

American Government (POLS 202) Syllabus

OAS- 5343-B901

Bellevue College, Winter 2019

Course Details

Class Sessions: *See Class Schedule Section for more details.*

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Office Location: A200F

Office Hours: *I will be available by appointment. Email me.*

Course Description

Analyzes constitutional government in America in terms of the theory and practices of democracy. Students investigate issues of individual rights, popular representation, and responsible leadership.

Course Learning Outcomes

After completing this class, students should be able to:

- Evaluate the basic nature of Constitutional government in America.
- Understand concepts such as separation of power and checks and balances as outlined in the constitution.
- Recall and define problems of individual rights, popular representation and responsible leadership.
- Identify roles of the Executive department, the Congress, and the Judicial branch.
- Understand the public policy making process in the U.S.
- Have the skills and knowledge necessary for analyzing American politics according to the ideals of American democracy.

Books and Required Materials

The textbook for the course is [*2017's American Government in Black and White: Diversity and Democracy \(3rd ed.\) \(Links to an external site.\)*](#). The book is available in the campus bookstore and you can purchase it used online as well. I will make the first week's textbook readings available as a PDF file on Canvas but you need a copy of the textbook by the second week of class.

We will be reading extensive supplemental materials, which will be available on our Canvas website or in-class. **Each assigned reading is to be completed before the class session for which it is scheduled. Moreover, you will be required to print out each of these readings and make a binder for yourself.**

I can understand that printing can be expensive and that you 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 visit any of the libraries within the [King County library system \(Links to an external site.\)](#), which provides library users with 75 ‘units’ of free printing per week. Also, strategically time when you print certain passages.

Suggested materials

In addition to the required materials, I may also suggest reading materials that are not mandatory to read but, will may add context and/ or content to your experience during the lesson. All of the suggested materials are admissible for any exam or project.

For information on who represents you in the State Legislature and Congress are located [here \(Links to an external site.\)](#). For county and local representatives, please speak with me and I’ll refer you to the proper resources.

Please note, that I only receive assignments (except tests) through canvas. I will not accept assignments, regardless of circumstances through email or on paper, unless specified otherwise.

Course Goals (broader, long-range intended objectives)

Cognitive objectives:

- Develop a basic understanding of the scientific study of politics as the study of social conflicts and resolutions;
- Understand the role, power, and functions of government. This includes developing an ability to identify the role of elite control of American Government;
- Understand the role and power of citizens (individually and in collective action) in the political environment.

Affective Objectives:

- Understand the effects of political ignorance and understand and care deeply about political knowledge;
- Understand how power and various “social forces” work in the political process;
- Care about systems of domination and understand the nature of resistance in the U.S. political system.

Behavioral Objectives:

- Be able to identify weak arguments and respond with informed knowledge and critical analysis;
- Be able to reflect upon political socialization in order to communicate and act based upon informed knowledge and critical analysis;
- Be able to efficiently find strong sources of information in an oversaturated information environment;
- Be able to act effectively in the world based upon political knowledge.

Grading

Course Assessments	Percentage
Assorted Homework Activities	10%
Civic Engagement challenge	20%
Bi-Weekly Responses	10%
Midterm	20%
Final "Policy Prescription" Project	20%
Discussion Boards	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%

NOTE: Grades will be rounded to the next letter grade, if the student's grade percentage is 0.50% over the threshold.

Assignment Submission Policy

In this course, I only accept assignments via the assignment page submission platform. In the **ASSIGNMENT** page that has the description of the work, on there page there will be a **SUBMIT** button. Please click it and submit your assignment via the platform.

I will not accept assignments via email. Any exception to this will be proactively issued by your instructor.

Apropos to submitting assignments, please submit files in **doc (98/2003, X), rtf, or Goodle Docs, PDF form**. Anything else isn't supported. If you need Microsoft Office suite FOR FREE then it can be acquired from Bellevue College's Library Media Center.

Assorted Homework Activities:

10% of grade

Every week a short homework assignment will be given in the form of a short answer question, puzzle, or activity to allow the students to engage with the material or assess their efficacy with the material.

Civic Engagement Challenge:

20% of grade

It's not just enough to learn about politics from a book or a lesson, to get a holistic education you should experience politics. During this course, I will ask you to attend public events and participate in political events on a non-partisan basis.

There will be two parts to this challenge. Both of these will have a hard deadline.

Part 1- Non-partisan Voter Registration.

You will register yourself and one other person to vote. This will be done using Washington's online voter registration platform ([Links to an external site.](#)). Please submit a screenshot to canvas for this assignment. Consult the calendar for the due date.

Part 2- "Petition [your elected official] for a redress of grievances"

This will be due during the second half of the course. You will be required to start a petition on a local or state-wide issue that you care about. It must be an issue that you specifically care about.

Students will be required to use one of the following online petition platforms to complete this assignment: 1) Change.org; 2) iPetitions

Students must take a screenshot of the petition, and have submitted the petition to a lawmaker with at least 20 people as signatories to the petition.

