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# POLS 202: AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

## Hybrid Course - Fall, 2012

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**Professor:** Carolyn Lee (Please call me “Carolyn”)

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**Office:** A100-A

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**“Liberty cannot be preserved without general knowledge among the people.”**

**~John Adams**

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This is an introductory course that is designed for students who are new to the study of American Government. By the end of the quarter, you should understand the structure of American government and have an increased ability to critically reflect on American politics. Specific topics of study include: the American Revolution, the Constitution, Congress, the Presidency, the Supreme Court, Civil Liberties, Civil Rights, Public Opinion, The Media, Campaigns and Elections, Interest Groups, and much more.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

1. To develop a critical understanding of American government and politics.
2. To become more informed and discriminating consumers of political information.
3. To develop the ability to distinguish between fact and opinion and to draw informed conclusions based on reliable and valid evidence.
4. To foster self-reflection about the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

### **COURSE POLICIES**

This is a college-level course, which means *you are responsible for your own learning*. I will do my best to facilitate our interactions on-line in a fun and interesting way, and to assess your learning fairly. I expect you to do your best to complete assignments in a timely and appropriate fashion, to log in to the course website each day prepared for the day's work, and to actively participate in on-line discussions and activities. *If you do not understand something you need to take the initiative to find out the answer*– raise your hand in class, email me, etc. I cannot read minds so it is up to you to try to seek clarity when it is lacking.

### **RULES OF ENGAGEMENT FOR CLASS DISCUSSIONS**

This course involves the discussion of controversial political issues. Remember that reasonable people often disagree. Your challenge and responsibility is to maintain civil discourse. We will achieve this by being respectful of each other and avoiding inflammatory, derogatory and insulting words, phrases and labels. Please use your common sense to avoid any other conduct that might distract or offend me or your classmates. Thank you!

## **A NOTE ABOUT IDEOLOGY**

I have no intention of trying to convert you to my belief system. The issues we will be exploring are often contentious and sometimes there will be no right or wrong answers. That being said, I believe there are good and bad arguments. Good arguments will be entertained in class (i.e. those that are logically sound and supported by the available evidence); bad arguments will be discouraged.

## **LATE ASSIGNMENTS AND MISSED EXAMS**

All major due dates are indicated on the calendar on our course website. Because I believe that one of the major lessons that students learn in college is the importance of meeting deadlines, I will not accept any late work unless it has been approved by me BEFORE the date it is due or you can document some sort of emergency. *All assignments turned in late will receive a grade of 0.0.* Likewise, *missed quizzes and exams will receive a grade of 0.0.* Make-up exams will not be administered unless you receive prior permission from me or you can document some sort of catastrophe (such as being medically unable to take the exam).

## **DISABILITY RESOURCES**

If you are a student who has a disability or a learning challenge and you feel you may need accommodations in order to be successful in college, please contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) as soon as possible. The DRC office is located in B132. The phone number is 425-564-2498, and the website is: <http://www.bellevuecollege.edu/drc>. If DRC provides you with documentation indicating that you have a disability that requires academic accommodation, please present that documentation to me at the beginning of the quarter so that we can begin working together as soon as possible to accommodate your needs in this class. The longer you wait to seek accommodation, the more difficult it will be for me to provide that accommodation.

## **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](http://bellevuecollege.edu/policies/2/2050P_Student_Code_%28Procedures%29.asp)). Such behavior will result in a grade of 0.0 for the assignment/exam in question. Please note that these are serious offences, which can result in possible probation or suspension from Bellevue College and go on your permanent record. 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.

## **COURSE MATERIALS**

The primary text for the course is Canon, Coleman, and Mayer's *The Enduring Debate: Classic and Contemporary Readings in American Politics* (6<sup>th</sup> Edition). We will also be reading Robert Dahl's book, *How Democratic is the American Constitution?* Both texts are available at the bookstore. One copy of each will also be made available for short-term check out in the library.

Any material covered by an assigned reading may be included in examination questions, regardless of whether it is specifically discussed in lecture. If adjustments are made to the reading schedule, you will be informed via an announcement in class and on the course MyBC page. The assigned readings are an important part of this class—if you don't do the reading you are going to find it hard to succeed.

## **KEEPING UP WITH THE NEWS**

Please keep up with current events related to American government and politics. We will begin each class with a brief discussion of current events and will also make reference to events throughout our discussion of course materials. Please find a few news sources that work for you (representing different mediums and viewpoints) and make a habit of reading, listening, and/or watching them throughout the quarter. If you have questions about the appropriateness of a particular news source for this class, please ask me sooner rather than later. I suggest that at least one of your sources be a national newspaper such as: the *New York Times* ([www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com)), the *Washington Post* ([www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com)), or the *Wall Street Journal* ([www.wsj.com](http://www.wsj.com)). I also encourage international sources such as the *BBC* ([www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)) and *Al Jazeera* (<http://english.aljazeera.net>).

