

# POLS& 202: American Government

Bellevue College, Winter 2019 (Item 5358)

---

## Course Details

**Class Sessions:** DAILY: 7:30-8:20A  
**Room:** L221  
**Instructor:** David Spataro, PhD  
**E-mail:** david.spataro@bellevuecollege.edu  
**Phone:** (425) 564-3161  
**Office Location:** D200E  
**Office Hours:** M: 9:00 – 11:00A  
T: 11:30A – 12:30P  
W: 11:00A – 1:00P

## Course Description

This course is designed to familiarize students with the study of American politics. Students will gain a basic understanding of the structure of U.S. government. In addition, students will develop the ability to identify and analyze the most significant problems confronting U.S. politics. The class is divided into four major sections, and each section deals with a significant political issue (racism/colonialism, environmental justice, gender and sexuality) in relation to U.S. government institutions and processes. As such, the course is designed as an applied critical thinking approach to U.S. government.

## Course Learning Outcomes

After completing this class, students should be able to:

1. Evaluate the basic nature of Constitutional government in the United States.
2. Understand concepts such as separation of power and checks and balances as outlined in the U.S. Constitution.
3. Recall and define problems of individual rights, popular representation and responsible leadership.
4. Identify roles of the executive branch, Congress, and the judiciary.
5. Have an understanding of the public policy making process in the United States.
6. Have the skills and knowledge necessary for analyzing U.S. politics according to the ideals of American democracy.

## Grading

Graded Assessments	Percentage
Congressional Watchdog Report	20%
Facilitating Current Events Discussion	15%
Reflection Papers	15%
Quizzes	15%
Midterm	15%
Final Exam	20%
Total	100%

Letter Grade	Percentage
A	92 - 100%
A-	90 - <92%
B+	88 - <90%
B	82 - <88%
B-	80 - <82%
C+	78 - <80%
C	72 - <78%
C-	70 - <72%
D+	68 - <70%
D	60 - <68%
F	<60%

**Congressional Watchdog Report:** The final project for this class is to create a “watchdog” report about one of Washington State’s members of Congress. The report will focus on the congressperson’s record with regard to the policy steps needed to drawdown carbon emissions and ensure environmental justice in the face of a warmer earth and local environmental changes in our region (e.g. increased amount and intensity of wildfires). Students will work in groups of 3-4 students. The final assignment includes a full-report, a tri-fold summarizing the report, a “talking points” flyer and web-ready memes. **(Outcomes 3, 4, 5)**

**Facilitating Current Events Discussion:** Students will be assigned to small groups of approximately 6-8 students at the beginning of the quarter and then rearranged into new small groups after the midterm. The small group discussions will focus on current

events related to the class material. Beginning in week two each student will be required to lead one current events discussion during the quarter. Leading the discussion requires: (1) selecting three strong news articles for your peers in the group ahead of the discussion, (2) writing the discussion's guiding questions, and (3) facilitating the discussion in class. Think of this like a small reading group with your peers. The leader selects the readings, brings questions to start the discussion, organizes the group and then helps to guide the discussion. The group leader will post the materials for the week on Monday before 5pm. The discussions are on Wednesdays. **(Outcome 6)**

**Reflection Papers:** On Fridays, we will begin watching a documentary related to the weekly material. For this assignment, students are required to (1) finish watching the documentary, (2) live tweet their viewing, and (3) write a two-page reflection paper. The reflection papers are due on Wednesdays. I will grade five reflection papers, chosen randomly. **(Outcome 6)**

**Quizzes:** There will be four quizzes during the quarter to assess your knowledge and prepare for the exams. The quizzes will be short and made up of multiple-choice questions. They will come at the end of each of the four sections of the class. Students who complete their notes (and Canvas submission) on time are able to use their notes on the quiz. See "Class Policies" for more details about notes. **(Outcomes 1 – 6)**

**Midterm and Final Exam:** There will be two exams during the quarter, which are designed to assess your conceptual knowledge and reading comprehension. The questions will include multiple choice and short essay questions. The final exam will be cumulative. Students can use stamped notes on the midterm and final exam. See "Class Policies" for more details about notes. **(Outcomes 1 – 6)**

## **Books and Required Materials**

The textbook for the course is *The Irony of Democracy: An Uncommon Introduction to American Politics* by Dye, Zeigler, and Shubert (17<sup>th</sup> edition). The book is available in the campus bookstore and you can purchase it online. I will make the first textbook readings available as a .PDF file on Canvas but you need a copy of the textbook by the second week of class. Supplemental readings will be available on our Canvas site.

