

# **AMERICAN POLITICS: POLITICAL SCIENCE 385 WI**

Fall 2014

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This course is intended to build upon the bases you might have developed in an introductory Political Science course. We will use the first portion of the class as a review of some concepts which are necessary to the understanding of a more in-depth study of American politics. This course will consist of an examination of the structures of power hierarchy in this country. What can be done to change the way the system operates to make it serve a larger proportion of the American public?

This class will be divided into four sections. First, we will review central concepts to the American political system and attempt to revise our assumptions about American politics. The second part of the course will examine discrimination practices based on gender, race, class, and sexuality in the context of civil rights and liberties. For the third section, we will use our unique time during this election year to discuss some of the issues facing people in the United States and the candidates' responses. The fourth section of the course will analyze how multinational corporations (MNCs), in conjunction with the process of globalization and American governmental structures, continue to erase any gains made by women and minorities in American society. Class and classism will have been a running theme throughout the course, but we will also examine its effects on women and people of color, throughout our conception of the American political system.

The student learning outcomes (SLO) for this class are as follows:

- SLO 1: Students will reexamine their current assumptions about American politics;
- SLO 2: Students will demonstrate knowledge of discrimination based on race, class, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality;
- SLO 3: Students will demonstrate knowledge of the election process and the role of citizens during this time;
- SLO 4: Students will learn to read, write, and think critically about the readings and concepts discussed in this class.

Some of the strategies used to obtain these learning outcomes are:

- Reaction journals used to facilitate inquiries into topics that are related to students' personal lives as well as current developments in American politics;
- Participation in online class discussions, presentations, projects; and papers;
- One group project, one midterm paper, and a final paper discussed below.

## Teaching-Learning Philosophy

In my experience, people learn better when they are actively engaged, rather than passively looking and listening. Therefore, this class requires students to articulate their thoughts and critiques and develop their arguments both in writing and in discussion. It also seems to be best when everyone in the class is aware that they are both teaching and learning. In keeping with both these ideas, the class is designed so that students have substantial input into the course content.

### Course requirements:

**\*Attendance and participation [Questions and Responses] (15%):** Since this class is based on online discussion and scheduled student presentations, regular attendance on laulima, especially the discussion board, is absolutely critical to your success in this class and to the success of your fellow students. If you don't "attend," you can't participate and missing week after week of class is equivalent to missing entire chunks of the semester of an in-person class. You are expected to contribute your thoughts, reactions, questions and responses online in the class. The questions and responses are based on the **readings**. You will ask **ONE critical question** based on the week's reading each week to be posted to the weekly discussion board. Please label your questions in the following way so that I can keep track of who is posting what: Jane's W1Q. Your fellow students should simply use the reply key to respond to your question. You will post **ONE response** to ONE of your classmates' questions of at least 100-150 words **per week**. They should also be labeled appropriately in the following way: Andy's W1R1. This means that when you do hit the reply key, you will have to change the subject line before you post your response. Clear labeling helps me to keep track of your work and give you appropriate credit for your posts, so thank you in advance for your cooperation on this matter.

**\*Journal entries (15%):** These are your personal critical reactions to each week's **lectures** found on the course website. Please note that the lectures are not necessarily on the same topic as the readings. The journals should be **one (double-spaced) typed page**. These will be due once a week on Fridays by midnight. **Please submit these in the laulima assignments tool** either as a Word attachment or cut and paste the text into the body of the message. The journal assignments are linked to the **gradebook** tool and work together. If you submit your work in the wrong place(s), it becomes difficult to keep track of each student's work and there can be no guarantee of accurate recordkeeping. By submitting in the assignments tool, all of your assignments will be housed in the same tool and any discrepancies in recordkeeping can easily be addressed by either student or teacher. I will respond to your journals (and other assignments) in the same tool, so be sure to look there for my feedback on your work. **(Total of 12 pages)**

*Note – For the two course requirements above, not only will you be graded simply on whether you turn the work in or not, but also on the **quality** of the submitted work.*

**\*Group project (20%):** This project is centered around a creative solution to a problem facing US residents as a group of 3 to 4 students. The goal will be to learn how to work with others in an online setting to create a powerpoint presentation to share your original solution with the class. Please see the resources tool for examples of successful projects from former classes.

