

American Political Culture
Political Science 160 and AMST 160
Fall Quarter 2009
Credits 5
Instructor: Dr. Leena Shah
Email: lsah@bcc.ctc.edu
Office hours by appointment only
No Cell phones Please

Course Description

This is a course on the culture of politics in the U.S. How do Americans think about government, political parties, social welfare, immigration civil right and liberties and on the other topics of politics? How do they define themselves as a nation? How does our political culture differ from that found in other Countries? Where did it originate? Is there a single political culture or several? How do our ideas about politics influence politics. 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 political culture and its relationship to politics
2. state how politics is shaped by culture
3. state how it is influenced and interpreted by various other disciplines
4. evaluate underlying assumptions presented by other authors
5. discuss the development of political culture in a variety of situations
6. apply this concept to the contemporary world

Requirements

Textbook

America the Unusual by John Kingdon

You will be asked to research topics that I will announce in class.

Some of the readings for this course have been placed on reserve in the library and you are required to read them

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 Wednesday. 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

Students will work in a group of three students. They will explore and trace differences between American political culture and other countries. This will be a comparative study. You can choose one or two people to work with. You can choose any country of your choice. You should research the similarities and differences between America and the selected country. For example you can look at death penalty between the two countries and examine how they stand on it. 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 Oct 12th. We will discuss the sequence of the presentations in class. They will be presented every Monday. 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 on Mondays and Wednesdays. For every two missed Mondays and two missed Wednesdays, 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 Discussions

On every Wednesday we will discuss current events. Students are asked to bring a relevant article with them on Wednesdays. 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. For two missed Wednesdays a point will be taken off from the grade. For every four missed Wednesdays 2 points will be taken off and so forth. Current events will be an integral part of our course on Political Culture.

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.

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

1. Critique of Articles

There will be 2 articles that you will be asked to critique. For the first one, you can choose any one article listed in the readings and critique it. The 2nd one will be announced in class. The critique should be 2 pages long, double spaced. The due dates are October 23rd. and November 13th. In the critique you will summarize the article, cite other authors who have written on this subject, evaluate the article and give your perspective. Each one will be worth 3 points.

2. Mr. Smith goes to Washington

Another 5 points will be reserved for watching and writing the synopsis of the movie Mr. Smith goes to Washington and what you gathered from it about American Political culture. How does the movie impact political culture? This can be about 3 pages long, double spaced. This will be worth 5 points. The movie will be watched in class. The date will be announced in class.

Class Participation

I strongly recommend class participation and have valued it at 4 points. This will include attendance and interest in the course even though you may be too shy to speak up.

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:	4 points
2 critiques	6 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

September 21st to the 16th, we will cover these topics

What values are important to us? (in class discussion)

Chapter 1 introduction (Reading from Kingdon)

What is political culture? (Reading from Kingdon)

Chapter 2 (Reading from Kingdon)

Describing the comparisons, we will use **Singapore** as an example.

Read the article from NYTimes on Singapore, A different kind of homework”, April 29th 2008

Be prepared to discuss all the research with the rest of the class.

Systems of Government (Research)

European and Japanese institutions a comparison with the American institutions
(Kingdon)

Public Policy (Kingdon)

Education

No Child left behind Research this topic 1point EC.

Read “Left behind” The Economist, March 27th 2008.

Read “400 schools falling behind,” Elizabeth Benton, Sept 2009

President Obama’s Race to the top Speech.

Read “Better Marks More Money” The Economist, July 10th 2008 (attached)

Read “Our friends in the north” The Economist, June 6th 2008

Read “Will Obama follow through on education,” Mike Thomas, Sept 9th 2009

Welfare,

Research from www.heritage.org/research/welfare

“The impact of welfare reform.” July 19th 2006.

Social Security (Research topic, 1point EC)

Healthcare (Kingdon)

Read “Obama calls for Congress to face healthcare challenge” CNN. Sept 10th 2009 (attached)

Read “What now for Obamacare?” Economist. August 1st 2009

Read “Globalisation and Healthcare” Economist, August 14th 2008.

Read “A healthcare Glossary” Time Magazine, August 31st 2009(attached)

Crime (Kingdon)

Environment (Kingdon)

Global warming,

Read . “Global Warming” NYtimes, Sept 9th 2009

Read “Cap and Trade, with handouts and loopholes,” Economist, May 23rd 2009

Exam 1: October 16th

Readings from Oct 17th to the 20th November

Chapter 3 (Kingdon)

Ideology,

Political philosophers

Locke, Montesquieu, Tocqueville (Research) website for Locke

<http://Plato.Stanford.edu/entries/locke>.

Read the section on “the two treatises of government”

Civil Liberties, (Bill of Rights)

Part of chapter 4 (Kingdon)

Why do Americans think the way they do (Kingdon)

Immigration Issues, (Kingdon)

Read “Obama vows to focus on borders,” Washington Post, August 11th 2009.

Research immigration pros and cons, look at US immigration reform.org

Security of the Nation (Patriot Act) (Research, 1 point EC)

Litigation (find cases on uncalled for litigation, research 1point EC)

Read Lexington’s “Law v Common Sense” Economist January 15th 2009

Exam 2: Novemeber 20th

Readings from November 21st to December 4th

Chapter 4 (Kingdon)

Supreme Court decisions on Contemporary civil rights issues,

Sexual harassment Title VII

Affirmative action

Chapter 5 (Kingdon)

Implications

Exam 3: December 4th

Please note this is the last day of classes. The duration of the test will be the same as a regular class 50 minutes.

No Classes
Oct 5th

Nov 11th,

Nov 26th and 27th

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.

Critical Review of Mr. Smith Goes to Washington

Critique "Mr. Smith goes to Washington" in accordance with the following criteria. The first one is the plot. Pay attention to the logical sequence of actions and overall believability. Second one is the character: does he correspond to the plot, is he character-driven? The third criteria for evaluation: What impact does the movie have on our political culture? What does the whole story emphasize in terms of political culture? Lastly, what are your reactions to this movie and what did you gather about our political culture?

The first paragraph should be a summary followed by the critical evaluation. This paper should be double space and AT LEAST three pages long. This is worth 5 points.

Please read the attached policies of the Social Science division

PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCE DIVISION

Revised Winter 2009

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 behavior (e.g., towards the instructor or other classmates) are violations of the Student Code of Conduct at Bellevue Community College. 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 Community 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").

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.

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 BCC Web site.