## **GRADED WORK**

**Weekly Journal Assignment (10%)** – Each week you will be required to reflect on the course lectures and readings in the form of a journal entry. You will be given a weekly prompt (made available each Monday on our MyBC page) and you must submit your entry to me via email ([carolyn.lee@bellevuecollege.edu](mailto:carolyn.lee@bellevuecollege.edu)) by 11:59pm on the following Sunday. Entries should be roughly 8-12 sentences long, written in academic form (i.e., no incomplete sentences or bullet points), and be a thoughtful analysis of the question(s) raised in the prompt.

**Online Activities (15%)** – This course is a hybrid course which means that you are expected to complete a certain number of your learning activities outside of the classroom. Each week you will be given a task to complete online (often a video to watch, a supplemental reading, or online quiz), followed by a brief write-up to be turned in to me. Like the Journal Assignment, your Online task will be posted on Mondays on MyBC and any required write-ups must be submitted to me via email by 11:59pm the following Sunday.

**Class Participation (10%)** – This entails your regular attendance and contribution to class discussions. You are expected to read the assigned material before lecture and bring relevant questions, critiques, and concerns to class. In addition to keeping up with course readings, I expect you to be well-informed on current events and to read/watch the news on a regular basis.

**Midterm (30%)** – It will ask you to answer short identification questions and to write a carefully reasoned essay based on course readings, lectures, and discussions. A study guide will be disseminated 1 week before the exam.

**Final Paper (35%)** – You will answer an essay prompt that asks you to synthesize course content into a well-reasoned and argued paper. Approximate length is five pages.

## **READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS**

### **WEEK 1: Constitutional Formation, Real and Imagined**

**Read by Thursday, September 20<sup>th</sup>**

Course Syllabus

Declaration of Independence (Canon 703-706)

The Constitution (Canon 713-725)

Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition...* (Canon 3-8)

Rogers M. Smith, *Beyond Tocqueville...* (Canon 17-26)

**Complete by Sunday, September 23<sup>rd</sup>**

\*\*Online Activity #1

\*\*Journal Entry #1

**WEEK 2:**

**Constitutional Formation *and* Constitutional Reformation**

**Read by Tuesday, September 25<sup>th</sup>**

Robert Dahl, Chapters 1-2 (pgs 1-40)

[Features of the Constitution](#) (hyperlinked)

[Bill of Rights](#) (hyperlinked)

[Amendments to the Constitution](#) (hyperlinked)

**Read by Thursday, September 27<sup>th</sup>**

Michael Kammen, “The Nature of American Constitutionalism” (Canon 51-59)

Abraham Lincoln, “The Perpetuation of our Political Institutions” (Canon 136-141)

Paul Peterson, *The Price of Early Federalism* (Canon 100-108)

**Complete by Sunday, September 30<sup>th</sup>**

\*\*Online Activity #2

\*\*Second Journal Entry #2

**Week 3:**

**The New Deal to the Rights Revolution**

**Ready by Tuesday, October 2<sup>nd</sup>**

Robert Dahl, Chapter 3 (pgs 41-72)

[Federalism](#) (hyperlinked)

[The New Deal](#) (hyperlinked)

Franklin D. Roosevelt, “Call for Federal Responsibility” (Canon 550-554)

Herbert Hoover, “Against the Proposed New Deal” (Canon 555-559)

**Read by Thursday, October 4<sup>th</sup>**

[Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas](#) (follow link)  
Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from Birmingham Jail” (Canon 142-149)  
[Roe v. Wade](#) (follow link)  
[Civil Rights](#) (hyperlinked)  
[The Civil Rights Movement](#) (hyperlinked)

**Complete by Sunday, October 7<sup>th</sup>**

\*\*Online Activity #3  
\*\*Journal Entry #3

#### **Week 4:**

**Congress / The Presidency**

**Read by Tuesday, October 9<sup>th</sup>**

**\*\*NO CLASS**

Edmund Burke, “Speech to the Electors of Bristol” (Canon 175-179)  
David R. Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection* (Canon 180-183)  
John R. Hibbing et al, “Too Much of a Good Thing...” (Canon 184-190)  
Debating the Issues: Pork Barrel Politics (Canon 191-203)  
[Congressional Power](#) (hyperlinked)  
[Legislative Process](#) (hyperlinked)

**Read by Thursday, October 11<sup>th</sup>**

Robert Dahl, Chapter 4 (pgs 73-90)  
Richard Neustadt, “The Power to Persuade” (Canon 204-213)  
Charles O. Jones, “Perspectives on the Presidency” (Canon 214-220)  
[The Presidency](#) (hyperlinked)  
[Presidential Power](#) (hyperlinked)

**Complete by Sunday, October 14<sup>th</sup>**

\*\*Online Activity #4  
\*\*Journal Entry #4

#### **Week 5:**

**The Judiciary / Public Opinion**

**Read by Tuesday, October 16<sup>th</sup>**

[The Supreme Court](#) (hyperlinked)  
[The Federal Judiciary](#) (hyperlinked)  
Alexander Hamilton, *The Federalist*, No. 78 (Canon 284-290)  
*Marbury v. Madison* (Canon 671-675)  
David O’Brian, “The Court and American Life,” (Canon 291-297)

