

INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN POLITICS

Political Science 202

Bellevue College

Fall 2016

Tuesday & Thursday 12:30pm-2:20pm in L221

INSTRUCTOR

Instructor: Dr. Larry Cushnie

Email: l.cushnie@bellevuecollege.edu

Office: A200F

Office Hours:

MTW @ 10:15-11:15 & by 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, labor studies, civil liberties, media, electoral politics, taxes, 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 move beyond binary argumentation and towards developing the nuance and historical context necessary to fully formed political discussion.
5. To strengthen our command of English prose through careful writing.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Attendance & Participation - 25%

Discussion Questions – 15%

Response Papers - 40%

Final Exam - 20%

Attendance & Participation – Involves doing more than keeping a seat warm. Will be graded through involvement during in-class discussions, attention paid, and participation in post-lecture activities.

Discussion Questions – Each student is required to provide discussion questions for one of our class meetings. Questions need to be emailed at least 2 hours prior to class on the day they are due. Students should provide 3-5 questions accompanied by a short explanation as to why they are important to the readings and how they hope to stimulate discussion amongst classmates.

Response Papers – Most weeks, students are asked to address questions about the readings. As a supplement to in-class discussion (and to fulfill the online requirement), the essays are meant to stimulate your thinking about the material covered in lecture and the readings. You are responsible for writing outside-of-class essays as assigned. Each essay should be at least 500-750 words in length. Each week's essay prompts will be posted on our course website by 11:59 pm on select Thursdays. You must upload your response to Canvas by 10:00 am the following Tuesday.

Final Exam (Thursday, December 8th) – A longer form exam of short essays.

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. Students are advised to read the syllabus carefully before emailing questions to the instructor.

Rules of Engagement

This course involves discussion of controversial political issues. We will be respectful of each other and avoid 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. All assignments are graded on a 100 point scale.

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) Tuesday, September 20 – Introduction and Syllabus Review
John Winthrop – “A Model of Christian Charity” (1630)
- 2) Thursday, September 22 – 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) Tuesday, September 27 – Ideological Foundations
John Locke – *Second Treatise of Government* - Chapters 2, 5, & 9 (1690)
- 4) Thursday, September 29 – Ideological Foundations & the Plea for Revolution
Montesquieu – Selections from *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748)
Thomas Paine – Selections from *Common Sense* (1776)
- 5) Tuesday, October 4 – Justifying Revolution & Federalism
Thomas Jefferson – *Declaration of Independence* (1776)
James Madison & Alexander Hamilton – Federalists Papers #10 & #51 (1787)
- 6) Thursday, October 6 – Constitutional Compromise
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 (2013)
- 7) Tuesday, October 11 – Law, Order, & Justified Resistance
Abraham Lincoln – “Address to the Young Men’s Lyceum” (1838)
Henry David Thoreau – Selections from *Civil Disobedience* (1849)
- 8) Thursday, October 13 – Abolitionism
Frederick Douglass – Selections from “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?” (1852)
John Brown – PBS Document Bundle (1859)
- 9) Tuesday, October 18 – Reconstruction & the Black Experience (No Class)
W.E.B. DuBois – “Of Our Spiritual Strivings” & “Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others” in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903)
- 10) Thursday, October 20 – Education, Sorrow, & Music
W.E.B. DuBois – “Of the Coming of John” & “Of the Sorrow Songs” in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903)
- 11) Tuesday, October 25 – The Civil Rights Movement
Martin Luther King Jr. – Letter from Birmingham Jail (1963)
Malcolm X – The Ballot or the Bullet (1964)
- 12) Thursday, October 27 – Black Power & Resistance
Stokely Carmichael – *Toward Black Liberation* (1966)
The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense – *Ten-Point Program* (1966)

- 13) Tuesday, November 1 – Civil Liberties & Government Surveillance
Dan Berger – “An FBI Bust...” in *Outlaws of America* (2005)
Scott Bombay – “Understanding Snowden and the Espionage Act in Three Minutes” (2013)
Glenn Greenwald – “On the Espionage Act Charges Against Edward Snowden” (2013)
- 14) Thursday, November 3 – Elections & Voter Exclusion
Michael Parenti – “Voters, Parties, and Stolen Elections” in *Democracy for the Few* (2011)
Vann R. Newkirk II – “Voter-Fraud Laws Are All About Race” in *The Atlantic* (2016)
- 15) Tuesday, November 8 – The Presidency & Citizen Knowledge (Election Day)
Katznelson et. al. – “The Presidency” in *The Politics of Power* (2010)
Rick Shenkman – “Gross Ignorance” in *How Stupid Are We?* (2008)
- 16) Thursday, November 10 – Economics, Wealth, & Inequality
Michael Parenti – “Politics: Who Gets What?” in *Democracy for the Few* (2011)
John Cassidy – “Piketty’s Inequality Story in Six Charts” in *The New Yorker* (2014)
- 17) Tuesday, November 15 – The Fall of the American Union
Jake Rosenfeld – “Introduction” & “The Collapse of Organized Labor in the United States” in *What Unions No Longer Do* (2007)
- 18) Thursday, November 17 – The Dignity of Labor
Martin Luther King Jr. – “Speech to Local 1199” (1968)
Martin Luther King Jr. – “Speech to AFSCME” (1968)
Martin Luther King Jr. – “Mountaintop Speech” (1968)
- 19) Tuesday, November 22 – Minimum Wage
Michael Reich – “The Ups and Downs of Minimum Wage Policy: The FLSA in Historical Perspective” (2015)
Nick Hanauer – “The Pitchforks Are Coming...For Us Plutocrats” from *Politico* (2014)
Molly Ball – “A Plutocrat’s Case for Raising the Minimum Wage” in *The Atlantic* (2016)
- 20) Thursday, November 24 – Thanksgiving (No Class)
- 21) Tuesday, November 29 – Voices of Resistance
Students for a Democratic Society – Selections from *The Port Huron Statement* (1962)
The Movement for Black Lives – “A Vision for Black Lives” (2016)
- 22) Thursday, December 1 – Gender, Sex, & Identity
Martha Shelley – “Gay is Good” (1969)
Emma Green – “America’s Profound Gender Anxiety” in *The Atlantic* (2016)
- 23) Thursday, December 7 – Final Exam (11:30am – 1:20pm)