**The Friday portion of class requires students to finish watching a documentary that we start in class.** During most of the quarter the documentary will be freely available, either through BC's Library Media Center databases or on the web. However, there may be weeks when students need to rent a streaming version of the film. The total cost for streaming materials will be less than \$10 but may require use of a credit or debit card.

Students without or unable to access a credit/debit card should contact me so we can work out an individualized solution.

I encourage you to find the most appropriate reading method that works for you. However, please keep in mind that new research suggests that reading comprehension is higher in print than on an electric device. BC students have a printing quota each quarter based upon technology fees. This quota is not likely to be sufficient for you to print all the materials and assignments for every course. I suggest that you patronize the King County library system, which provides library users with 75 'units' of free printing per week. Additionally, be strategic about readings that you need to print, and readings that you can read and take notes using a computer.

## **Late work and Classroom Policies**

\*These policies may apply differently to students with DRC accommodations. I will be working with all students individually to meet their accommodations.

- **No shaming, no judging:** This classroom is a no shaming, no judgment zone. It is important that everyone contributes and that everyone is accountable to class policies. However, we will not be shaming or looking negatively upon others for mistakes, for their political beliefs, or for any other reason.
- **Collective Structure:** This class is based upon the principles of cooperation and collaboration. Students who develop strong community bonds in college tend to succeed. Additionally, social scientists find that participation in cooperative groups builds "social capital"—a term for hard-to-measure human capacities involving trust and one's ability to collaborate. All areas of life—including employment, family, community, and politics—involve working together. The development of human capital greatly influences the efficacy of social groups. Thus we will model this behavior in an authentic manner in the classroom. Everyone in class wishes to succeed, and everyone can participate in making that goal a reality.
- **Attendance:** I will be taking attendance in this class, but students are not graded on attendance or participation. It is important that students attend class everyday and arrive on time. It is especially important that students are present on Wednesdays for the student-led small group discussions. As a result, although students will not be graded on attendance, there is a grade penalty for missing class on Wednesdays. The Wednesday attendance policy is the following:
  - All students have one freebie. Students can miss one Wednesday without affecting your grade.

- All students have one additional opportunity for a documented absence. Students with a documented emergency may miss a second Wednesday without affecting your grade.
- The third Wednesday missed (or second Wednesday without documentation) will lead to a drop of one step in the letter grade system.
- **Reading notes:** I do not believe that memorization is as important as developing the skillset needed to be strong readers and note-takers. As a result, I am incentivizing reading and note-taking practices. I allow on-time notes to be used on tests. Students who do all of the following are allowed to use their “stamped” reading notes on the quizzes and exams.
  - Students who want a stamp on their notes must write a brief submission (two paragraphs) on Canvas before the start of class on the day the reading is due
  - Notes will only be stamped at the beginning of the class period on the day the reading is due
  - Notes must be just one 8 ½ x 11 piece of paper (double-sided is okay)
  - For the quizzes, midterm and final exam, all stamped notes must be organized into a three-ring binder
- **Late work:** Reflection papers are due on Wednesdays at midnight. You will have a period of one week after the assignment due date to turn in late work for 85% of the grade. This means that if you turn in work during this one-week period, I will multiply your final score by 85/100. You do not need to ask me to turn in work during this period; all you need to do is turn it in.

The quizzes, midterm and final must be taken on the assigned day. If you have a documented emergency that prevents you from taking a test, please contact me immediately (with documentation) to discuss a retake. In the case of an emergency, document everything so that it is clear what occurred.

The late work policy does NOT apply to leading the small group discussion or to the reading notes. Students who are leading the small group discussion must complete the work on time because other students are relying on the leader to be timely to complete their work. Being late by an hour or two with the articles is acceptable because the other students in the group will still be able to complete their work.

