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Spring 2013
Office Hours:
MW 2:00-3:30
T Th 3:15-4:30
and by appt.

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, Kenneth Shepsle and Stephen Ansolabehere, AMERICAN GOVERNMENT (core 11th ed.)
Peter Woll, ed., AMERICAN GOVERNMENT: READINGS AND CASES (19th ed.)
Jonathan Rauch, KINDLY INQUISITORS
Steven E. Schier, ed., TRANSFORMING AMERICA: BARACK OBAMA IN THE WHITE HOUSE
Rosalee Clawson and Zoe Oxley, CONDUCTING EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS: PUBLIC OPINION IN ACTION

In addition, all students will begin a subscription to THE WEEK magazine 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 each group a chapter from the Clawson and Oxley text to analyze for purposes of their presentations. Each group will then use the online dataset to complete the assigned analysis exercises for their chapter. Then, each group must prepare a thirty-minute presentation (about twenty minutes of presentation and ten minutes of discussion prompted by analysis group-generated discussion questions). The presentation must answer three questions: (1) Which findings from the 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 this chapter?

At the outset, each group member’s completed exercise 2-3 should be *evaluated with comments* by another group member. The group should *next* work through the assigned exercises at the end of your chapter because they often yield some important findings. *However, feel free to go beyond your chapter’s assigned exercises when analyzing data to answer these questions.* Be sure to include the following in your group presentation: control variables and directional measures of association (gamma).

Your group should use the computer projection facilities in Willis 203, preferably with PowerPoint, to present the most important findings. Each group will prepare an outline of the group presentation and *post* it at the group reports location on our course Moodle page. The outline should be no greater than a single 8 ½ by 11 inch page in length. On the day of a group’s presentation, each group member must *submit* at the personal report location on our Moodle page a one-paragraph minimum report on the contribution of each group member in preparing the group presentation. Each group must also *hand in* one set of the completed assigned exercises for their chapter. Material from the student reports will be included in the final examination. Your group presentation and activities counts for thirty of the forty-five points in your class participation grade.

Regarding THE WEEK, we will have a series of seven news discussion sessions over the course of the class. These will occur during the first 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 WEEK 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 should examine several of these sites at least twice a week.

Discussion leaders should identify a major topic from recent media, present information on it from their sources, and encourage group questions and discussion about it. Students leading their group discussion *must also submit* a brief report on the substance of the group discussion at that week’s posting location at our course Moodle site. 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 (March 27)
2. American Principles (March 29)
Lowi, Ginsberg, Shefter and Ansolabehere (LGSA) chs. 1 and 2; Woll, 3-9, 40-47, 358-367 and *U.S. v. Nixon* (on e-reserve)
3. *American Fend*, a video on American Liberalism and Conservatism (April 3)
Obama book introduction, Rae and Guth chapters
4. Playing Primitive Politics (April 5)
Laver, PLAYING POLITICS (on e-reserve – bring this to your game group)
*******First paper due at your game session*******
5. Federalism and Questions of Equal Protection (April 10)
LGSA, 137-162, ch. 4; Woll, 51-73, 127-137, 165-168
NEWS DISCUSSION GROUP #1
6. Understanding Popular Politics (April 12)
LGSA, ch. 11; Woll, 173-181
Schier, YOU CALL THIS AN ELECTION? chs. 1, 3 (on e-reserve)
7. Public Opinion, the Media and Elections (April 17)
LGSA, chs. 9&10; Woll, 208-216
NEWS DISCUSSION GROUP #2
8. Evaluating Public Opinion and Popular Politics (April 19)
Obama book Coleman and White chapters
Schier, YOU CALL THIS AN ELECTION? ch. 4 (on e-reserve)

9. Interest Groups (April 24)
LGSA, ch. 12; Woll, 227-239, 248-256
NEWS DISCUSSION GROUP #3
10. Playing Entrepreneurial Politics (April 26)
Laver, PLAYING POLITICS (on e-reserve – bring this to your game group)
11. **MIDTERM EXAMINATION (May 1)**
12. Analyzing Public Opinion: Some Examples (May 3)
Clawson and Oxley, chs. 1-2 and Reference Appendix. COMPLETE exercise 2-3.
E-MAIL of public opinion analysis group preferences DUE to sschier by 9 AM this morning.
NEWS DISCUSSION GROUP #4
13. The Controversy over Campus Speech (May 8)
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)
14. Class discussion and vote on the Carleton policy (May 10)
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
15. The Presidency and Congress (May 15)
LGSA, chs. 5&6; Woll, 259-262, 267-276
Obama book conclusion
NEWS DISCUSSION GROUP #6
- *******Campus Speech papers due at NOON Wednesday, May 16 at 414 Willis*******
16. President, Congress and National Politics (May 17)
Obama book Harris and Hohmann, Johnson and Pitney chapters
Woll, 311-320, 336-354
17. The Supreme Court and Bureaucracy (May 22)
LGSA, chs. 7&8; Woll, 297-310, 366-373, 382-389; Obama book Maveety chapter;
Walter Russell Mead, “When Government Jumps the Shark” (on e-reserve)
NEWS DISCUSSION GROUP #7
18. Public Opinion Analysis Reports I (May 24)
Clawson and Oxley, chs. 3, 5, 7
19. Public Opinion Analysis Reports II (May 29)
Clawson and Oxley, chs. 8, 10, 11

YOUR FIRST ASSIGNMENT

Write a four to six typed 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. You may draw on arguments from the *American Feud* video when composing your essay. Your paper is **due at your game session on Thursday, April 5.**

PUBLIC OPINION ANALYSIS GROUP PROJECTS

Each group project will involve one chapter. The chapters and the assigned group work for each chapter are listed below. **You need to examine the Clawson and Oxley text and give me your top five project pair choices, written in rank order, via e-mail (to sschier) by 9 AM Thursday, May 3. Also, include with your preferences whether you have had PowerPoint experience.**

Mass Media – ch. 3; complete exercises 3-1 and 3-2 and For Further Exploration

Political Ideology – ch. 5; complete exercises 5-1, 5-2 and 5-3 and For Further Exploration

Political Knowledge – ch. 7; complete exercises 7-1, 7-2, 7-3 and 7-4 and For Further Exploration

Civil Liberties – ch. 8; complete exercises 8-1, 8-2 and 8-3 and For Further Exploration

Trust and Social Capital – ch. 10; complete exercises 10-1 and 10-2 and For Further Exploration

Public Opinion and Policy – ch. 11; complete exercises 11-1 and 11-2