th October

Readings from October 16th to 13th November

Chapter 4 (rest of it)

Chapter 5: Civil Rights

Chapter 6 : Public opinion

Chapter 7: Political Participation

Chapter 8 : Interest Groups

Chapter 9 : Parties, Elections, Campaigns and Voting

Chapter 10 :Media

Exam 2: November 13th

Readings from November 13th to Dec 4th

Chapter 11 : Congress

Chapter 12 : The Presidency

Chapter 14 :The Courts

Chapter 15 Public Policy

Chapter 16 Foreign Policy

Final: Dec 4th (Last day of Class)

Guidelines for Writing 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 analyse in 2 pages.

PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCE DIVISION

Fall 2014

Cheating, Stealing and Plagiarizing*

Cheating, stealing and plagiarizing (using the ideas or words of another as one's own without crediting the source) and inappropriate/disruptive classroom behavior are violations of the Student Code of Conduct at BellevueCollege. Examples of unacceptable behavior include, but are not limited to: talking out of turn, arriving late or leaving early without a valid reason, allowing cell phones/pagers to ring, and inappropriate behavior toward the instructor or classmates. The instructor can refer any violation of the Student Code of Conduct to the Dean of Student Services for possible probation or suspension from BellevueCollege. Specific student rights, responsibilities and appeal procedures are listed in the Student Code of Conduct, available in the office of the Dean of Student Services.

Incomplete

If a student fails to complete all the required work for a course, an instructor may assign the grade of Incomplete ("I"). The student must complete the coursework by the end of the next quarter, or receive the assigned letter grade (usually an "F").

F Grade

Students who fail a course will receive a letter grade of "F."

Final Examination Schedule

The Social Science Division will adhere to the final examination schedule as stated in the BC Schedule. Final examinations will be held at the end of each quarter at fixed times. Instructors will not give examinations in advance of the regular schedule. A student who is absent from any examination held at any time during the quarter may forfeit the right to make up the examination. If, for illness or some other circumstance beyond the student's control, the student is unable to be present at any scheduled examination and has contacted the instructor on a timely basis, the student may be permitted to take such examination at a time designated by the instructor.

Withdrawal From Class

College policy states that students must formally withdraw from a class by the end of the seventh week of the quarter (Registration Office, B125). If a student has not withdrawn by that date, an appropriate letter grade will be assigned for the course.

Hardship Withdrawal

Instructors may assign the grade of “HW” (hardship withdrawal) at their discretion in the event that a student cannot complete the coursework due to extreme and exceptional circumstances. Students may also contact the Enrollment Services office BEFORE grades are assigned in cases of hardship.

Students Who Require Disability Accommodations:

Students with disabilities who have accommodation needs are encouraged to meet with the Disability Resource Centre (DRC) office located in B132 (telephone 425.564.2498 or TTY 425.564.4110), to establish their eligibility for accommodation. The DRC office will provide each eligible student with an accommodation letter. Students who require accommodation in class should review the DRC accommodation letter with each instructor during the first week of the quarter.

Students with mobility challenges who may need assistance in case of an emergency situation or evacuation should register with Disability Resource Centre, and review those needs with the instructor as well.

Distribution of Grades

Grades will not be posted in the Social Science Division or in faculty offices, and secretaries will not give out grades. Students should access their grades through the BC Web site.

Return of Papers and Tests

Paper and/or Scantron score sheet returns will be arranged in the following ways ONLY: by mail, if student supplies the instructor with stamped, self-addressed envelope (with appropriate postage); or by the instructor designating a time and place whereby the student may retrieve his/her papers. Unclaimed papers and/or Scantron score sheets must be kept by the instructor for a minimum of sixty (60) instructional days following the end of the quarter.

If you are accused of cheating, stealing exams and/or plagiarism, there is a Bellevue College Student Discipline and Appeals Procedure (the right to due process) which you may pursue. Contact the office of Division Chair (D110), the Dean of Student Services (B231A) or the Associated Student Body (C212) for information regarding the appeals process.

