



# POLS& 202: American Government

Bellevue College, Winter 2020 (Item 5347)

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## Course Details

**Class Sessions:** MTWTh: 8:30 - 9:20AM in L214

**E-mail:** david.spataro@bellevuecollege.edu

**Phone:** (425) 564-3161

**Office:** D200E

**Instructor:** David Spataro, PhD

**Office Hours:** Tu: 9:30 – 11:30AM

W: 12:30 – 1:30PM

Th: 9:30 – 11:30AM

## Course Description

This course will familiarize students with the study of American politics. Students will gain a critical understanding of the structure of U.S. government and develop the ability to identify and analyze the most significant problems confronting U.S. politics. The class is divided into three major sections: 1) the U.S. Constitution, 2) institutions and elections, and 3) contemporary issues.

## 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. Understand the public policy making process in the United States.
6. Demonstrate ability to analyze U.S. politics according to the ideals of American democracy.

## Grading

Graded Assessments	Percentage
Congressional Watchdog Report	25%
Weekly Reflection Papers	25%
Leading Current Events Discussion (Hybrid)	10%
Entry Task Questions (Reading Quizzes)	20%
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 focusing on one member of Congress. The group will “watchdog” a congressperson by analyzing if their actions support (or undermine) the policies needed to drawdown carbon emissions and ensure environmental justice in the face of warmer temperatures and environmental change. Students will work in groups of 4-5. The final assignment includes a report and a tri-fold flyer.

**Weekly Reflection Papers:** The weekly reflection papers are short (500-word) writing assignments that

require students to use metacognition (thinking about your thinking) and reflection techniques to analyze their process of learning during the previous week. There will be 9 papers throughout the quarter due on Wednesdays at 5pm. Students will be graded on 4 of the 9 papers chosen at random.

**Leading the Current Events Discussion (Online):** 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 around the middle of the quarter. Each student will be required to lead one current events discussion during the quarter. Leading the discussion requires: (1) selecting three strong news articles, (2) writing the discussion’s introduction and guiding questions, and (3) facilitating the discussion online using Canvas. Think of this like a small online reading group with your peers. The group leader will post the materials for the week on Mondays before 5pm.

**Entry Task Questions (Reading Quizzes):** The readings for this class are due on Mondays and Thursdays at the beginning of class. Class on Mondays and Thursdays begins with an entry task question on the board/projector, which students answer on a 4” x 6” notecard. The entry task question will assess students’ comprehension and analysis of the reading material. There will be 20 entry tasks throughout the quarter. 10 entry task questions will be graded on a 5-point scale. The lowest two grades will be dropped.

**Final Exam:** There will be a comprehensive multiple-choice final exam at the end of the quarter.

## **Books and Required Materials**

There is no textbook for this class. Instead, the readings will be available in our Canvas site as PDF documents. Students are required to bring their own 4" x 6" notecards to class on days that the readings are due.

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. I suggest that students also patronize the King County library system, which provides library users with 75 pages of free black and white printing per week.

## **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.

- **Canvas:** Students are required to use Canvas this quarter. We will be using it in very specific ways. Important documents such as the syllabus and readings will be posted on Canvas. The current events discussions will be on Canvas. Additionally, I will communicate to the class using Canvas's "Announcements" function. It is necessary that students edit Canvas notifications to ensure that my announcements in Canvas end up in their preferred location (email or text). I will use Canvas announcements for unexpected issues such as being out sick or school closures.
- **Collaboration and no shaming/judging:** This classroom is a no shaming, no judgment zone. We will not be shaming or looking negatively upon others for mistakes, for their political beliefs, or for any other reason. This class is based upon the principles of cooperation and collaboration. Students who develop strong community bonds in college tend to succeed. All areas of life—including employment, family, community, and politics—involve working together. 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 there is no attendance or participation grade. Rather than grade students on their attendance, I will use my attendance record to see who is missing class so that I can check in on individuals who are habitually absent or tardy. Students who miss four class sessions (10% of the sessions) must meet with me to make a concrete, personalized plan of action. Students who miss ten class sessions (25% of the sessions) will automatically fail the class unless there is an instructor-approved plan of action in place.

- **Participation in Canvas discussions (hybrid):** It is especially important that students participate in the Canvas discussions, because these will be led by other students. As a result, there is a penalty for not participating (or not meeting the discussion requirements). The current events Canvas discussion policy is the following:
  - All students have one freebie. Students can miss one online discussion without a penalty.
  - The second missed discussion will lead to a drop of one step in the letter grade system.
- **Late work:** Reflection papers can be turned in any time after the due date, but before the quarter ends, for 80% of the grade. Late reflection papers will not receive feedback, but all students are free to solicit feedback from me in office hours at any time. Entry tasks (quizzes) must be taken on the assigned day at the beginning of class, and there are no make-up quizzes. The two lowest quizzes will be dropped, and this allows for a buffer if students miss due to an emergency. The final must be taken on the assigned day. If you have a documented emergency that prevents you from taking the final exam, 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. There is no formal late work policy for the current events assignment. 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.***

- **If English is not your first language:** Please check in with me about the quizzes and exams to discuss how I can best support you.
- **Electronic devices:** I prohibit the use of laptops and phones in the classroom during lectures and most activities. During certain group activities associated with the watchdog report, I will make an announcement that students can bring/use their laptops. I also do not allow students to record audio or video during the class. I do not consent to being recorded in any way during class, office hours or appointments. We will occasionally use smart phones for in-class polling apps such as Kahoot! or to access Canvas. Otherwise, I require that cell phones be put away.
- **Plagiarism/Cheating:** Plagiarism and cheating are serious offenses that violate BC's student code of conduct. Students who violate the school's policies are required to meet with me for a one-on-one meeting. I will report violations to BC's CARE Team. Please be in touch with me if you are unsure of what constitutes this type of violation.

