

# #IDIOCRACY:

## SEX, RACE, AND POLITICS IN THE MEDIA AGE



**15 - CREDIT IDS COURSE  
WINTER 2016**

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# FACULTY

## **Katherine Oleson**

Communication Studies Chair

[koleson@bellevuecollege.edu](mailto:koleson@bellevuecollege.edu)

Office Hours:

1:30-2:20 Wednesday (R230-U)

9:30-10:20 Friday (R230-U)

and by appointment

## **Tim Jones**

Political Science Chair

[tim.jones@bellevuecollege.edu](mailto:tim.jones@bellevuecollege.edu)

Office Hours:

9:30-10:20 Monday (A200-B)

1:30-2:20 Monday (A200-B)

and by appointment

## **Denise Johnson**

Sociology Chair

[denise.johnson@bellevuecollege.edu](mailto:denise.johnson@bellevuecollege.edu)

Office Hours:

9:30-10:20 Thursday (A100-D)

1:30-2:20 Thursday (A100-D)

and by appointment

**We will also hold a "collective" office hour (in which you can come talk with all three of us) on Wednesdays, 9:30-10:20 in the lobby of A100.**





# COURSE INTRO

Do we live in a democracy or an idiocracy? This course will critically examine U.S. politics and culture through the lens of the mass media, with particular focus on race and sex. The primary goals of the course are to help students become critical consumers of media messages, to learn to constructively engage in the political process, and to foster self-reflection about the rights and responsibilities of democratic citizenship. This is a 15-credit course and students who take it will receive five credits in Communication Studies, five credits in Political Science and five credits in Sociology. Some of the major media events that we will focus on this quarter are: Martin Luther King Day, the State of the Union Address, the 2016 presidential primaries, the Super Bowl, the Grammys, and the Oscars.

## LEARNING ATMOSPHERE

We believe that students learn best when they are actively involved in the teaching and learning process. Therefore, this is an *active, interactive* course where you are expected to read, write, discuss, and participate. You will actively create your own knowledge, rather than simply passively listen to ours. We think of our class as a “collaborative learning community” where we all teach and learn from each other. Every time you make a comment or ask a question, you teach something to the rest of us. We challenge you to abandon the traditional passive student role and to get involved with teaching and learning – we think you’ll enjoy it and learn a lot in the process.

## SAFE SPACE

This class is a Safe Space for **all** students, regardless of age, color, nationality, income, sex, sexual orientation, religion, gender identity, physical or mental ability, or political stance. All students are welcome in this classroom and encouraged to speak out and be an integral part of this class. Any questions about what this means should be brought to us immediately. All are welcome!



# COURSE CREDIT

We will help you choose your three classes during the first two weeks of the quarter. Although different students will earn credit for different courses, we will all study and explore the same course material.

Communication Studies (Choose One)	Political Science (Choose One)	Sociology (Choose One)
CMST& 101 Introduction to Communication	POLS& 101 Introduction to Political Science	SOC& 101 Introduction to Sociology
CMST& 102 Introduction to Mass Media	POLS 160 Introduction to American Political Culture	SOC 210 Popular Culture
	POLS& 202 American Government	





# LEARNING OUTCOMES

After completing #IDIOCRACY, students should be able to:

- Critically read books and articles, understanding and weighing the strength and weakness of an author's argument;
- Work collaboratively in a community endeavor: investigate ideas together, respect others' insights and opinions, and develop areas of consensus and agreement;
- Articulate a basic understanding of the fields of Communication Studies, Political Science, and Sociology and their intersections;
- Analyze the role of power in society;
- Become a more effective communicator in a variety of settings and find your voice;
- Understand how race/class/gender operate in society and impact our relationships;
- Apply critical thinking to American government, culture, and politics;
- Critique media messages and political information in a critical and discerning way;
- Realize the rights and responsibilities of engaged citizenship.



