

American Political Culture
Political Science 160 and AMST 160
Fall quarter 2008
Credits 5
Instructor: Dr. Leena Shah
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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

Please do the required readings, research and come prepared to discuss this with us. This is an interactive class so be willing and prepared to discuss the readings with the class.

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 October 6th. 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.

Critique of Articles

There will be 2 articles that you will be asked to critique. You can choose any two listed in the readings and critique them. The critique should be 2 pages long, double spaced. The due dates are **October 24th and November 21.** 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.

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

Sept 22nd to 13th Oct 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. Research this topic (1 pt EC)

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 "Top of the Class" The Economist, June 26th 2008

Read "Better Marks more money" The Economist, July 10th 2008

Read "Our friends in the north" June 6th 2008

Welfare, Research from www.heritage.org/research/welfare

"The impact of welfare reform." July 19th 2006.

Social Security (Research topic, 1point EC)

Healthcare (Kingdon)

Research Presidential nominees McCain and Obama's views on healthcare
Read "Globalisation and Healthcare" from the Economist, August 14th 2008.

Crime (Kingdon)

Environment (Kingdon)

Global warming, articles on this are placed on reserve in the library)

Read "The tipping Point" Time magazine April 3rd 2006. Also read from the same magazine what other countries are doing and what the cities in the U.S. are doing to combat Global warming.

Exam 1: October 14th

Oct 14th to Nov 7th

Chapter 3 (Kingdon)

Ideology, (on reserve)

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 "Immigration Americans can live with," Seattle Times, July 10th 2008

Research immigration pros and cons

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

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

Exam 2: Nov 7th

Nov 8th to Dec 4th

Chapter 4 (Kingdon)

Supreme Court decisions on Contemporary civil rights issues,

Sexual harassment
Affirmative action

Chapter 5(Kingdon)
Implications

Exam 3: Dec 5th

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

October 29th

November 11th

November 27th and 28th

Please read the attached policies of the Social Science division