**\*One midterm paper (20%):** The midterm will examine students' assumptions about American politics and the issues we have studied thus far. Students will determine the exact topic of the paper with the instructor's final approval. Students will be required to submit a thesis and outline to the instructor in the Assignments tool and will be provided feedback on their submission. Subsequently, students will be tasked to conduct peer reviews of each other's papers. For the midterm, you should send your draft to the person **following** you in the Lulima mailtool. Your name will not appear in the list, so you will have to figure out where you fit alphabetically. When you are done with your peer review, please be sure to cc the instructor when you return the review to your fellow student via email. Please be sure to observe the dates listed for these WI activity steps listed in the course schedule below. **(5 pages)**

**\*One final research paper (30%):** This paper will be the culmination of the course with each student choosing individual topics within the overarching topic of American politics for further research. Students will be required to submit a thesis and outline to the instructor in the Assignments tool and will be provided feedback on their submission. Subsequently, students will be tasked to conduct peer reviews of each other's papers. For the midterm, you should send your draft to the person **before** you in the Lulima mailtool. Again, your name will not appear in the list, so you will have to figure out where you fit alphabetically. When you are done with your peer review, please be sure to cc the instructor when you return the review to your fellow student via email. Please be sure to observe the dates listed for these WI activity steps listed in the course schedule below. **(7-8 pages)**

**Note:** It isn't fair for some people to have more time to turn in assignments than others. If your paper is late, there will be three points deducted from your grade EACH day that it is late. It is very easy to go from an A to a B to a C very quickly. Therefore, I strongly encourage you to turn your papers in on time.

**Note:** Plagiarism is a serious academic offense. Taking credit for someone else's work is a grave ethical offense. It is especially tempting to engage in this practice as busy/overworked students, but *don't*. After reading your short journals throughout the semester, I become quite proficient at discerning your writing from someone else's. If I do find that you are engaging in this practice, you will receive an "F" for that assignment and be placed on probation in my course, where I will keep a sharp eye on your further work. Therefore, please cite your sources in an appropriate way, (see the citation for the required texts below as an example) and if you have any questions you can either ask me, refer to your library, or to any style manual you have available.

*Note: Any class is like a marathon. If you don't run the entire race, you don't get a finisher's t-shirt. The same goes for this class. If you don't do all the work, and don't "attend" this online class, you can't expect to get a passing grade.*

### **Required Readings:**

Blanco, William and David Canon. 2010. *American Politics Today, Core Second Edition*. New York: WW Norton and Co.

Domhoff, William. 2009. *Who Rules America? Challenges to Corporate and Class Dominance, 6<sup>th</sup> edition*. Boston: McGraw Hill Humanities.

### **Course Schedule:**

Note: This schedule is not set in stone. With class consensus, we can alter to fit our needs.

#### **Week 1: Revision of the assumptions we bring to the class. Where did we learn them? Why were they taught this way? (SLO 1)**

##### **Lecture Topic: Introduction to Democracy**

Reading: Blanco and Cannon Appendix 3: Constitution of the United States (Also available at <http://www.usconstitution.net/const.html> if you have not yet purchased the book. Use CTRL + click to follow the link

Monday, August 25  
Introductions

Wednesday, August 27  
Question due to Week 1 Discussion board by midnight

Friday, August 29  
Journals due by midnight – Please post journal in weekly Lulima assignments tool (Special topic this week only: What do you hope to get out of this class?)

#### **Week 2: Revision of assumptions continued (SLO 1)**

##### **Lecture Topic: The U.S. Constitution**

Reading: [http://lachlan.bluehaze.com.au/books/beard\\_usa\\_constitution.html](http://lachlan.bluehaze.com.au/books/beard_usa_constitution.html) (make sure to scroll all the way down the page) **and** [http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/Zinn/Empire\\_PeoplesHx.html](http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/Zinn/Empire_PeoplesHx.html)

Wednesday, September 3  
Question due to Week 2 Discussion board by midnight

Friday, September 5  
Response due to Week 2 discussion board  
Journals due by midnight – Please post journal in weekly Lulima assignments tool

