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web page:

http://www.acad.carleton.edu/curricular/POSC/faculty/schier/index.html

# POSC 122 Politics in America: Liberty and Equality

The goals of this course are four: (1) a greater understanding of your own opinions concerning political, social and economic issues in the United States; (2) an experiential understanding of the art of politics through playing two political games; (3) an assessment of the debate over free speech on campus and (4) an introduction to the empirical analysis of American politics through group analysis projects featuring data from Microcase online datasets.

Final grades are calculated on the following basis:

Essay on political, social and economic opinions 10% (30 points)

Group project and paper on campus speech 15% (45 points)

Midterm examination 30% (90 points)

Games, Group Analysis Projects and class participation 15% (45 points)

Final examination (self scheduled) 30% (90 points)

300 total points are awarded for work in this class. 270 points (90%) earns an “A,”

240 points (80%) a “B,” 210 points (70%) a “C,” and 180 points (60%) a “D.”

The following books are required and available in the bookstore:

Theodore Lowi, Benjamin Ginsberg and Kenneth Shepsle, AMERICAN GOVERNMENT (core 10th ed.)

Peter Woll, ed., AMERICAN GOVERNMENT: READINGS AND CASES (17th ed.)

Jonathan Rauch, KINDLY INQUISITORS

Steven Schier, YOU CALL THIS AN ELECTION?

Microcase Corporation, AMERICAN GOVERNMENT: AN INTRODUCTION USING EXPLORIT (9th ed.)

In addition, all students will begin a subscription to the WASHINGTON POST NATIONAL WEEKLY EDITION that I will distribute in class. This subscription will cost each student $10.00.

My grading standards are as follows. An “A” on essay examination questions and papers features clear, thorough and, above all, original analysis of the topic. Relatively few papers and examination essays achieve this standard. A “B” grade on essay examination questions and papers includes reasonably sound consideration of the topic, but an analysis that is less than fully clear, thorough and original. “C” grades on essay examination questions and papers contain serious thematic vagueness and/or factual inaccuracies. On identification questions on exams, an “A” features a complete and accurate answer regarding the topic and a thoughtful exploration of the implications of your answer for American politics generally. I am likely to award “A”s, “B”s and “C”s as final grades in this class, with the modal category probably a “B.”

The two political games we play – Primitive Politics, based on John Locke’s “state of nature” and Entrepreneurs, involving the pursuit of electoral victory – allow you to experience politics in a lively, interactive fashion. One of the short answer questions on the midterm examination will ask you to make analogies between game behavior and actual American politics.

The class also includes two group projects. During week seven, we will consider the question of campus speech codes. I will divide the class into teams, each assigned with the task of evaluating and, if necessary, revising our college's Statement on Discrimination and Academic Freedom. This component of the course involves two class sessions. Session one involves a lecture on the controversy. Also during session one, the groups will meet and each will decide the appropriateness of the college's statement and which, if any, changes in its text are necessary. Teams will each present their recommendations to the class as a whole during session two. Each team will have twenty-five minutes for their presentation. At the end of session two, the class will decide by majority vote which of the four proposals it prefers. After the class has voted, students must write a 4-6 page paper explaining and defending their personal evaluation of the issue.

During the last weeks of the course, students will work in analysis teams to create group presentations based on their research. I will assign particular groups two chapters from the Microcase text to analyze for purposes of their presentations. Each group will then use their online Microcase datasets to complete the analysis exercises for their two chapters. Then, each group must prepare a thirty-minute presentation (fifteen minutes on each Microcase chapter assigned to them). The presentation must answer three questions: (1) Which findings from each chapter are most important in understanding that chapter’s topic? (2) Why are these findings the most important for understanding the chapter’s topic? (3) In summary, what major new understandings about American politics result from your work on these two chapters? I recommend that you first work through the exercises at the end of your two chapters because they often yield some important findings. *However, feel free to go beyond each chapter’s assigned exercises when analyzing data to answer these questions*. Be sure to include the following in your group presentation: control variables, directional measures of association (TauB and TauC) and measures of statistical significance. Your group should use the computer projection facilities in Willis 203, preferably with PowerPoint, to present the most significant findings. On the day of a group’s presentation, each group member must hand in a one-page report on the activities of each group member in preparing the group presentation. Each group must also hand in one set of completed exercises for their two chapters. Material from the student reports will be included in the final examination. Your group presentation counts for thirty of the forty-five points in your class participation grade.

Regarding the POST, we will have a series of seven news discussion sessions over the course of the class. These will occur during the last 20-30 minutes of class on the assigned days. A group of 2-3 students will lead a discussion of recent events in American politics, drawing upon the WASHINGTON POST NATIONAL WEEKLY EDITION and other sources. The Internet features many great sources: “first read” at msnbc.com, the daily political “note” at abcnews.com (both with many daily media links), nytimes.com, latimes.com, cnn.com, foxnews.com, washingtonpost.com, pollingreport.com, politicalwire.com. You are required to examine several of these sites at least twice a week. Discussion groups will draw upon their Internet sources in class. These groups should identify a few major topics from recent media, present information on them from their sources, and encourage class questions and discussion about them. Your participation in a news discussion group and as a member of the class in news discussions figures greatly in your class participation grade.

What follows is a schedule of class sessions by topic. We will usually spend one day on each topic.