# REQUIRED TEXTS



The following books are available at a wide range of vendors beyond the BC bookstore (often for cheaper):

- 1) **Celebrity Inc: How Famous People Make Money** (by Jo Piazza)  
ISBN: 978-1-4532-5819-4
- 2) **The Influencing Machine** (by Brooke Gladstone and John Neufeld) ISBN: 978-0-393-34246-8
- 3) **Citizen: An American Lyric** (by Claudia Rankine) ISBN: 978-1-55597-690-3
- 4) **Between the World and Me** (by Ta-Nehisi Coates) ISBN: 978-0-8129-9354-7
- 5) **When the Emperor was Divine** (by Julie Otsuka) ISBN: 978-0385721813
- 6) **We Should All Be Feminists** (by Chimamanda Adichie) ISBN: 978-1101911761
- 7) **The Radical King** (by Martin Luther King Jr and Cornell West) ISBN: 978-080701282
- 8) **The Gardens of Democracy: A New American Story of Citizenship, the Economy, and the Role of Government** (by Eric Liu and Nick Hanauer) ISBN: 978-1570618239





# EXPECTATIONS

A silhouette of a person's head and shoulders is shown from behind, looking towards a bright blue screen that fills the background. The person's hair is dark and short. The screen has a subtle, textured pattern.

In order to have a respectful, cooperative learning environment in which we learn as much as possible from one other, we all need to contribute positively to classroom dynamics. Although each class is unique and develops its own 'personality,' the following are the basic expectations that serve as the foundation of our class community.

The following outlines what we can expect from each other:

**Preparation.** All of us should come to class prepared. As instructors, our ultimate goal is to help you learn and succeed, so we will spend ample time and effort on class preparation in order to make the material as understandable and as interesting as we possibly can. Class time will only sometimes be lecture – we will have interesting discussions, watch films, and engage in a variety of activities because that helps us all learn more. We are big believers that 'learning by doing' leads to deep and meaningful levels of understanding.

As students, you should come to class having done the assigned work, and you should always bring the proper supplies with you. Don't neglect the "smaller" assignments, because they count toward all fifteen credits, and so they are worth more than they appear.

When we all come to class prepared, everyone benefits.

**Quality.** We will do our best to choose course materials and assignments that are outstanding, and we'll bring our "best selves" to the class. We'll also give you meaningful feedback on your own work, keeping in mind that our goal is to both challenge you and help you attain your personal goals.

We work hard to make this course a success for you, and we expect you to try hard too. When making comments and completing assignments, your comments should indicate to us that you have read and understand the course material. You should always try to do your personal best. Please don't assume that you can simply "wing it" in this class and still earn a high grade. We have high expectations of you, as we want you to succeed. We hope you have high expectations of us as well.

**Promptness.** We will be to class on time, and we commit to returning your work to you in a timely, reasonable fashion. We will respond to your questions and communication promptly as well.

When you arrive late, it hurts not only yourself but also your classmates. Often at the beginning of class we make important announcements or discuss crucial material, and when you come in late, not only do you miss it but you also disrupt the class. We certainly understand that



# EXPECTATIONS

sometimes “life happens” and you might miss a bus or have trouble finding a parking space, so don’t worry if that happens to you (just try to enter the classroom with as little disruption as possible). But repetitive or habitual lateness is a sign of disrespect to our class, so if you repeatedly come in late to class, it will affect the participation portion of your course grade. The same thing goes for repeatedly leaving class early. As far as your assignments, we will accept one late individual assignment of your choice without penalty. All other late work will receive up to 1/2 credit, unless you have had a medical emergency that you’ve discussed with us.

A note about religious holidays: If you expect to miss classes, examinations, or any other assignments as a consequence of your religious observance, you will be provided with a reasonable alternative opportunity to complete the work, as long as you notify us of this in advance. It is your responsibility to provide us with reasonable notice of the dates of religious holidays on which you will be absent, and you should provide this information to us at the beginning of the quarter.

