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# **POLS 202: AMERICAN GOVERNMENT**

**Fall 2010: Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:30 to 2:40 pm, C168**

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**Professor:** Tim Jones (Please call me “Tim”)

**Office:** A200B

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**Office Hours:** M/W 11:30 to 12:30; T/TH: 9:30 to 11:00, or by appointment

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**Website:** <https://go.mybcc.net/classes/5369B012/default.aspx>

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**“If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and what never will be”**

**~Thomas Jefferson**

## **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 Constitution, campaigns and elections, Congress, the Presidency, the Supreme Court, Civil Liberties, Civil Rights, and much more. This is not a current events course, but we will spend time at the beginning of each class talking about news topics such as the 2010 election and the ongoing War in Afghanistan.

## **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 that I expect you to take responsibility for your own learning. I will do my best to teach the class 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 come to class prepared for the day's work, and to actively participate in classroom discussions and activities. You are responsible for any material missed due to absence or lateness so I encourage you to get acquainted with those around you, trade e-mail addresses and/or phone numbers, and make one or more study buddies. If you do not understand something please take the initiative to find out the answer by raising your hand, talking to me before or after class, coming to my office, etc.

### **LATE ASSIGNMENTS AND MISSED EXAMS**

Assignments handed in late will be penalized unless they are the result of a college-sponsored official absence or a documented emergency. Likewise, make-up exams will not be administered and incompletes will not be given unless you receive prior permission from me or you can document some sort of catastrophe (such as being medically unable to take the exam or complete the course).

### **GRADE COMPLAINTS**

If you wish to formally request a grade change, you must wait at least 24 hours, and then turn in a written statement explaining why you feel your assigned grade did not reflect your work based on the grading criteria used. We will then make an appointment to discuss your grade in my office. I will only discuss your grade in my office, and not in class. The statute of limitations for a grade complaint is one week.

### **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**

Please familiarize yourself with BC's Campus Code of Conduct. Cheating or plagiarism of any kind will not be tolerated and will result in a grade of 0.0 for the assignment/exam in question.

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

You are expected to contribute to a classroom atmosphere that is productive and cordial. Because this course involves the discussion of controversial issues, 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. Remember reasonable people often disagree. Please turn off your cell phones, take out your earphones, and do not hold private conversations. If you have one, you may use your laptop in class to take notes, but please refrain from playing games, checking email and surfing the Internet so as to not distract your classmates. Use your common sense to avoid any other conduct that might distract or offend other students in class. Thank you!

### **COURSE MATERIALS**

The primary text for the course is Bardes, Shelley and Schmidt's *American Government and Politics Today: The Essentials* (2009-2010 Edition). This text is available at the bookstore; it may also be purchased on-line. Supplemental reading will be made available

on our course website. Please note that each reading should be completed before the class session for which it is scheduled, so that you can participate in any discussion or other classroom activity we do that day. Any material covered by an assigned reading may be included in examination questions, regardless of whether it is specifically discussed in the classroom. If adjustments are made to the reading schedule, you will be informed in class. The assigned reading is 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. Our discussions in class will frequently touch on current events and it is important that you keep up-to-date on the major goings-on. 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)) or the *Wall Street Journal* ([www.wsj.com](http://www.wsj.com)). For an international perspective, I suggest the *BBC* ([www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)).

### GRADED WORK

|                                 |                  |             |
|---------------------------------|------------------|-------------|
| Letter to the Editor Assignment | (10 pts)         | 3%          |
| Film Review Assignment          | (20 pts)         | 6%          |
| Discussion Questions            | (20 pts)         | 6%          |
| Participation                   | (50 pts)         | 14%         |
| Reflective Journal              | (50 pts)         | 14%         |
| Midterm Exam                    | (100 pts)        | 29%         |
| Final Exam                      | (100 pts)        | 29%         |
| <b>Total</b>                    | <b>(350 pts)</b> | <b>100%</b> |

### GRADEPOINT CONVERSION CHART

| A           | B           | C           | D           | F             |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|
| 4.0=341-350 | 3.4=312-314 | 2.4=276-279 | 1.4=241-244 | 0.0-0.6=0-209 |
| 3.9=334-340 | 3.3=309-311 | 2.3=273-275 | 1.3=236-240 |               |
| 3.8=328-333 | 3.2=304-308 | 2.2=270-272 | 1.2=231-235 |               |
| 3.7=322-327 | 3.1=299-303 | 2.1=267-269 | 1.1=227-230 |               |
| 3.6=318-321 | 3.0=296-298 | 2.0=264-266 | 1.0=222-226 |               |
| 3.5=315-317 | 2.9=293-295 | 1.9=260-263 | 0.9=218-221 |               |
|             | 2.8=289-292 | 1.8=256-259 | 0.8=214-217 |               |
|             | 2.7=286-288 | 1.7=252-255 | 0.7=210-213 |               |
|             | 2.6=283-285 | 1.6=249-251 |             |               |
|             | 2.5=280-282 | 1.5=245-248 |             |               |

### LETTER TO THE EDITOR ASSIGNMENT (10 pts ~ 3%)

The purpose of this assignment is to get you to engage with current events as they are covered in the news. This assignment is worth 10 points. You need to write and submit a

letter to the editor in response to a political issue that is covered in a newspaper or magazine of your choice (e.g., the *Jibsheet* for a campus issue, the *Seattle Times* for a local or regional issue, or the *New York Times* for a national or international issue). You must format your letter to fit with the specifications required of the publication to which you are submitting. If your letter is in response to a specific news story—and most letters to the editor are—please include a copy of the story in your submission to me. The final submission deadline for this assignment is Tuesday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>, but I encourage you to turn in your letter before this date.

