
POLS 202: AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

Winter 2011: Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:30 to 2:40 pm, R304

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

Office: A200B

Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday 9:30 am to 12:00 pm, and by appointment

Phone: 425-564-2010

Email: tim.jones@bellevuecollege.edu

Website: <https://go.mybcc.net/classes/5369B013/default.aspx>

“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 Wikileaks controversy 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 ***you are responsible 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. Ultimately, ***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. Finally, ***if you do not understand something you need to take the initiative to find out the answer***—raise your hand, talk to me after class, come to my office, etc. I cannot read minds, so it is up to you to try to seek clarity when it is lacking.

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT FOR CLASS DISCUSSIONS

This course involves the discussion of controversial political issues. Remember that reasonable people often disagree. 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. Please note that ***all electronic devices are prohibited in the classroom at all times***. This includes cell phones, blackberries, laptops, i-pods/mp3 players, computers, etc. If you need a laptop to take notes, I will need verification. ***Students caught using electronic devices will be marked absent and asked to leave class that day***. This may seem like a harsh penalty, but such behavior is not only disrespectful to me, it is also disrespectful to the people around you. Please use your common sense to avoid any other conduct that might distract or offend the instructor or the other students in class. Thank you!

A NOTE ABOUT IDEOLOGY

I have no intention of trying to convert you to my belief system. The issues we will be exploring are often contentious and sometimes there will be no right or wrong answers. That being said, I believe there are good and bad arguments. Good arguments will be entertained in class (i.e. those that are logically sound and supported by the available evidence); bad arguments will not.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS AND MISSED EXAMS

All assignments must be typed, printed out, stapled, and handed in at the beginning of class. Emailed assignments will not be accepted. If you are going to be absent on the day that an assignment is due it is your responsibility to get a classmate to turn it in for you. All major due dates are indicated: (a) in the attached course schedule and (b) on the calendar on our course website. Because I believe that one of the major lessons that students learn in college is the importance of meeting deadlines, I will not accept any late work unless it has been approved by me BEFORE the date it is due or you can document some sort of emergency. ***All assignments turned in late will receive a grade of 0.0.*** Likewise, ***missed exams will receive a grade of 0.0.*** Make-up exams will not be administered unless you receive prior permission from me or you can document some sort of catastrophe (such as being medically unable to take the exam).

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

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 0.0 for the assignment/exam in question. Please note that these are serious offences, which can result in possible probation or suspension from Bellevue College and go on your permanent record. 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.

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. Two copies are also available for short-term check out in the library. Supplemental texts will be made available on our class website, which can be accessed via MyBC. To access the supplemental readings click on "Shared Documents" and then "Supplemental Readings." Please note that you are responsible for downloading (and printing) all supplemental readings as they are assigned. For those of you who do not have a printer at home you can print for free in the student computer lab in the N-Building. Please also 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 and on our class website. 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.

READING PROMPTS

To help you get the most out of the reading, you will be provided with a prompt for nearly every assigned reading in this course. These prompts will be made available at least one class period before the reading is due and they will include a handful of reflection questions as well as a comprehensive list of key concepts. You are expected to engage with these prompts before, during, and after doing the reading. My primary purpose in creating these prompts is to help you focus on what is important in the reading, to help you get ready for our in-class discussions, and to help you prepare for assignments, quizzes, and exams. I expect everyone to bring a copy of each day's reading prompt to class on the day the reading is due. Please note that ***I will be collecting your prompts at the beginning of every class as a way to keep track of attendance***. You are encouraged to write answers to the reflection questions that I have provided on the prompts themselves as well as to define the key concepts that I have listed. To give you extra incentive to do so, I will return your prompts to you when you take the midterm and

final exams—if you’ve written a lot on your prompts they are likely to help you with the exams; if you haven’t they won’t.