**Engagement.** We’ll be present to assist you both inside and outside of the classroom, and we’ll get to know you. When you are speaking, you will have our undivided attention. We won’t make you feel “stupid” or less intelligent for asking a question or making a comment. We will treat you as a multi-dimensional human being with feelings and a unique personal background. You are not a student identification number to us!

On your end, we need you here, because the success of our class depends on students. We expect you to actively engage with the course materials, participating and being involved as much as you possibly can. While in class, we would like for you to focus on our class. All electronic devices should be put away, unless we prompt you to use them. If you need a laptop to take notes, or if you need technology for any other reason, we would like for you to talk to us about it. Increasing numbers of students use their laptops during class time to surf the web or post on Facebook. Texting, excessive talking, or other disruptive behavior is disrespectful to our class, so your participation grade will be affected by these types of behaviors. Please just use common sense and be respectful of the class. Remember that we want you to be physically and mentally present.

A note about course content: Essential to an education is an open-minded tolerance for ideas and modes of expression which might conflict with one’s personal values. By being exposed to such ideas or expressions, students are not expected to endorse or adopt them but rather to understand that they are part of the free flow of information upon which higher education depends. To this end, you may find that class requirements may include engaging certain materials which may, in whole or in part, offend you. These materials are equivalent to



# EXPECTATIONS



required texts and are essential to the course content. If you decline to engage the required material by not reading, viewing, or performing material you consider offensive, you will still be required to meet class requirements in order to earn credit. This may require responding to the content of the material, and you may not be able to fully participate in required class discussions, exams, or assignments. If you have any questions or concerns about course content or climate, don't hesitate to let us know.

**Honesty and integrity.** Your grade will be based upon what we detect that you have learned. It is your job to show us that you understand the material. Your work should be your own, except when asked to work with other students. You are required to acknowledge if you have borrowed any ideas, terms, or phrases, even if you have borrowed from a classmate. Please do not copy and paste material from wikipedia or any other website into your assignments, as this is a severe form of cheating (that is very easy to catch, by the way). ***In this class, your assignments should be grounded in the lectures, activities, and readings (rather than web resources, which are often wrong!).*** If you have any hesitation, or if you are in doubt about one of these issues, feel free to ask us.

**Respect and inclusion.** Since learning about diverse experiences is important in this course, it is of the utmost importance that we respect each other's experiences, differences, and opinions. We will do everything within our power to encourage a classroom culture that is free of prejudice and discrimination. We value each other and you. Everyone in our class has the right to feel welcome here and safe from personal attack, so with this in mind, we expect you to express yourself respectfully. When engaged in your role as a student, please be constructive in your comments. We will be constructive with ours. Students are expected to model the behavior discussed in the content of this course. You may certainly disagree and debate, but you can express your viewpoint in an open, respectful manner. We cannot allow students to insult or belittle an entire group of people (such as women, men, people of color, gays and lesbians, poor people, Christians, Jews, Muslims, disabled people, veterans, conservatives, liberals, and so on). You are entitled to your beliefs, but you are not entitled to make attacks or victimize others. If you have any doubts, feel free to check with us and we'd be more than happy to help you express yourself responsibly. Hopefully, by the time you finish our class, you will be more appreciative of and comfortable with human diversity. Our differences are what make us wonderfully unique.







# GRADING

Overall course grades are based on your performance on the following:

Journal Assignments	200 points
Seminar	200 points
Participation	200 points
Midterm Exam	100 points
Engaged Citizen Reflection	100 points
Group Survey Project	50 points
Political Action Project	50 points
Popular Culture Artifacts	50 points
Media Consumption/Fast	50 points

TOTAL	1000 points
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**In #IDIOCRACY, students will earn the same grade for the full 15-credits selected.**

The following are the letter-grade equivalents to the course points:

940-1000 points	A
900-939	A-
870-899	B+
830-869	B
800-829	B-
770-799	C+
730-769	C
700-729	C-
660-699	D+
600-659	D
0-599	F

Here is a brief description of each of the course components:

1) Journal (200 pts): Each week (beginning in week two), you'll complete a journal assignment (worth 20 points) that asks you to interact with the world around you in some way, perhaps on the internet or observing some aspect of the world around you. Details on specific journal assignments will be distributed weekly, and in most cases you'll have one week to complete them.