**\*Success Tip:** Do not wait until the last minute to write your letter. Come talk to me if you have any questions or need guidance, and be sure to proofread for spelling and grammatical errors well in advance of turning in your letter.

### **FILM REVIEW ASSIGNMENT (20 pts ~ 6%)**

You will be expected to write one film review for this class. In your review, you must fulfill the following requirements: (1) summarize the premise of the video (the issue or issues examined, the evidence provided, etc.); and (2) explain how this video fits in with the concepts and ideas discussed in class. Your film review needs to be at minimum one page, single-spaced. Suggested documentaries will be posted on Blackboard; you may choose to review a different documentary, but please clear it with me first. The last day to submit a film review is Thursday, December 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**\*Success Tip:** Plan ahead and pick a documentary on a topic that you are interested in. Make sure your write-up addresses how the film relates to the topics being discussed in class.

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (20 pts ~ 6%)**

At least once a week, you will be asked to write a question that shows your engagement with the course material. The question should identify a central point or idea covered in class that you would like clarification with or that you think would make for a good discussion in the next class. There will be 12 questions in all, and the call for questions will be made randomly throughout the quarter. You must turn in at least 10 questions in order to receive full credit. Each question is worth 2 points and they are due in class on the day they are requested—in other words, make up questions will not be accepted. If you turn in 10 questions you will get 100% for this portion of your grade, 9 questions turned in gets you 90%, 8 questions gets you 80%, etc. PLEASE PURCHASE A SMALL PACKAGE OF 3 X 5 CARDS AND BRING YOUR FIRST CARD TO CLASS BY THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 23<sup>RD</sup>. These questions will be used to see where you are with the material and to feed back into lecture and discussion. Make sure that you include your name and the date on each card.

**\*Success Tip:** Come to class every day and jot down questions as they come to you.

### **REFLECTIVE JOURNAL (50 pts ~ 14%)**

As a supplement to in-class discussion and as a way of processing the materials we cover, I would like you to keep a journal, recording your thoughts and reactions to the course material. The primary purpose of this journal is to stimulate your thinking about the

material and to serve as a starting point for our in-class discussions. I have set up the journaling tool on the Blackboard site for you to use, or if you prefer, you may buy a separate spiral notebook or journal to use for this purpose. I will periodically read and respond to the journals as a way of entering into a more individualized intellectual dialogue with you. You need to write approximately one outside-of-class journal entry per week for a total of 10 entries. Each journal entry should be at least 250 words in length. Each entry is worth 5 points. The topics of your journal entries will be announced in class on Thursday and they need to be completed by the following Tuesday.

**\*Success Tip:** Take the prompts seriously and sincerely reflect on the course content.

### **PARTICIPATION (50 pts ~ 14%)**

This class would be extremely dull if I did all the talking so please do your part to participate. It is impossible for you to participate if you are not in class. I will be taking attendance: three unexcused absences will be allowed during the quarter; absences beyond this number will adversely affect your grade. I intend to start class on time every day and I expect you to be there when I do. Occasionally, you may find it necessary to be late, in which case I would certainly prefer that you come rather than miss the entire class. However, you should enter quietly through the back door and tardiness should never develop into a pattern—consistent tardiness will be treated in the same manner as consistent absences.

**\*Success Tip:** Attend and participate every day! Ask questions in class, after class, in my office, or via email.

### **MIDTERM EXAM (100 pts ~ 29%)**

Your midterm will be held in class on Tuesday, October 26<sup>th</sup>. This exam will cover assigned readings, movies, lectures, guest presentations, and major current events discussed in class. The exam will consist of a mix of question types, including: true-false, multiple-choice, identifications, short answer, and essay. My policy on exams is as follows: 1) everyone must take them on the day they are scheduled; 2) make-up exams will be allowed only if you present documentation excusing the absence on or before the day of the exam; 3) the make-up exam must be scheduled within one week of the original exam date; 4) grade disputes must be raised within one week of the return of the examination.

### **FINAL EXAM (100 pts ~ 29%)**

Your final will be held in class on Tuesday, December 7<sup>th</sup>. This exam will not be cumulative; rather, it will cover the assigned readings, movies, lectures, guest presentations, and major current events discussed in class since the midterm exam. Like the midterm, the final exam will consist of a mix of question types, including: true-false, multiple-choice, identifications, short answer, and essay.

**\*Success Tip:** Keep up with the assigned material and do not leave your exam preparation until the night before the exam. Take advantage of the review sheet. Form a study group with your classmates. Come to my office hours if you have questions.

