

POLITICS IN AMERICA: LIBERTY & EQUALITY
POSC 122, FALL 2009

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Office Hours: MW 2:00-3:00
by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Welcome to Political Science 122. This course is intended to provide an overview of the main features of the national government and politics of the United States. The primary purpose of the course is to provide you with the knowledge and analytical skills necessary to understand and make considered judgements about political events as they unfold in the United States. The general theme of the course is an examination of the values, beliefs and concerns embedded in the political system and how they have changed since its founding.

TEXTS

- 1) *American Government: Power and Purpose*, brief 10th edition with 2008 election update, Theodore Lowi, Benjamin Ginsberg, and Kenneth Shepsle,
- 2) *The Lanahan Readings in the American Polity*, fourth edition, Ann Serow and Everett C. Ladd, editors
- 3) *Good Citizenship in America*, David Ricci
- 4) *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, Neil Postman

CLASSROOM POLICIES

Class policies are intended to foster a stimulating and fruitful intellectual community for everyone. Our time in class is valuable. Therefore, I will enforce the following rules/expectations:

1. Conversations, electronics and other diversions will not be tolerated. I will strictly enforce this rule in order to protect the class environment so all students can have a calm, productive, stimulating learning environment. Laptop computers are a convenience but also a potential and tempting distraction. During class discussion and at other times I will ask that the screens be folded down.
2. Any student with a documented disability who needs to arrange accommodations should talk to me at the beginning of the semester.

3. Topics in politics often entail conflicting opinions. Even those who take the time to make deeply thoughtful conclusions often disagree. Class discussion will encourage free expression for everyone and hold to a standard of respect for all class members.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1) Participation

This class will be a mix of short lectures, class discussion, and other activities. The lectures will primarily include material that is not in the readings. Consequently, your success in this class depends upon attending class regularly. If you miss class it is your responsibility to find out what you missed so you can return to class prepared. Because of concerns about the H1N1 flu, please do not come to class when you are ill.

2) Current Events

We will frequently discuss current events as they relate to the topics we are studying. Therefore, you will be expected to read a major newspaper on a regular basis and to be familiar with the prominent political stories. Watching television news or listening to the radio is not adequate. You can read many newspapers for free online, including *The New York Times* (nytimes.com) and *The Washington Post* (washingtonpost.com).

3) Reading

Your reading assignments are due on the date they are listed on the course schedule. I expect excellent comprehension, retention and reflection to be evident in course discussions, questions raised, and in your workbook.

4) Assignments

Your grade will be based on quizzes, workbook writing, short papers and a take home final exam.

Make-up quizzes will be provided for students for who have an emergency, an illness, a religious observance, or who must attend a College-approved function. Arrangements should be made in advance whenever possible. If you have a problem in the course, the sooner you contact me, the more effectively it can be handled.

There will be three different kinds of writing assignments to facilitate your thinking about politics. These include:

- 1) workbook assignments (handed in on 9/25, 10/9, 10/23, 11/6)

- 2) 3 short (4-5) page papers (due 10/5, around 10/26, 11/16)
- 3) one final take home exam (8-10 pages) (handed out on 11/18 and due on 11/23)

None of these assignments involve research. Other than the workbooks, your papers must be typed, double-spaced with one-inch margins, and in Times New Roman 12 point font. Please do not use report covers; a title sheet with a staple in the corner is preferred.

Papers are due in class on the date specified. Late papers will be graded down two points for each day they are late, starting after class on the due date. I do not accept computer problems as a valid excuse for a late paper, so you should not wait until the last minute to print your paper. Saving your work in a timely manner and making back up copies is your responsibility.

GRADES

4 quizzes	20 points each	80 points
workbook (turn in 4 times)	30 points each	120 points
3 short papers	50 points each	150 points
Take home exam		100 points
	Total	450 points

The grading standards as follows:

- A Achievement outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.
- B Achievement significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements in every respect.
- C Achievement meeting the basic course requirements in every respect.
- D Achievement worthy of credit even though it does not fully meet the basic course requirements in every respect.