# GRADING

2) Seminar (200 pts; total 10 pts each): Most weeks, we will have two seminar sessions (typically Mondays and Thursdays). Seminars involve small groups of students meeting with one faculty member in order to have thought-provoking discussions about the readings. This is the heart of the interdisciplinary studies program, and being prepared for these meetings is crucial. You must complete the readings ahead of time and bring a seminar response paper (approximately 1 page, single spaced each) to each seminar. The purpose of seminar papers is to give you an opportunity to respond to the readings and prepare you for a discussion of the reading in seminar. Seminar papers are a way to interact with the reading material, as part of a dialogue between you and what there is on the page. In other words, seminar papers are your somewhat formalized thoughts on some aspect of the material. They will serve to generate discussion in your groups. We will evaluate them primarily on the depth of understanding and thought they reflect. They should be carefully proofed and edited. You are encouraged to explore, take risks, and take on what you may not be certain of. The point is to stimulate interesting discussion and discover new, deeper ways to understand the material. Seminar papers must be typed. Some additional information about seminar papers will be provided early in the quarter. When meeting in seminar, you are expected to be an active participant, bring up questions to be discussed, speak to the point under discussion, and be a good listener. Your seminar grade is based on attendance, participation, and seminar response papers.

3) Participation (200 pts): Participation is essential to the format of this course. In short, you should plan to be an *active* participant. "Participation" includes attendance at all events as well as participation in workshops, class discussions, guest speaker presentations, film sessions, in-class activities, internet assignments, and other miscellaneous assignments.

4) Midterm (100 pts): One exam is given over the course of the quarter. The exam will integrate all the material we read and study (films, lectures, guest speakers, etc.). You will have a list of some possible exam questions ahead of time. In fact, students will participate in the process of determining the questions and should organize themselves into study groups to prepare for the exam.



5) Engaged Citizen Reflection (100 pts): This assignment involves reflecting on your own role as an engaged citizen in our society, and connecting your personal experiences to the course material. This assignment will be completed at the end of the quarter and is intended to be a "course wrap-up." Additional details will be provided in class.

6) Group Survey Project (50 pts): In groups of roughly five students each, you'll design and administer a survey to Bellevue College students about a course-related topic. Half of the questions will be determined by our entire class, and the other half of the questions will be designed by your group. With our guidance, your group will collect data, analyze the data, write a brief paper, and give a presentation to the class about what you did and what you learned. Details will be provided later in the quarter.

7) Political Action Project (50 pts): You'll choose a political issue that you care about, research it, take political action, and reflect on your action. For example, you might start a petition, contact an elected official, attend a political protest or rally, volunteer for a cause you believe in, etc. You'll need to clear your action with us before doing it. After you've acted, you need to write a two- to three-page, single-spaced reflection on the issue that you chose, what you did, why you did it, and what you learned. You will also share an abbreviated version of this write-up with your classmates so they have a chance to engage with you about your action. More guidelines will be provided in class. **\*Success Tip:** Pick a political topic that you care about and clear your action with us early in the quarter so that you are not rushing to do something meaningless to both of us at the last minute.





8) Popular Culture Artifacts (50 pts): You will be asked to choose popular culture items (such as an advertisement, music video, etc.) and analyze them using the course material. Depending on the #Idiocracy course credits you choose, you will either write an essay or deliver a speech. Additional details will be provided.