KEEPING UP WITH THE NEWS

Please keep up with current political events. Our discussions in class will frequently touch on current events and it is important that you keep up-to-date on the major international 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), the *Washington Post* (www.washingtonpost.com), or the *Wall Street Journal* (www.wsj.com). I also encourage international sources such as the *BBC* (www.bbc.co.uk) and *Al Jazeera* <http://english.aljazeera.net>. If you speak another language I encourage you to follow the news in that language and bring that perspective to class.

GRADED WORK

Attendance	(20 pts)	5%
Participation	(40 pts)	10%
Pop Summaries	(30 pts)	7.5%
Weekly Journal	(40 pts)	10%
Pop Summaries	(40 pts)	10%
This I Believe Writing Assignment	(70 pts)	17.5%
Midterm Exam	(100 pts)	25%
Final Exam	(100 pts)	25%
Total	(400 pts)	100%

GRADEPOINT CONVERSION CHART

Grade	Points	Percentage	Grade	Points	Percentage
A	372-400	93-100%	C	292-311	73-77%
A-	360-371	90-92%	C-	280-291	70-72%
B+	352-359	88-89%	D+	272-279	68-69%
B	332-351	83-87%	D	240-271	60-67%
B-	320-331	80-82%	F	0-239	59% & Below
C+	312-319	78-79%			

ATTENDANCE (20 PTS ~ 5%)

Your presence in class is important as I cover a lot of material in class that cannot be found in the readings. Please note that more than one unexcused absence or late attendance will lower your grade, and continue to do so as you miss more classes. We are scheduled to meet twenty-one times this quarter. One unexcused absence or late arrival will not adversely affect your grade, but *starting with your second unexcused absence or*

late arrival you will be docked one point per day—thus, if you miss or are late to two classes you will receive 19 out of 20 points, if you miss or are late to three classes you will receive 18 out of 20 points, if you miss or are late to four classes you will receive 17 out of 20 points, etc. To excuse an absence or late arrival, you must discuss it with me beforehand, unless it is the result of an emergency. Excused absences include documented doctor's visits, family emergencies, and sometimes work-related issues. If you miss class, you are expected to connect with one or more of your classmates to find out what you missed. I am happy to clarify what you missed during my office hours, but I will only do so after you have checked with at least one of your classmates first.

POP SUMMARIES (30 PTS ~ %)

Four times during the quarter, you will be asked to write a pop summary of a concept or controversy discussed in the reading or in a previous lecture. You will be allowed to refer to readings and your notes, but you will not be able to talk to others. The call for pop summaries may come at any time during class. The point of these summaries is to test how well you are engaging with the material. Grading will be based on the quality and depth of your answers, synthesized into an argument, including the use of evidence to back up your points. Your lowest graded summary will automatically be dropped at the end of the quarter – in other words, you have four opportunities to produce three quality summaries. A sample pop summary prompt might be: *Two states currently allot their Electoral College votes based on a congressional-district model, but all the other states use a winner-take-all approach. Which two states are the outliers? How does each model work and what are the strengths and weaknesses of each?*

PARTICIPATION (40 PTS ~ 10%)

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, but participation is about more than just attendance. You are expected to come to every class having done ALL the assigned reading and homework, and you are expected to contribute to our in-class discussions—even if you are shy. Please come to every class with a pen or pencil, some paper, a copy of the assigned reading, and a copy of that day's reading prompt. It is worth pointing out that ***the BC guideline for homework is two hours outside of class for each hour spent in class!***

***Success Tip:** Don't be shy. Try to participate every day. If you are confused, ask me questions in class, during my office hours, or via email.