Please feel free to talk with me about your assignments. I am happy to answer any questions you have about either the course materials or your progress in the course.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

An act of academic dishonesty is a serious offense in a college community. By seeking credit for

work which is not his or her own, a student takes unfair advantage of fellow students, who accept their limitations, and of teachers, who trust that the work received is the student's. Dishonesty in academic work, particularly in the form of plagiarism, also defeats the process of self-discovery which is the heart of a liberal education. People establish their integrity and personality only as they learn to distinguish what is significantly their own from what belongs to another, only as they learn to value their own work, including its limitations, in relation to the work of others. As a scholar, finally, one should be generous in acknowledging the work of other scholars, for their work makes possible one's own.

At Carleton College, an act of academic dishonesty is therefore regarded as conflicting with the work and purpose of the entire College and not merely as a private matter between the student and an instructor; all cases involving such dishonesty are referred to the Academic Standing committee for appropriate action. This action can vary from a grade of Unsatisfactory in the given piece of work to a recommendation of permanent dismissal from the College in cases of repeated or serious offenses.

GUIDELINES FOR PAPERS

Short Papers

The purpose of the short papers is to provide a venue for more extended thought about the course materials than provided by the quizzes or workbook, but still provide some leeway for exploration. In answer to specific questions you will be expected to analyze, synthesize, draw connections, question, and make judgements about the course materials. I will be looking to see how you are making meaning out of your interaction with the readings. These papers are meant to be public. As such, your work will be read by classmates and may be read aloud in class.

These papers will not be graded on punctuation and spelling, etc., but they are expected to have clear organization in order to reflect organized thinking. In addition, you must use citations on all your references to the readings, including passages which are paraphrased. If you don't it will be more difficult for me to follow your argument or understand your point, and you may be committing plagiarism. If you have a standard citation format that you are accustomed to using, I am sure it will be fine for these papers. If you need a guide, please follow the examples given below.

Final Exam (Formal Paper Format)

Formal papers are an opportunity for you to present your ideas in a polished, well-organized format. By the time you finish this exam your thoughts on the issues should be thoroughly examined and sorted out in a logical manner. You will be expected to make a commitment to a point, and form an argument for your position, using evidence to support your points. Ideally,

when you turn in your exam you will have done work that you feel proud of because it displays your best analytical skills and a depth of understanding.

Please follow the guidelines below when writing the final version of your exam.

1. Use page numbers. The first page of your paper, not including the title page, should be page one. Handwritten page numbers are fine.
2. Use direct quotes sparingly. If you have more than one sentence of direct quotations per page, you should cut back. Since I am familiar with the readings, I do not need to have the author's views repeated. Reference to the pages under discussion is sufficient.
3. You do not need to put a bibliography on your exam since all the sources for your paper will be from the syllabus.
4. You must use citations on all your references to the readings, including passages which are paraphrased. If you don't it will be more difficult for me to follow your argument or understand your point, and you may be committing plagiarism. If you have a standard citation format that you are accustomed to using, I am sure it will be fine for the exam. If you need a guide, please follow the examples given below.

Citation Examples

Example One

Most people agree that parents who abuse children were abused themselves as children. Many abusive parents had poor role models as parents and did not experience the love between parent and child that most of us know. Julianne Wayne and Nancy Avery stipulated that some parents do not see themselves as people with real potential, and they even believe themselves to be the "black sheep" of the family (10). In addition, Young states that "a number of psychiatrists believe that there is an organic or constitutional factor involved" with parents who abuse a child (78). That is, for unknown reasons some people have "a predisposition toward this kind of personality" (Young 78).

Example Two

Even worse, severe abuse is on the rise. Each year more and more children suffer the trauma of physical and emotional abuse. Although the exact number remains unknown, the Education Commission of the States reports that some 60,000 cases occur annually (Cohen and Sussman 433). Boys outnumber girls as victims of abuse until the teen years (Chase 104). The death rate from cruelty exceeds that from infectious disease (Fontana 196). In truth, few young persons reach adulthood without a spanking from an angry parent.

Examples taken from *Writing Research Papers*, 4th ed., by James D. Lester.

PC8/09