9) Media Consumption and Fast (50 pts): For the first part of this writing assignment you need to compile a log of your media consumption on three separate days—two school days and one weekend day. For each day, your assignment is to log all media activity, including: listening to the radio, surfing the Internet, reading the paper, talking on the phone, etc. For the second part of this assignment you need to conduct a twenty-four hour media "fast" —no media of any kind for an entire day. For the third part of the assignment, you will need to analyze your personal media consumption (and the day you went without any media at all) and write a reflective essay about your relationship to the media environment. The purpose of this assignment is to get you to think critically about the role that media play in your life, the amount of media that you consume, what impact these media have on you as a consumer/citizen, etc. Details will be provided in class. **\*Success Tip:** Plan out in advance which three days you are going to track your media consumption and which day you are going to avoid media all together so that you are not rushing to do everything at the last minute.







# WEEKLY COURSE STRUCTURE

In general, the weekly schedule of #IDIOCRACY is the following (this schedule is tentative and will change slightly from time to time):

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
First Half of Class	Current Events & Community Building	Lecture	Journal	Seminar	Films & Discussion
Second Half of Class	Seminar	Activities	Lecture	Lecture	Wrap-up

Please note that you will be given a print copy of a more detailed calendar/schedule as the quarter progresses.

# RESOURCES AND INFO

## College Anti-Discrimination Statement (Title IX)

Bellevue College does not discriminate on the basis of race or ethnicity; color; creed; national origin; sex; marital status; sexual orientation; age; religion; genetic information; the presence of any sensory, mental, or physical disability; gender identity or veteran status in educational programs and activities which it operates. For further information and contacts, please consult [College Anti-Discrimination Statements](#).

## Disabled Students

The Disability Resource Center serves students with a wide array of learning challenges and disabilities. If you are a student who has a disability or 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 us as soon as possible. If you are a student with a documented autism spectrum disorder, there is a program of support available to you. If you are a person who requires assistance in case of an emergency situation, such as a fire, earthquake, etc, please meet with your individual instructors to develop a safety plan within the first week of the quarter. The DRC office is located in B 132 or you can call them at 425.564.2498. Deaf students can reach them by video phone at 425-440-2025 or by TTY at 425-564-4110. Please visit our website for application information into our program and other helpful links at [www.bellevuecollege.edu/drc](http://www.bellevuecollege.edu/drc)

## Technology

All students registered for classes at Bellevue College are entitled to a network and e-mail account. Your student network account can be used to access your student e-mail, log in to computers in labs and classrooms, connect to the BC wireless network and log in to MyBC. To create your account, go to: [Create Email](#) BC also offers a wide variety of computer and learning labs to enhance learning and student success. Find current campus locations for all student labs by visiting the [Technology Help Desk](#) Help with Canvas: The following link may be helpful: [HelpDesk](#). You will find additional resources in our Canvas site in the "Getting Started" module.

## Academic Calendar

The BC Academic Calendar is separated into two calendars. They provide information about holidays, closures and important enrollment dates such as the finals schedule. On the [Enrollment Calendar](#) you will find admissions and registration dates and important dates for withdrawing and receiving tuition refunds. At the [College Calendar](#), you'll see the year at a glance and college holidays, scheduled closures, quarter end and start dates, and final exam dates.