# **POL S 202**

## **TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE**

### **WEEK 1: GETTING STARTED**

**Tuesday, September 21<sup>st</sup>—Introduction to the Course**

- Syllabus

**Thursday, September 23<sup>rd</sup>—The Democratic Republic**

- Bardes: “Ch. 1: The Democratic Republic,” pp. 4-27 (24 pgs)
- Shenkman: “Gross Ignorance,” pp. 13-36 (24 pgs)

### **WEEK 2: THE CONSTITUTION AND FEDERALISM**

**Tuesday, September 28<sup>th</sup>—The Constitution and the Bill of Rights**

- Bardes: “Ch. 2: The Constitution,” pp. 30-77 (48 pgs)

**Thursday, September 30<sup>th</sup>—Federalism**

- Bardes: “Ch. 3: Federalism,” pp. 80-104 (25 pgs)

### **WEEK 3: PUBLIC OPINION AND POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION**

**Tuesday, October 5<sup>th</sup>—Public Opinion and Political Socialization**

- Bardes: “Ch. 6: Public Opinion and Political Socialization,” 192-219 (28 pgs)
- Gawiser: “20 Questions A Journalist Should Ask About Poll Results,” pp 1-14 (14 ps)

**Thursday, October 7<sup>th</sup>—Recognizing and Overcoming Political Spin**

- Excerpts from *unSpun: finding facts in a world of disinformation* (2007) by Jackson and Jamieson

### **WEEK 4: CIVIL LIBERTIES**

**Tuesday, October 12<sup>th</sup>—Civil Liberties (36 pgs)**

- Bardes: “Ch. 4: Civil Liberties,” pp. 110-145 (36 pgs)

**Thursday, October 14<sup>th</sup>—The Debate over Religious Freedom**

- Billitteri: “Government and Religion,” pp. 25-48 (24 pgs)

### **WEEK 5: CIVIL RIGHTS**

**Tuesday, October 19<sup>th</sup>—Civil Rights (41 pgs)**

- Bardes: “Ch. 5: Civil Rights,” pp. 148-188 (41 pgs)

### **Thursday, October 21<sup>st</sup>—The Debate over Affirmative Action**

- “Affirmative Action,” pp. 841-864 (24 pgs)
- In addition to the above reading, please come to class having watched and ready to discuss the film *A Class Divided* (1985) (60 mins)
  - <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/divided/etc/view.html>

## **WEEK 6: MIDTERM/The 2010 Midterm Election**

### **Tuesday, October 26<sup>th</sup>—Midterm**

- In-class midterm!

### **Thursday, October 28<sup>th</sup>—The 2010 Midterm Election**

- Readings to be announced.

## **WEEK 7: INTEREST GROUPS AND POLITICAL PARTIES**

### **Tuesday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>—Interest Groups**

- Bardes: “Ch. 7: Interest Groups,” pp. 224-248 (25 pgs)

### **Thursday, November 4<sup>th</sup>—Political Parties**

- Bardes: “Ch. 8: Political Parties,” pp. 252-284 (33 pgs)

## **WEEK 8: CAMPAIGNS, ELECTIONS AND THE MEDIA**

### **Tuesday, November 9<sup>th</sup>—Campaigns, Elections, and the Media**

- Bardes: “Ch. 9: Campaigns, Elections, and the Media,” pp. 288-334 (47 pgs)

### **Thursday, November 11<sup>th</sup>**

- Jost: “Campaign Finance Debates,” pp. 457-476 (20 pgs)
- NO CLASS!

## **WEEK 9: CONGRESS AND THE PRESIDENT**

### **Tuesday, November 16<sup>th</sup>**

- Bardes: “Ch. 10: The Congress,” pp. 340-371 (32 pgs)

### **Thursday, November 18<sup>th</sup>**

- Bardes: “Ch. 11: The President,” pp. 376-406 (31 pgs)

## **WEEK 10: THE COURTS AND THE BUREAUCRACY**

### **Tuesday, November 23<sup>rd</sup>**

- Bardes: “Ch. 12: The Bureaucracy,” pp. 410-438 (29 pgs)

### **Thursday, November 25<sup>th</sup>**

- Bardes: “Ch. 13: The Courts,” pp. 442-468 (27 pgs)

## **WEEK 11: PATRIOTISM AND CITIZENSHIP**

### **Tuesday, November 30<sup>th</sup>—Patriotism (26 pgs)**

- Bennett: “The American Patriot” (pp. vii-xii) (6 pgs)
- Goldman: “Patriotism: A Menace to Liberty” (pp. 270-272) (3 pgs)
- Zinn: “Patriotism” (pp. 111-120) (10 pgs)
- Beinart: “The War Over Patriotism” (pp. 1-7) (7 pgs)

### **Thursday, December 2<sup>nd</sup>—Citizenship (37 pgs)**

- Loeb: “Introduction,” pp. 1-13 (13 pgs)
- Loeb: “We Don’t Have to Be Saints,” pp. 34-57 (24 pgs)

## **WEEK 12: FINAL EXAM**

### **Tuesday, December 7<sup>th</sup>**

- In-class final exam!