

American Government
Political Science 202
Winter 2012
Credits 5
Instructor: Dr. Leena Shah
Tue and Thurs
Email: lshah@bellevuecollege.edu
Office hours by appointment only
No Cell phones Please

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

1. clearly define and identify the three branches of government
2. analyze the concept of democracy and the role and influence of the interest groups
3. integrate this knowledge for a personal understanding of how the political process works
4. evaluate underlying assumptions presented by other authors
5. discuss the role of the media
6. apply this concept to the contemporary world

Requirements

Textbook

AMGOV 2011 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.

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. You will share your personality, knowledge, skills and special expertise with the rest of us throughout this quarter.

Assumptions you can make about me

1. I will give you the respect that I ask you to give me and other members of this class.
2. I will do my best to help you but I cannot learn the material for you.
3. 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 its pros and cons. 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 substance, creativity, clarity and how well they answered the questions. These presentations will begin on January 17th. We will discuss the sequence of the presentations in class. They will be presented every Tuesday. The presentation is worth 5 points.

Attendance

Even though as college students I expect you to be responsible and regular to class, I will take attendance. For every two missed classes, I will deduct one point and for every 4 missed classes, it will be two points and so forth. At the end of the quarter if you have perfect attendance I will give you extra credit of 2 points. Class non attendees will get a 0 for class participation.

Class Discussions

On every Thursday we will discuss current events. Students are asked to bring a relevant article 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.

Extra Credit

There will be extra credit opportunities worth 10 points. Every now and then you will be asked to research topics and discuss them in class. The students who bring their research and discuss their findings with the rest of the class will be awarded 1 point per topic. There will also be a current event quiz for extra credit. I will announce these dates in class. In addition there will be questions from the presentations on the quiz. Altogether it will account for 10 extra credit points.

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

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

1. Critique of Article

There will be 1 article that you will be asked to critique. The article is “The trouble with homework” by Annie Murphy Paul, NYTimes Sept 11, 2011 .

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/11/opinion/sunday/quality-homework-a-smart-idea.html?pagewanted=all>

You will 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 **24th January**.

2. Waiting for Superman

Another 5 points will be reserved for watching and writing the synopsis of the movie “Waiting for Superman” Discuss what you gathered from it about American Politics? Discuss the films’ basic argument about American politics. Does this film have relevance in understanding important American political values? How does the movie impact us? What arguments does it make about politics? This can be about 3 pages long, double spaced. This will be worth 5 points. The movie will be watched in class. This is due on **Feb 28th**.

Class Participation

I strongly recommend class participation and have valued it at 5 points. This will include discussion and class participation.

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 25 points and the last and final exam will be worth 30 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.

Grades

The grades will be broken up as follows:	
1 st exam	25 points
2 nd exam:	25 points
3 rd exam:	30 points
Class Presentation and movie critique	10 points
Class participation:	5 points
critique	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

From Jan 3rd to Jan 26th

Chapter 1 Citizenship in our changing Democracy

Chapter 2 The Constitution

Chapter 3 Federalism

Chapter 4 Civil Liberties (part of chapter 4)

Exam 1: Jan 26th

Readings from

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: Feb 23rd

Readings from Feb 23rd to March 16th

Chapter 11 : Congress

Chapter 12 :The Presidency

Chapter 14 :The Judiciary

Chapter 15 Domestic and Economic Policy

Chapter 16 Foreign Policy

Exam 3 March 15th

Same as class time 50 minutes

Holidays

January 31st

March 1st

Waiting for Superman Guidelines

The first page should be a synopsis of the film. The rest should be a critical analysis and what you think about the education system as compared with other countries. How did the movie and its theme impact you? Discuss what you gathered from it about American Politics? Discuss the films' basic argument about American politics. Does this film have relevance in understanding important American political values? How does the movie impact us? What arguments does it make about politics? Lastly what recommendations would you make to the director? It should be 3 pages long, regular font and double spaced. It is worth 5 points.

Guidelines for writing the 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. Instead identify and summarize three or four 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? You are also welcome to research other writers who have worked on the same topic. What do they say? Make sure you cite them in your references if you have researched them or are using their quotes.

PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCE DIVISION Fall 2010

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 Bellevue College. 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 Bellevue College. 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.*