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# PUBLIC SAFETY

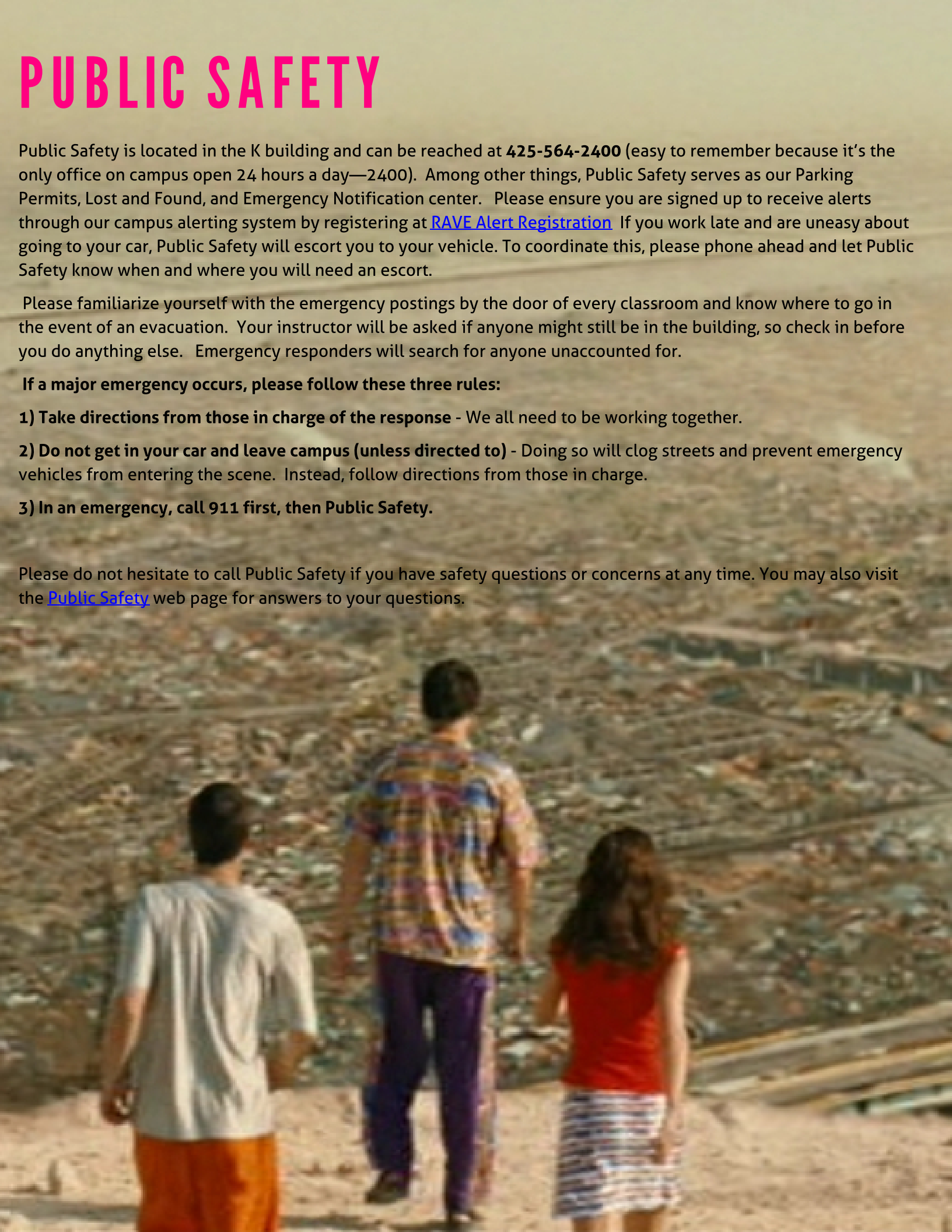
Public Safety is located in the K building and can be reached at **425-564-2400** (easy to remember because it's the only office on campus open 24 hours a day—2400). Among other things, Public Safety serves as our Parking Permits, Lost and Found, and Emergency Notification center. Please ensure you are signed up to receive alerts through our campus alerting system by registering at [RAVE Alert Registration](#). If you work late and are uneasy about going to your car, Public Safety will escort you to your vehicle. To coordinate this, please phone ahead and let Public Safety know when and where you will need an escort.

Please familiarize yourself with the emergency postings by the door of every classroom and know where to go in the event of an evacuation. Your instructor will be asked if anyone might still be in the building, so check in before you do anything else. Emergency responders will search for anyone unaccounted for.

**If a major emergency occurs, please follow these three rules:**

- 1) Take directions from those in charge of the response** - We all need to be working together.
- 2) Do not get in your car and leave campus (unless directed to)** - Doing so will clog streets and prevent emergency vehicles from entering the scene. Instead, follow directions from those in charge.
- 3) In an emergency, call 911 first, then Public Safety.**

Please do not hesitate to call Public Safety if you have safety questions or concerns at any time. You may also visit the [Public Safety](#) web page for answers to your questions.





# #IDIOCRACY

