

Introduction to American Government

Pol S 202, Winter 2018

Classroom L221

MW 1230 - 220

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Office Hours: MW 1130 - 1220, OBA @ A200F

<https://bc.instructure.com/courses/15514031>

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this course is to help you to develop the conceptual and theoretical tools necessary to critically understand and engage with the political system. My primary objectives are to help you:

1. Develop a basic understanding of and appreciation for contemporary American politics,
2. Critically assess the strengths and weaknesses of constitutional government and democracy, branches of American government, the public policy cycle, and
3. Understand how to engage in a meaningful civic life.

COURSE POLICIES

This is a college-level course, which means you are responsible for your own learning. I have the following expectations of you:

1. Complete your assignments in a timely, complete manner,
2. Come to class prepared for the day's work,
3. Actively participate in classroom discussions, and
4. Raise your hand, talk with me during office hours, send me an email, or speak with me before or after class if you are confused about something we are learning.

Meeting these expectations will help you engage fully with the course materials. It is important to note that some of our class work will involve discussion of controversial political issues about which reasonable people 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.

All electronic devices are prohibited in the classroom at all times. If you need an electronic device to take notes, please contact me. Students caught using electronic devices will be marked absent and asked to leave class that day.

COURSE TEXTBOOK AND ASSIGNED READINGS

The core text for this course is The Irony of Democracy: An Uncommon Introduction to American Politics, 17th Edition by Schubert, Dye, and Zeigler. This book is available at the Bellevue College Bookstore; copies are also available for short-term check out at the library.

There will be secondary texts available online. These will be made available at least one week in advance of the date of discussion. The assigned reading (in the textbook and online) should be completed before you come to class to enable full participation. Any assigned reading material may be included in examination questions, regardless of whether it is specifically discussed in the classroom.

Many of our discussions will engage the current international situation, and it will behoove you to stay current. 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).

GRADING/EVALUATION

20% Attendance and Participation
Mondays and Wednesdays

30% Analytical Engagement: Civic Project
January 29 (Discover) -- 10%
March 5 (Analyze) -- 20%

50% Comprehension Check: Evaluations
January 31 -- 15%
February 28 -- 15%
FINAL: March 21, 1130 - 120 -- 20%

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

You will be both learning about and analyzing American Government and current events related to the course. Part of learning this information involves discussion. You cannot discuss and listen if you do not attend class. To encourage attendance, I will be taking role daily and assessing the degree to which you participate. Occasionally, there will be additional assignments to supplement your participation grade. These will be emailed to you.

You have one “free” unexcused absence for which your participation grade will not be affected; starting with your second unexcused absence or late arrival, you will not receive points for that day. If you are shy or uninterested in speaking during class, please talk with me about alternative ways for you to earn your participation points. If you need to miss class, please let me know in advance or you will receive no points for that day. 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 further during my office hours, but I will only do so after you have checked with at least one of your classmates first.

ANALYTICAL ENGAGEMENT: CIVIC PROJECT

As a way to demonstrate what you have learned in this class and engage with an important political issue, you will write a Civic Project Paper. The goal of this assignment is to get you to think critically about your role in American Government. The assignment will develop over the course of the quarter and has the following parts:

1. DISCOVER: In **January**, you will research and discover a group which engages in our political, civic life at the local, state, national, or international level. Attend at least one meeting **or** meet with a representative of the group to get a deeper understanding of the ways in which the group engages politically.
2. ANALYZE: In **March**, you will write up your Civic Project Paper, analyzing your experience and tying it to the themes of the class.

COMPREHENSION CHECK: Evaluations

Evaluations will occur three times in the quarter as a test of your comprehension of the readings, lecture, and discussion.

LATE AND MISSED EVALUATIONS

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. I will not accept any late work unless it has been approved by me before the date it is due or if you can document some sort of emergency. All evaluations turned in late or missed will receive a grade of 0.0.

Students must take the exams on the dates they are scheduled. Make-up exams will be allowed only if the student presents documentation excusing the absence on or before the day of the exam; make-up exams must be scheduled within one week of the exam date.

GRADE COMPLAINTS

If you wish to formally request a grade change, you have one week to do so from when your evaluation was returned to you. There are three steps in this process:

1. You must wait at least 24 hours from when you received your evaluation.
2. Turn in a written statement explaining why you feel your assigned grade did not reflect your work based on the grading criteria used.
3. 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.

DISABILITY PROCEDURES

The Disability Resource Center (DRC) serves students with a wide array of learning challenges and disabilities. If you (1) are a student who has a disability or a learning challenge for which you have documentation, (2) have seen someone for treatment, and/or (3) feel you may need accommodations in order to be successful in college, please contact the DRC staff as soon as possible. The DRC office is located in B132, and the reception desk phone number is 425-564- 2498. For application information and other helpful links the DRC website is <http://www.bellevuecollege.edu/drc>. Deaf students can reach the DRC by videophone at 425-440- 2025 or by TTY at 425-564- 4110.

Finally, if you have either an apparent or non-apparent disability and require assistance in case of an emergency situation (fire, earthquake, or other emergency), please let me know early in the quarter so that we can develop an appropriate safety plan for you.

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 evaluation in question. Please note that these are serious offenses, 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 SCHEDULE

Week 1: Introductions (Jan 3)

Introductions and Syllabus

Weeks 2 - 5: The Constitution, Power, Elites, Masses, and the Media (Jan 8 - 31)

Chapter 1: The Irony of Democracy

Chapter 2: The Elite Consensus of the Founding Fathers: U.S. Political Principles

Chapter 3: Elites in America

Chapter 4: Masses in the United States

Chapter 5: The Media: Elite-Mass Communication

Discover: January 29

Evaluation 1: January 31

January 15: BC Closed

Weeks 6 - 9: Elections, Congress, The Presidency, and The Courts (Feb 5 - 28)

Chapter 6: Elections, Parties, and Democracy

Chapter 7: Elites and Organized Interests

Chapter 8: Congress: The Legislative Elite

Chapter 9: The Presidency

Chapter 10: Courts: Elites in Black Robes

Evaluation 2: February 28

February 19: BC Closed

Weeks 10 - 12: The Federal Bureaucracy, Federalism, Civil Rights, and the Global Elite (Mar 5 - 21)

Chapter 11: The Federal Bureaucracy

Chapter 12: Federalism: State and Community Elites

Chapter 13: Civil Rights: Diversifying the Elite

Chapter 14: The United States as Global Elite

Epilogue: What Can Students Do?

Analyze: March 5

Evaluation 3: March 21, 1130 - 120