Weekly Responses**10% of grade**

At the end of each week, excluding week #1, you will be asked to write a short reflection piece on what you learned, and you will be asked different a series of questions each week.

These pieces are not expected to be more than 400 words (i.e. a very small essay or a bigger short answer response). These will be graded on a pass/ fail- complete/ incomplete basis and the criteria will be given ahead of time.

Final “Policy Prescription” Project**20% of grade**

During the course you will be required to do research based on a prompt asking you to resolve a policy issue. Please refer to the project's assignment page for more details. Students will have include a bibliography and citations in an APA format.

This will be in lieu of a final exam. These will be presented in person, only the bibliography is subject to the submission policy.

Midterm Exam:**20% of grade**

During week 6 of the quarter there will be a take-home midterm. The test will cover the content from the first half of the class and will be an essay-based assessment. In contrast to the quizzes (which will assess your knowledge of governmental structures), the midterm will assess your conceptual understanding of the course material.

Discussion Boards:**20% of grade**

Occasionally discussion boards will be opened to continue a discussion from class. These will be opened on an ad-hoc basis as homework. These discussion boards will follow the community expectations and agreements outlined below. Your responses should be informed (no conspiracy theories, ad hominem or red herring arguments, etc...) but, these are designed to be collective learning experiences. Your responses will be graded on a 1-5 scale based on the level of quality they display (i.e. clarity of thought, effort and development, and relevance).

Changing the syllabus?

Yes, I reserve the right to change the assignment structure or grading structure at any time during the course. If it's the former then you will have 48 hours' notice at the very least; if it's the latter then you will have 72 hours' notice at the very most.

Grading Dispute Policy

How do I deal with an issue about the class, a classmate or the professor???

It happens! Sometimes we're not a good fit, sometimes my answers aren't what you're looking for, sometimes you might not understand my feedback, sometimes the class is not what you are expecting, and sometimes there is a student in the class that you clash with.

Please come to me (the instructor) first, always. I listen, I grow, I change, and I'm fair.

But even then, sometimes the teacher-student relationship doesn't work. If you feel that you cannot resolve (or I cannot resolve) your issue, there's a chain of communication within the department that I can help you navigate. I'll help you with the process if we cannot resolve your concern and you email me or provide me with a written request.

Historically, I have been able to work things out with students. On the rare occasion there's a real problem *the grade dispute system is here to give you a voice.*

Not everything is perfect, especially people. I want you to be satisfied with your experience with the course, so please do your level best (and I will do mine) to work things out together.

Attendance Policy

To succeed, you need to participate in class and on almost daily basis, check the canvas page. In fact, if you do these things, you will most definitely succeed!

In this course, given the online format of this class, your participation is your attendance in the class. Participation, for all intents and purposes means the following: completing the assignments.

How can I miss a class assignment that DOESN'T HAVE A HARD DEADLINE?

Good question. If you are dealing with one of the scenarios below (generally, a reason outside of your control) AND you send me an email then I'll do my best to accommodate you. Usually, I don't question you on your absence; unless there's a pattern and then I would merely seek the best way to support you.

Acceptable Absences-

Death in the family

Death of a friend

Car Accident

Personal Illness

Personal Injury

Inclement Weather

Family Injury or Calamity

Income/ Financial issues

Community Expectations

REMEMBER: How, Why and Wonder!

This is a college course so we're all adults here, or emerging adults. We all have a role in your learning process. The motto for this class is *how (learning how things really work)*, *why (breaking apart fallacies, misconceptions and dichotomies)* and *wonder (dream! What can you do to change things)*.

As a member of our learning community, you have a responsibility to your own education and I have a responsibility to support your education as fairly and thoroughly as I can. Though, that relationship is reciprocal, it's not transactional.

This means that while I expect you to complete assignments and readings on-time, I will never withdraw my support from you.

My interest is in making sure that you succeed regardless of background, beliefs, opinions or past attitudes. I want this to be a supportive place for you to develop and grow.

Taking responsibility for your education also requires you to reach out when you need assistance. Many students often ignore this part of the syllabus, even though they are thoroughly disinterested in politics, or find my lectures boring (it's okay, I can be boring) or outright don't put in the effort; and find themselves in trouble when, regardless of the circumstance my *office hours are always open*.

During my office hours, I can explain things to you and provide you with extra context aside from the main lecture or seminar in class. I will do my best to accommodate your schedule and make myself available for questions.

There are no “dumb” questions in this course. If you are confused about something, please ask, or take the time to find the answer by either: a) flexing your research muscles; b) forming a study group for long-term support; c) email me or post a question to the “Ask the Professor” discussion board.