*If you are falling behind due to emergency/unforeseen circumstances, you can work with me to create an individualized plan.*

- **English Second (or more) Language Students:** If English is not your first language, please check in with me about the timed quizzes and exams.
- **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. Please familiarize yourself with BC's Student Code of Conduct: <http://www.bellevuecollege.edu/policies/id-2050/>. I will report all instances of cheating/plagiarism to the campus Behavioral Intervention Team (now known as the CARE team).
- **Appointments, Email and Canvas Inbox:** The best ways to communicate with me are: phone call or drop by during office hours; BC email; or the Canvas mail function (inbox). I may check these at odd hours, such as at night or over the weekend. But please do not expect me to reply outside of regular business hours. Please respect the dynamic that teaching this class is my workplace and I do not work at all hours of the day every day. On my end I will be answering your messages swiftly. However, if I do not answer your inquiry in about a day, you should feel comfortable to follow up.

*Please use Outlook to schedule appointments with me. I have created a tutorial video on the Canvas homepage to show you how to do this.*

## **Classroom Learning Atmosphere**

### **Affirmation of Inclusion**

Bellevue College is committed to maintaining an environment in which every member of the campus community feels welcome to participate in the life of the college, free from harassment and discrimination. We value our different backgrounds at Bellevue College, and students, faculty, staff members, and administrators are to treat one another with dignity and respect.

### **Religious Holidays**

Students who expect to miss class, examinations, or any other assignments as a consequence of their religious observance should be provided with a reasonable alternative opportunity to complete such academic responsibilities. It is the obligation of students to provide faculty with reasonable notice of the dates of religious holidays on which they will be absent, preferably at the beginning of the term. Students who are absent on days of examinations or class assignments should be offered an opportunity to make up the work without penalty (if they have previously arranged to be absent), unless it can be demonstrated that a makeup opportunity would constitute an unreasonable burden on a member of the faculty. Should disagreement arise over what

constitutes an unreasonable burden or any element of this policy, parties involved should consult the department chair, or dean.

### **College Anti-Discrimination Statement (Title IX)**

Bellevue College does not discriminate on the basis of race or ethnicity; color; creed; national origin; sex; marital status; sexual orientation; age; religion; genetic information; the presence of any sensory, mental, or physical disability; gender identity or veteran status in educational programs and activities which it operates.

## **Important Resources/Services**

### **Disability Resource Center – B132**

The Disability Resource Center (DRC) serves students with a wide array of learning challenges and disabilities. If you are a student who has a disability or learning challenge for which you have documentation or have seen someone for treatment and if you feel you may need accommodations in order to be successful in college, please contact the DRC as soon as possible. If you are a student with a documented autism spectrum disorder, there is an additional access program available to you. Contact [Autism Spectrum Navigators](#). Email and phone number is on the web page. ASN is located in the Library Media Center in D125. The DRC office is located in B132 or you can call the reception desk at (425) 564.2498. Deaf students can reach the DRC by Skype: the address is **DRCatBC** (NOTE: There is no @ sign...it is actually **DRCatBC**). Please visit the website at [Disability Resource Center](#) for application information and other helpful links.

### **Multicultural Services – 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor of B building (above the bookstore)**

Multicultural Services (MCS) is a student-centered service program on campus that is designed to support all students in general, and diverse student populations in particular. MCS is a broad program that can assist students with tutoring in Math and English as well as help students locate community resources such as food and housing assistance. Please familiarize yourself with MCS by stopping by or visiting: [bellevuecollege.edu/mcs/](http://bellevuecollege.edu/mcs/)

### **Counseling Center – 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor of B building (above the bookstore)**

The Counseling Center provides personal, career, and academic counseling for all registered BC students. The Counseling Center can be a helpful place for locating community resources (referrals) as well as free counseling appointments with the center's staff of licensed mental health counselors. Please familiarize yourself with the services offered by the counseling center by stopping by or visiting: [bellevuecollege.edu/counseling/](http://bellevuecollege.edu/counseling/)

## Calendar at a Glance

### **WEEK 1 (1/2 – 1/4):** INTRODUCTIONS

### **WEEK 2 (1/7 – 1/11):** PART ONE – THE CONSTITUTION

- READINGS DUE ON **MONDAY** AND **THURSDAY** BEFORE CLASS BEGINS
- SMALL GROUP LEADERS SUBMIT READINGS AND QUESTIONS BY 5PM **MONDAY**
- REFLECTION PAPER DUE ON **WEDNESDAY** NIGHT BY MIDNIGHT