- **Appointments, Email and Canvas Inbox:** The best way to communicate with me is in-person during office hours and in appointments. I will also allot some class time for individual questions. Students can also contact me through my BC phone, my BC email, or the Canvas mail function (inbox). I may check these at odd hours, such as at night or over the weekend. But I will not reply outside of regular business hours. On my end I will be answering your messages swiftly during business hours. However, if I do not answer your inquiry in about a day, you should feel comfortable to follow up. Don't be shy if I haven't followed up. It is likely due to other tasks taking priority.

*Please use Outlook to schedule appointments with me outside of office hours. This is a simple technique that will eliminate back and forth emails. 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. ([Affirmation of Inclusion](#))

### **Reasons of Faith and Conscience**

Reasonable Accommodations for Reasons of Faith and Conscience: Students who will be absent from course activities due to reasons of faith or conscience may seek reasonable accommodations so that grades are not impacted. Such requests must be made within the first two weeks of the course to the office of the Associate Vice President of Student Affairs. See Bellevue College [Policy 2950](#). In the event you feel you are being discriminated against based on faith or conscious, you may refer to the procedures outlined in the college's [Discrimination, Harassment and Retaliation Policy 1440P](#).

### **Annual Notice Non-Discrimination**

Bellevue College does not discriminate on the basis of race or ethnicity; creed; color; national origin; sex; marital status; sexual orientation; age; religion; genetic information; the presence of any sensory, mental, or physical disability; or veteran status in educational programs and activities which it operates. Bellevue College is prohibited from discriminating in such a manner by college policy and by state and federal law. All college personnel and persons, vendors, and organizations with whom the college does business are required to comply with applicable federal and state statutes and regulations designed to promote affirmative action and equal opportunity.

Reports of gender and sex-based discrimination, sexual misconduct, or retaliation by a student should be raised with the Title IX office. In cases where the impacted party is a student and the responding party is a college employee, the Title IX coordinator will direct the matter to the Office of Human Resources (HR). All other reports, including all reports where the impacted party is an employee, should be raised with the HR. If a report is against personnel in the Title IX office or HR, it should be submitted to the president's office for referral to an alternate designee. ([Equal Opportunity](#))

### **Confidentiality and Mandatory Reporting**

As an instructor, one of my responsibilities is to help create a safe learning environment on our campus. It is my goal that you feel able to share information related to your life experiences in classroom discussions, in your written work, and in our one-on-one meetings. I will seek to keep information you share private to the greatest extent possible. However, I am required to share with the Title IX Coordinator any and all information regarding sexual assault and other forms of sexual misconduct (e.g. relationship violence, stalking) that may have occurred on campus or that impacts someone on campus. Students may speak to someone confidentially by contacting the BC Counseling Center at (425) 564-2212. The Title IX Office can be contacted at 425-564-2641 and more information can be found at [Title IX](#). If you have any concerns, you may report to: [Report Concerns](#).

### **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 (see Canvas for up-to-date schedule)**

### **WEEK 0: Introduction & Syllabus**

- Thursday: First day of class
- Friday: No class

### **WEEK 1: Introduction – We Have Never Been Exceptional (~50 pages)**

- Monday: King Jr. “Beyond Vietnam” (p. 201-220)
- Tuesday: No reading
- Wednesday: No reading
- Thursday: Dahl “The Constitution as a Model: An American Illusion” (p. 41-72)
- Friday: No class & no current events discussion

### **WEEK 2: The Framers’ Coup & the U.S. Constitution (~60 pages)**

- Monday: Klarman selections from “Economic Turmoil in the States” (p. 73-101)
  - Group leaders: current events post due on Canvas
- Tuesday: No reading
- Wednesday: No reading due for class
  - Reflection paper due 5pm
  - Canvas current events discussion post due by midnight
- Thursday: Dahl “What the Framers Couldn’t Know” (p. 7-39)
- Friday: No class
  - Canvas current events discussion post due by midnight

### **WEEK 3: Civil Rights and Amending the Constitution (~50 pages)**

- Monday: No Class (MLK, Jr. Day)
- Tuesday: McClain & Tauber “Civil Rights” (p. 126 – 151)  
Stiles “The Constitutional Amendment that Reinvented Freedom”
  - Group leaders: current events post due on Canvas
- Wednesday: No reading due for class
  - Reflection paper due 5pm
  - Canvas current events discussion post due by midnight
- Thursday: Hannah-Jones “The Idea of America” (p. 14 – 26)  
Selections from Newsday report on racism in housing markets (TBD)
- Friday: No reading
  - Canvas current events discussion post due by midnight



**WEEK 4:** Looking East at the Founding & U.S. Constitution (~50 pages)

- Monday: Dunbar-Ortiz “This Land” & “Birth of a Nation” (p. 1-14, 78-95)
  - Group leaders: current events post due on Canvas
- Tuesday: No reading
- Wednesday: No reading due for class
  - Reflection paper due 5pm
  - Canvas current events discussion post due by midnight
- Thursday: National Congress of American Indians (p. 6 – 17)  
Footen “Pacific Northwest Salmon Habitat – The Culvert Case and the Power of Treaties” (p. 1 – 12, 16 – 19)
- Friday: No reading
  - Canvas current events discussion post due by midnight

**WRITE:**

TWO QUESTIONS ABOUT THE SYLLABUS

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ONE THING YOU ARE GENUINELY INTERESTED IN LEARNING ABOUT U.S. GOVERNMENT

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ONE THING THAT MAKES YOU NERVOUS OR UNCERTAIN ABOUT THIS CLASS

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