WEEKLY JOURNAL (40 pts ~ 10%)

As a supplement to in-class discussion, I would like you to keep a reflective journal this quarter. The purpose of this journal is to stimulate your thinking about the material being covered in lecture and in the reading and to serve as a starting point for in-class discussions. Your reflective journal should also help you to organize your thoughts for the *This I Believe* audio essay. You are responsible for writing approximately one outside-of-class journal entry per week for a total of 10 entries. Each journal entry should be at least fifteen lines in length, typed, single-spaced, with Times New Roman font and one-inch margins. Please keep your journals in a small folder and bring the folder to class every day—I will collect and grade your journals approximately

two times during the quarter. Each journal entry is worth four points. All journal entry topics will be announced on Thursday of each week—both in class and on our class website. Your journal entries need to be completed by the following Tuesdays. **JOURNALS NOT STORED IN A FOLDER WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED FOR GRADING.** Please let me know if you have any questions.

***Success Tip:** Take the journal prompts seriously and keep up with the assigned entries. Make sure you follow the formatting instructions outline above.

***THIS I BELIEVE* AUDIO ESSAY (70 pts ~ 20%)**

The purpose of this assignment is to get you to critically examine and creatively express your personal credo (*credo* in Latin means “I believe”). It is based on the National Public Radio (NPR) series of the same name, an international project engaging people in writing, sharing, and discussing the core values that guide their daily lives. The assignment has four phases: (1) a “writing down the bones” phase—***due Thursday, February 3rd***; (2) a “filling in the flesh” phase—***due Thursday, February 17th***; (3) a “cutting to the chase” stage—***due Thursday, March 3rd***; and (4) a “going public” phase—also ***due Thursday, March 3rd***. For your final product, you will record yourself reading a 350- to 500-word statement of belief about politics and/or citizenship in America. We will likely be listening to some of your essays in class. While it is not a requirement, I encourage you to submit your essays to NPR via the website www.thisibelieve.org.

MIDTERM EXAM (100 pts ~ 25%)

Your ***midterm will be held in class on Tuesday, February 8th***. 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.

***Success Tip:** Come to class, keep up with the reading, and do not leave your exam preparation for a night-before cram session!

FINAL EXAM (100 pts ~ 25%)

Your ***final will be held in class on Thursday, March 17th***. 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: AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK 1: DEMOCRACY/CITIZENSHIP

Tuesday, January 4th—Gross Ignorance (24 pgs)

- Syllabus
- Shenkman: “Gross Ignorance” (pp. 13-36) (24 pgs)

Thursday, January 6th—The Democratic Republic (24 pgs)

- Bardes: “Ch. 1: The Democratic Republic,” pp. 4-27 (24 pgs)

WEEK 2: THE CONSTITUTION/FEDERALISM

Tuesday, January 11th—The Constitution (48 pgs)

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

Thursday, January 13th—Federalism (37 pgs)

- Bardes: “Ch. 3: Federalism” (pp. 80-104) (25 pgs)
- Madison: “Federalist Paper No. 51” (pp A7-A9) (3 pgs)
- Peterson: “The Price of Federalism” (pp. 87-95) (9 pgs)

WEEK 3: PUBLIC OPINION/POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION

Tuesday, January 18th—The Martin Luther King You Don’t See on TV (8 pgs)

- Solomon: “The Martin Luther King You Don’t See on TV” (pp. 1-2) (2 pgs)
- Postman: “Amusing Ourselves to Death” (pp. 1-4) (4 pgs)
- Waters: “Electronic Isolation Brings Cold Comfort” (pp. 1-2) (2 pgs)
- King: “Beyond Vietnam—A Time to Break Silence” (23 mins)
 - Please listen to the speech:
<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkatimetobreaksilence.htm>
- In-Class Film: *A Call to Conscience* (56 mins)

Thursday, January 20th— Public Opinion/Political Socialization (46 pgs)

- Bardes: “Ch. 6: Public Opinion and Political Socialization” (pp. 192-219) (28 pgs)
- Gawiser: “20 Questions A Journalist Should Ask About Poll Results” (pp. 1-14) (14 ps)
- Morin: “Choice Words: If You Can’t Understand Our Poll Questions, Then How Can We Understand Your Answers?” (pp. 337-341) (4 pgs)

WEEK 4: CIVIL LIBERTIES

Tuesday, January 25th—Civil Liberties (44 pgs)

