

# **INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN POLITICS**

Political Science 202

Bellevue College

Winter 2016

Monday & Wednesday 3:00pm-5:10pm in L220

## **INSTRUCTOR**

Instructor: Dr. Larry Cushnie  
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Office Hours: MW 11:30-12:30 & appointment  
Office: A200F

## **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%  
Discussion Questions – 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 thoughtful discussion questions (3-5) for one class meeting during the quarter. Students should email me the questions by 10am on the day you sign-up for. Discussion question grades will be assigned based upon the effort put into questions as well as helping to lead the in-class discussion.

**Midterm #1:** Wednesday, January 27<sup>th</sup>  
**Midterm #2:** Wednesday, February 24<sup>th</sup>  
**Final Exam:** Wednesday, March 23<sup>rd</sup> @ 1:30-3:20

## **TEXTS**

All of the readings are available through 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](http://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](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, January 4 – Introduction and Syllabus Review  
John Winthrop: *A Model of Christian Charity* (1630)
- 2) Wednesday, January 6 – Indigenous Past & Colonial Foundation  
Howard Zinn: “Columbus, the Indians, and Human Progress” in *A People’s History of the US* (1980)  
Ward Churchill & Jim Vander Wall: Selections from “Why Pine Ridge?” in *Agents of Repression* (1990)
- 3) Monday, January 11 – Normative Foundation  
John Locke: *Second Treatise of Government* - Chapter 2, 5, & 9 (1690)
- 4) Wednesday, January 13 – Normative Foundation & the Plea for Revolution  
Montesquieu: Selections from *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748)  
Thomas Paine: Selections from *Common Sense* (1776)
- 5) Monday, January 18 – Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Observed
- 6) Wednesday, January 20 – Ideological Foundation  
Thomas Jefferson: *Declaration of Independence* (1776)  
Federalists Papers: #10 & #51 (1787)
- 7) Monday, January 25 – The 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
- 8) Wednesday, January 27 – Midterm #1
- 9) Monday, February 1 – Law, Order, & Justified Resistance  
Abraham Lincoln: *Address to the Young Men’s Lyceum* (1838)  
Henry David Thoreau: Selections from *Civil Disobedience* (1849)
- 10) Wednesday, February 3 – Abolitionism  
Frederick Douglass: Selections from *What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?* (1852)  
John Brown: PBS Document Bundle
- 11) Monday, February 8 – Reconstruction & the Black Experience  
W.E.B. DuBois: “Of Our Spiritual Strivings” & “Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others” in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903)
- 12) Wednesday, February 10 – Education, Sorrow, & Music  
W.E.B. DuBois: “Of the Coming of John” & “Of the Sorrow Songs” in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903)
- 13) Monday, February 15 – President’s Day Observed
- 14) Wednesday, February 17 – The Civil Rights Movement  
Martin Luther King Jr.: *Letter from Birmingham Jail* (1963) cont.  
Malcolm X: *The Ballot or the Bullet* (1964)

- 15) Monday, February 22 – Black Power & Resistance  
Stokely Carmichael: *Toward Black Liberation* (1966)  
The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense: *Ten-Point Program*
- 16) Wednesday, February 24 – Midterm #2
- 17) Monday, February 29 – Civil Liberties & Government Surveillance  
Dan Berger – “An FBI Bust...” in *Outlaws of America*  
Scott Bombay – “Understanding Snowden and the Espionage Act in Three Minutes” (2013)  
Glenn Greenwald – “On the Espionage Act Charges Against Edward Snowden” (2013)
- 18) Wednesday, March 2 – Foreign Policy, Militarism, & War  
John Kerry: *Congressional Testimony – Vietnam Veterans Against the War* (1971)  
Martin Luther King Jr.: *Beyond Vietnam – A Time to Break Silence* (1967)
- 19) Monday, March 7 – The Politics of Media & Elections  
Michael Parenti: “Voters, Parties, and Stolen Elections”  
Rick Shenkman – “Gross Ignorance” in *How Stupid Are We?* (2008)
- 20) Wednesday, March 9 – The Presidency  
Katznelson et al: “The Presidency”
- 21) Monday, March 14 – Economics, Wealth, & Inequality  
Michael Parenti: “Politics: Who Gets What?”  
John Cassidy: “Piketty’s Inequality Story in Six Charts” (2014)
- 22) Wednesday, March 16 – Voices of Resistance  
Students for a Democratic Society: Selections from *The Port Huron Statement* (1962)  
Martha Shelley: *Gay is Good* (1969)
- 23) Wednesday, March 23 – Final Exam (1:30pm – 3:20pm)