### **WEEK 3 (1/14 – 1/18):** PART TWO – THE CONSTITUTION

- READINGS DUE ON **MONDAY** AND **THURSDAY** BEFORE CLASS BEGINS
- SMALL GROUP LEADERS SUBMIT READINGS AND QUESTIONS BY 5PM **MONDAY**
- REFLECTION PAPER DUE ON **WEDNESDAY** NIGHT BY MIDNIGHT
- QUIZ ON **FRIDAY**

### **WEEK 4 (1/21 – 1/25):** PART ONE – FEDERALISM AND THE ENVIRONMENT

- **MONDAY** IS A HOLIDAY
- SMALL GROUP LEADERS SUBMIT READINGS AND QUESTIONS BY 5PM **MONDAY**
- READINGS DUE ON **TUESDAY** AND **THURSDAY** BEFORE CLASS BEGINS
- REFLECTION PAPER DUE ON **WEDNESDAY** NIGHT BY MIDNIGHT

### **WEEK 5 (1/28 – 2/1):** PART TWO – FEDERALISM AND THE ENVIRONMENT

- READINGS DUE ON **MONDAY** AND **THURSDAY** BEFORE CLASS BEGINS
- SMALL GROUP LEADERS SUBMIT READINGS AND QUESTIONS BY 5PM **MONDAY**
- REFLECTION PAPER DUE ON **WEDNESDAY** NIGHT BY MIDNIGHT

### **WEEK 6 (2/4 – 2/8):** MIDTERM WEEK

- READINGS DUE ON **MONDAY**
- QUIZ ON **TUESDAY**
- REVIEW ON **WEDNESDAY**
- REFLECTION PAPER DUE ON **WEDNESDAY** NIGHT BY MIDNIGHT
- NO CLASS OR READINGS ON **THURSDAY**
- MIDTERM ON **FRIDAY**



**WEEK 7 (2/11 – 2/15):** PART ONE – CONGRESS AND THE EXECUTIVE

- READINGS DUE ON MONDAY AND THURSDAY BEFORE CLASS BEGINS
- SMALL GROUP LEADERS SUBMIT READINGS AND QUESTIONS BY 5PM MONDAY
- REFLECTION PAPER DUE ON WEDNESDAY NIGHT BY MIDNIGHT

**WEEK 8 (2/18 – 2/22):** PART TWO – CONGRESS AND THE EXECUTIVE

- NO CLASS ON MONDAY
- READINGS DUE ON TUESDAY AND THURSDAY BEFORE CLASS BEGINS
- SMALL GROUP LEADERS SUBMIT READINGS AND QUESTIONS BY 5PM MONDAY
- REFLECTION PAPER DUE ON WEDNESDAY NIGHT BY MIDNIGHT

**WEEK 9 (2/25 – 3/1):** PART ONE – THE COURTS

- QUIZ ON MONDAY OR TUESDAY
- READINGS DUE ON MONDAY AND THURSDAY BEFORE CLASS BEGINS
- SMALL GROUP LEADERS SUBMIT READINGS AND QUESTIONS BY 5PM MONDAY
- REFLECTION PAPER DUE ON WEDNESDAY NIGHT BY MIDNIGHT

**WEEK 10 (3/4 – 3/8):** PART TWO – THE COURTS

- READINGS DUE ON MONDAY AND THURSDAY BEFORE CLASS BEGINS
- SMALL GROUP LEADERS SUBMIT READINGS AND QUESTIONS BY 5PM MONDAY
- REFLECTION PAPER DUE ON WEDNESDAY NIGHT BY MIDNIGHT

**WEEK 11 (3/11 – 3/15):** FINISHING UP

- GROUP PRESENTATIONS
- READINGS DUE ON MONDAY BEFORE CLASS BEGINS
- QUIZ ON TUESDAY
- SMALL GROUP LEADERS SUBMIT READINGS AND QUESTIONS BY 5PM MONDAY
- REFLECTION PAPER DUE ON WEDNESDAY NIGHT BY MIDNIGHT
- FINAL WATCHDOG PROJECT DUE ON FRIDAY AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS

**WEEK 12 (3/18 – 3/22):** FINAL EXAM WEEK

- REVIEW ON MONDAY
- STUDENT SUCCESS DAY ON TUESDAY
- FINAL EXAM ON WEDNESDAY