- Bardes: “Ch. 4: Civil Liberties” (pp. 110-145) (36 pgs)
- Rauch: “In Defense of Prejudice” (pp. 142-149) (8 pgs)

Thursday, January 27th—Civil Liberties (44 pgs)

- In-Class Film: *The Most Dangerous Man in America* (2010) (90 mins)
- Supplemental Readings to Be Announced

WEEK 5: CIVIL RIGHTS

Tuesday, February 1st—Civil Rights (41 pgs)

- Bardes: “Ch. 5: Civil Rights” (pp. 148-188) (41 pgs)
- In-Class Film: *The Untold Story of Emmett Till* (2005) (70 mins)

Thursday, February 3rd—The Debate Over Affirmative Action

- Katel: “Affirmative Action” and “Affirmative Action Update” (pp. 841-860, 1-3) (23 pgs)
- Supplemental readings to be announced!
- In-Class Film: *A Class Divided* (1985) (60 mins)
- “Writing Down the Bones” Due in Class!

WEEK 6: MIDTERM/CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

Tuesday, February 8th

- In-Class Midterm Exam

Tuesday, February 10th—Civil Disobedience (55 pgs)

- Zinn: “Law and Justice” (pp. 106-146) (41 pgs)
- Lincoln: “The Perpetuation of Our Political Institutions” (pp. 127-133) (7 pgs)
- King: “Letter from Birmingham Jail” (pp. 134-141) (8 pgs)
- Possible In Class Film: *The People Speak* (2010) (112 mins)

WEEK 7: INTEREST GROUPS AND POLITICAL PARTIES

Tuesday, February 15th—Interest Groups (25 pgs)

- Bardes: “Ch. 7: Interest Groups” (pp. 224-248) (25 pgs)
- Supplemental readings to be announced!

Thursday, February 17th—Political Parties (33 pgs)

- Bardes: “Ch. 8: Political Parties” (pp. 252-284) (33 pgs)
- Supplemental readings to be announced!
- “Filling in the Flesh” Due in Class!

WEEK 8: CONGRESS AND THE PRESIDENT

Tuesday, February 22nd—The Congress (39 pgs)

- Bardes: “Ch. 10: The Congress” (pp. 340-371) (39 pgs)
- Supplemental Readings to be announced!

Thursday, February 24th—The President (52 pgs)

- Bardes: “Ch. 11: The President” (pp. 376-406) (31 pgs)
- Dahl: “Electing the President” (pp. 73-89) (17 pgs)
- NYT Editorial: “Drop Out of the College” (1 pg)
- Dorgan: “Electoral College Works Quietly, Just As Founders Intended” (pp 10-12) (3 pgs)

WEEK 9: THE COURTS/THE NEWS MEDIA

Tuesday, March 1st— The Courts (49 pgs)

- Bardes: “Ch. 13: The Courts,” pp. 442-468 (27 pgs)
- Canon, Coleman, and Mayer: “Interpreting the Constitution: Originalism or a Living Document” (pp. 305-326) (22 pgs)

Thursday, March 3rd—The News About Democracy (49 pgs)

- Bennett: “The News About Democracy” (pp. 1-28) (28 pgs)
- Farsetta: “Fake TV News” (pp. 5-12, pp. 62-74) (21 pgs)
- “Going Public” Due

WEEK 10: NEWS MEDIA CONTINUED

Tuesday, March 8th—College Issues Day—No school!!! (37 pgs)

- Bennett: “Four Information Biases That Matter” (pp. 32-68) (37 pgs)

Thursday, March 10th—All the News That Fits Democracy (34 pgs)

- Bennett: “All the News That Fits Democracy” (pp. 256-289) (34 pgs)

WEEK 11: CITIZENSHIP/FINAL EXAM

Tuesday, March 15th—Engaged Citizenship (37 pgs)

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

Thursday, March 17th—Final Exam

- In-Class Final Exam Due in Class!