1. Introduction and completion of the questionnaire (January 6)

2. American Principles (January 8)

Lowi, Ginsberg and Shefter (LGS) chs. 1 and 2; Woll, 3-9, 41-45, 385-394 and *U.S.* v. *Nixon*

(on e-reserve)

3. Federalism and Questions of Equal Protection (January 13)

LGS, chs. 3&4; Woll, 51-73, 133-144, 167-170

NEWS DISCUSSION GROUP #1

4. Playing Primitive Politics **January 15—FIRST PAPER DUE**)

Laver, PLAYING POLITICS (on e-reserve – bring this to your game group)

5. Understanding Popular Politics (January 20)

LGS, ch. 11; Woll, 173-181

Schier, preface, introduction and chs. 1-3

NEWS DISCUSSION GROUP #2

6. Public Opinion, the Media and Elections (January 22)

LGS, chs. 9&10; Woll, 205-213; Steven E. Schier and Janet Box-Steffensmeier, “The 2008

General Election Campaign” (on e-reserve)

7. Evaluating Popular Politics (January 27)

Schier, chs. 4-6, conclusion

NEWS DISCUSSION GROUP #3

8. Interest Groups (January 29)

LGS, ch. 12; Woll, 226-230, 241-252

9. Playing Entrepreneurial Politics (February 3)

Laver, PLAYING POLITICS (on e-reserve – bring this to your game group)

10. **MIDTERM EXAMINATION** **(February 5)**

11. Regions, Federalism and Public Knowledge: Microcase Examples (February 10)

Microcase, ix-xv and chs. 1-3 (not the exercises). **E-MAIL of Microcase group preferences**

**DUE to sschier by 9 AM this morning.**

NEWS DISCUSSION GROUP #4

12. The Controversy over Campus Speech (February 12)

Rauch, chs. 2, 3 and 5; Stanley Fish, THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS FREE SPEECH AND IT'S A GOOD THING, TOO, pp. 11-19, 102-119, 296-298; Paul Berman, ed., DEBATING P.C., pp. 225-230 (both on e-reserve)

13. Class discussion and vote on the Carleton policy (February 17)

Rauch, chs. 1 and 6, Fish, pp. 120-140, 70-79; Berman, ed., DEBATING P.C., introduction (both on e-reserve)

NEWS DISCUSSION GROUP #5

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\***Campus Speech papers due at Noon, Friday, February 20 at 414 Willis**\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

14. Congress and the Presidency (February 19)

LGS, chs. 5&6; Woll, 255-268, 279-282, 321-329, 355-382

15. MOVIE: Journeys with George and 2008 election videos (February 24)

This is a “home movie” by NBC news producer Alexandra Pelosi, who traveled for a year

with the George W. Bush campaign in 2000. Pelosi, a liberal Democrat whose mother is

Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, had a variety of humorous encounters

with the candidate. You will get a good sense of the craziness of the pursuit of the presidency.

We’ll also view some video coverage of the 2008 presidential election.

16. Congress vs. President in Policymaking (February 26)

Bertram Johnson “A Stake in the Sand” (167-186) in Steven E. Schier, ed., HIGH RISK AND BIG AMBITION: THE PRESIDENCY OF GEORGE W. BUSH (on e-reserve);

Barbara Sinclair, “Leading the New Majorities," (on e-reserve) NEWS DISCUSSION GROUP #6

17. The Supreme Court and Bureaucracy (March 3)

LGS, chs. 7&8; Woll, 307-320, 394-409; Peter Drucker, “Really Reinventing Government” (on e-reserve)

NEWS DISCUSSION GROUP #7

18. Microcase Analysis Reports I (March 5)

Skim Microcase, chs. 6-11

19. Microcase Analysis Reports II (March 10)

G. Calvin Mackenzie, THE IRONY OF REFORM, ch. 7 (on e-reserve)

Larry Sabato, A MORE PERFECT CONSTITUTION (recommended, not required – skim for possible reform ideas; on closed reserve)

Skim Microcase, chs. 4, 5, 12-15

YOUR FIRST ASSIGNMENT

Write a four to six page defense of the opinions evident in your responses to the questionnaire. Your goal should be to convince me of the reasonableness of the pattern of your opinions evident in each of the sections of the questionnaire. The first section concerns individual rights and liberties, the second a variety of social issues, and the third a number of economic issues.

You should first examine your responses to each of the sections and try to discern a pattern. For example, when do you want the state to intervene in the social life of the nation? The economic life? What personal liberties must the state not restrict? What are the compelling reasons for this degree of state intervention? Next, you should examine how your responses in each of the sections relate to each other. For example, are you more in support of state social intervention than economic intervention or vice versa? Why?

Some of the questions may concern topics with which you may not be familiar and willing to venture much of an opinion. If so, do not be afraid to admit your lack of exposure to such matters in your paper. Rather, try to make sense of the opinions that you do hold. If you find several questions about which you do not hold clear views, try to explain why you have not had occasion to develop them.

You are graded on the quality of the arguments you use to defend your positions. You should not dwell too much on one or a few questions; a justification for your overall tendency is what counts here. Also, do not explain your views in terms of personal background—for example, that the reason you are an economic conservative is that your parents are economic conservatives. Instead, support your views by presenting sound arguments why another person should seriously consider adopting them.

You should conclude your paper by explaining why you identified yourself as liberal, moderate or conservative, and Democrat or Republican, and how this self-identification relates to your pattern of answers.

Your paper is due at class on Thursday, January 15. You should type it or write it in double-spaced longhand. If writing in longhand, assume a length of eight to twelve pages.

ANALYSIS GROUP PROJECTS

Here is the list of group projects. Each project will involve a pair of chapters. The pairs are listed below. You need to examine the Microcase text and give me your top five project pair choices, written in rank order, via e-mail (to sschier) by 9 AM Tuesday, February 10. Also, include with your preferences whether you have had PowerPoint experience.

Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (chs. 4&5)

Public Opinion and Elections (chs. 6&10)

The Media and Political Participation (chs. 7&8)

Parties and Interest Groups (chs. 9&11)

Congress and the Presidency (chs. 12&13)

The Bureaucracy and the Courts (chs. 14&15)