Common Community Agreements

Bellevue College has a [Code of Conduct and Regulations \(Links to an external site.\)](#) that, as a student, you are bound to follow. Though, there are some basic agreements that we’ve made as a class historically to get us by:

1. Respect: This is fundamental to our success. Everyone comes into this classroom with a valid viewpoint. Each of us deserves to be seen as worthwhile and each of us must give that respect to the other. This means that this classroom is a ***no shame zone. You will not be judged by myself or anyone else in class for the way you look, the way you ask a question, for asking a question, for having trouble with the coursework, for who you are and for being yourself. In fact, on the last point, you’ll be applauded for being yourself!***
2. Disagree but, don’t be disagreeable: If someone makes a point that you disagree with or find downright distasteful, don’t make it personal. Just disagree and move on- or come up with a good argument.
3. Integrity: Take responsibility for what you have done.
4. Don’t Plagiarize! Don’t copy others work and submit it as your own. We will find out.
5. Step up, step back: If you like to contribute to classroom conversations, contribute to the learning of your fellow students who may be a bit more shy and create space for them to speak up. It’s not a bad thing to contribute but, sometimes one can take up more space and marginalize others without intending to.
6. Everyone is everyone: this is a space for all races, classes, genders, sexualities, nationalities, and persons. Racism or any other oppressive slurs or behavior **will not be tolerated and result in your immediate exit from the course.** That goes for harassment as well (see point #1).

Moreover, the term *illegal immigrant* or calling people '*illegals*' will be treated as a racial and social epithet as the term is used to specifically denigrate immigrants from central and Latin America as well as the rest of the global south, in general. Moreover, it is more of a political term rather than describing the actual legal status of someone within the U.S..

Late work and Classroom Policies

Late work: Assignments are due on the date listed in the course schedule and the quizzes/tests will be in-class on the date listed in the schedule. You will have a period of two weeks 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 two-week period, I will multiply your final score by 85/100. If it goes beyond the two week deadline then it will be multiplied by 70/100.

You do not need to ask me to turn in work during this period; all you need to do is turn it in. Late work may lead to delays in grading and delays in instructor feedback, as I will prioritize work that is turned in on time. In-class quizzes and tests do not qualify for this policy.

If your work is more than two weeks late or you are falling behind due to emergency/unforeseen circumstances, you can work with me to create an individualized plan. Generally however, I do not accept work that is more than eight weeks late. Email me at clifford.cawthon@bellevuecollege.edu to let me know if you have any questions about this.

English Second (or more) Language Students: If English is your second language, you can use a translation dictionary during in-class assessments (quizzes and exams). The dictionary must be a book not an electronic dictionary, and it must be the type of translation dictionary that only includes the translation, not the definition. If English is a second (or third or fourth) language, I encourage you to talk with me directly so that we can make sure the learning environment works for you.

Email and Canvas Inbox: Canvas provides many different places to communicate with me (replies to my feedback/grading, etc.), which can sometimes make communicating more challenging than it needs to be. The best ways to communicate with me are: in person during office hours (or by appointment); through my BC email; or the Canvas 'inbox'.

Please note, that I only receive assignments (except tests) through canvas. I will not accept assignments, regardless of circumstances through email or on paper, unless specified otherwise.

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. I may check these locations at odd hours, such as at night or over the weekend. But please do not expect me to reply outside of regular business hours. Respect the dynamic that teaching this class is my workplace.

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. Such behavior will result in a zero

grade for the assignment/exam in question. Please familiarize yourself with BC's Student Code of Conduct: <http://www.bellevuecollege.edu/policies/id-2050p/> (Links to an external site.).

Plagiarism is expressly forbidden in my class, though I do understand that sometimes people will not understand how to cite a source correctly or offer a bibliography.

In the case of plagiarism, there is a three-tiered process to addressing this issue:

1. An informal warning including counseling on the details of citation.
2. A formal warning that will include documentation of the incident.
3. Reporting the behavior to the school.

Institutional Commitments and Policies

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 classes, 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 \(Links to an external site.\)](#). 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 \(Links to an external site.\)](#) for application information and other helpful links.

Multicultural Services – 2nd 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/

Counseling Center – 2nd 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/

Course Calendar

Holiday (no work will be due after this date) July 4th

Grade rosters open. August 5th

Grade reporting due August 19th by 11pm

Class End August 20th

The course's modules will be open at the following times:

- *July 1st:*

1. Welcome Module

- *July 6th- Modules 2-4:*

2. Basic Understanding of American Politics AND Race, gender and identity;

3. Federalism;

4. Rights, Equality and Equity;

- *July 20th- Modules 5-6*

5. The Legislative Process;

6. The Executive Branch.

- *July 27th- Modules 7-12:*

7. Interest Groups; Public Opinion and Elections;

8. Media and Media Literacy;

9. Social Movements and Activism in American Politics;

10. The Bureaucracy;

11. Foreign Policy;

12. The Judiciary.

Given the online nature of the course, the modules are not numbered by the week they are due. Students are expected to **turn on notifications** for the **Announcements Page** and check the announcements page at least four times a week. A combination of the two practices should allow students to keep up with the work and any changes in the course.

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