**Read by Thursday, October 18<sup>th</sup>**

George Gallup, “Polling the Public” (Canon 327-334)

Richard Morin, “Choice Words...” (Canon 335-339)

[Public Opinion](#) (hyperlinked)

[Political Socialization](#) (hyperlinked)

**Complete by Sunday, October 21<sup>st</sup>**

\*\*Online Activity #5

\*\*Journal Entry #5

**Week 6:**

**The Press and Media Effects/**MIDTERM****

**Read by Tuesday, October 23<sup>rd</sup>**

[The Media](#) (hyperlinked)

[D. Scheufele “Framing, Agenda Setting, and Priming...”](#) (hyperlinked)

Markus Prior, “News vs. Entertainment...” (Canon 340-346)

**Thursday, October 25<sup>th</sup>**

**MIDTERM – bring your own bluebook**

**Week 7:**

**Political Parties/Interest Groups**

**Read by Tuesday, October 30<sup>th</sup>**

Morris Fiorina, “The Decline of Collective Responsibility in American Politics” (Canon 415-426)

Morris Fiorina, “*What Culture Wars? Debunking the Myth of a Polarized Society*” (Canon 440-442)

James Q. Wilson, “How Divided Are We?” and Fiorina’s Response (Canon 443-455)

[The Republican Party](#) (hyperlinked)

[The Democratic Party](#) (hyperlinked)

**Read by Thursday, February 23<sup>rd</sup>**

[Interest Groups](#) (hyperlinked)

[James Madison, \*The Federalist\*, No. 10](#) (hyperlinked)

Alexis de Tocqueville, “Political Association in the United States” (Canon 464-467)

Mancur Olson, “The Logic of Collective Action” (Canon 468-477)

**Complete by Sunday, November 4<sup>th</sup>**

\*\*Online Activity #6

\*\*Journal Entry #6

**Week 8:**

**Elections and Voting/Election Results**

**Read by Tuesday, November 6<sup>th</sup>**

[Voting in America](#) (hyperlinked)

V.O. Key, Jr., “The Voice of the People: An Echo” (Canon 376-381)

Rickard D. Parker, “Power to the Voters” (Canon 382-389)

Ronald Dworkin, “The Decision That Threatens Democracy” (Canon 159-166)

Bradley A. Smith, “Citizens United We Stand” (Canon 167-174)

**Read by Thursday, November 8<sup>th</sup>**

Robert Dahl, Chapter 5 (pgs 91-120)

Election result analysis in The New York Times, Washington Post, and The Guardian

**Complete by Sunday, November, 11<sup>th</sup>**

\*\*Online Activity #7

\*\*Journal Entry #7

**Week 9**

**The Politics of Public Policy**

**Read by Tuesday, November 13<sup>th</sup>**

[Our Bureaucracy](#) (hyperlinked)

[The Bureaucratic Dilemma](#) (hyperlinked)

James Wilson, “Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It” (Canon 255-263)

**Ready by Thursday, November 15<sup>th</sup>**

James Pfiffner, “Presidential Use of White House ‘Czars’” (Canon 265-270)

Matthew Spalding, “Examining the History and Legality of Executive Branch Czars (Canon 271-276)

Will Englund, “Czar Wars” (Canon 277-383)

**Complete by Sunday, November 18<sup>th</sup>**

\*\*Online Activity #8

\*\*Journal Entry #8

## Week 10

### **The Politics of Public Policy/Thanksgiving Holiday**

#### **Read by Tuesday, November 20<sup>th</sup>**

Charles E. Lindblom, "The Science of Muddling Through" (Canon 515-523)

Theodore Lowi, "American Business, Public Policy, Case Studies & Political Theory" (Canon 524-530)

Bill McKibben, "Climate Change" (Canon 535-540)

Bjorn Lomborg, "Mr. Gore: Your Solution to Global Warming is Wrong" (Canon 541-549)

#### **Complete by Sunday, November 25<sup>th</sup>**

\*\*Online Activity #9

\*\*Journal Entry #9

## Week 11

### **Public Policy Issues**

#### **Read by Tuesday, November 27<sup>th</sup>**

Barack Obama, "Address to Congress on Health Care Reform" (Canon 623-630)

Marilyn Serafini, "Grading Health Reform..." (Canon 631-635)

Yuval Levin, "Repeal: Why and How Obamacare Must Be Undone" (Canon 636-645)

#### **Read by Thursday, November 29<sup>th</sup>**

Robert Dahl, Chapters 6 & 7 (pgs 141-158)

#### **Complete by Sunday, December 2<sup>nd</sup>**

\*\*Online Activity #10

\*\*Journal Entry #10

## Week 12 – Conclusions

#### **Tuesday, December 4<sup>th</sup>**

**FINAL PAPER DUE** in class