#### **Week 3: Foundations**

**Lecture Topics: Political Culture (SLO 1)**

Reading: Blanco and Canon, Chapters 1 and 2

Wednesday, September 10

Question due to Week 3 Discussion board by midnight

**PICK GROUP PROJECTS IN GROUP PROJECT TOPIC DISCUSSION BOARD**

*Work on group projects for the next three weeks*

Friday, September 12

**PICK/FINALIZE GROUP PROJECTS ARRANGEMENTS BY MIDNIGHT.**

Response due to Week 3 discussion board

Journals due by midnight – Please post journal in weekly Lulima assignments tool

**Week 4: Foundations, continued (SLO 1, 2)**

**Lecture Topic: Civil Liberties**

Reading: Blanco and Canon Chapters 3 and 4

*Work on Group projects for the next two weeks*

Wednesday, September 17

Question due to Week 4 Discussion board by midnight

Friday, September 19

Response due to Week 4 discussion board

Journals due by midnight – Please post journal in weekly Lulima assignments tool

**Week 5: Politics (SLO 2)**

**Lecture Topic: Civil Rights**

Reading: Blanco and Canon, Chapters 5 and 6

*Work on group projects this week*

Wednesday, September 24

Question due to Week 5 Discussion board by midnight

Friday, September 26

Response due to Week 5 discussion board

Journals due by midnight – Please post journal in weekly Lulima assignments tool

**Week 6: Politics, continued (SLO 4)**

**No Lecture Topic – Group Projects due**

Reading: Blanco and Canon, Chapters 7 and 8

Wednesday, October 1

Question due to Week 6 Discussion board by midnight

Friday, October 3

Response due to Week 6 Discussion board by midnight - **NO Journals due this week**

**GROUP PROJECT PRESENTATIONS DUE** – Please post powerpoint presentations in **group project presentation** discussion board AND in assignments tool.

**Week 7: Politics and Institutions (SLO 3)**

**Lecture Topics: Opinion and Participation**

Reading: Blanco and Canon, Chapters 9 and 10

Wednesday, October 8

Question due to Week 7 Discussion board by midnight

Friday, October 10

Response due to Week 7 discussion board

Journals due by midnight – Please post journal in weekly Laulima assignments tool

**Week 8: Institutions, continued (SLO 3)**

**Lecture Topic: Campaigns and Elections**

Reading: Blanco and Canon, Chapters 11 and 12

Wednesday, October 15

Question due to Week 8 Discussion board by midnight

**PROPOSE MIDTERM PAPER TOPICS BY WEDNESDAY AT MIDNIGHT**

Friday, October 17

Response due to Week 8 discussion board

Journals due by midnight – Please post journal in weekly Laulima assignments tool.

**Vote on midterm paper topics in midterm paper topic conference by midnight**

**Week 9: Institutions and Policy (SLO 2, 3)**

**Lecture Topic: Political Parties**

Reading: Blanco and Canon, Chapters 13 and 14

Wednesday, October 22

Question due to Week 9 Discussion board by midnight

**Submit thesis to Assignments tool by midnight.**

Friday, October 24

Response due to Week 9 discussion board

Journals due by midnight – Please post journal in weekly Laulima assignments tool.

Sunday October 26

PLEASE EMAIL YOUR PAPER DRAFT TO THE PERSON **FOLLOWING** YOU IN THE LAULIMA MAILTOOL. THE LAST PERSON IN THE ALPHABETICAL LIST MUST SEND TO THE FIRST PERSON ON THE LIST. BE SURE TO COMPLETE YOUR PEER REVIEWS ASAP.

**Week 10: Policy (SLO 2, 3, 4)**

**No Lecture: Midterm Papers due**

Reading: Blanco and Canon, Chapters 15 and 16  
Wednesday, October 29  
Question due to Week 10 Discussion board by midnight

Friday, October 31  
Response due to Week 10 Discussion board by midnight - **NO Journals due this week**  
**MIDTERM PAPERS DUE – Please post papers in Midterm paper assignments tool**

**Week 11: Policy, continued (SLO 2, 3)**

**Lecture Topic: Interest Groups**

Reading: Blanco and Canon, Chapter 17 AND find and post information about any candidate running in your district BEFORE election day (November 6).

Wednesday, November 5  
Question due to Week 11 Discussion board by midnight

Friday, November 7  
Response due to Week 11 discussion board  
Journals due by midnight – Please post journal in weekly Lulima assignments tool.

**Week 12: Class and Power (SLO 2)**

**Lecture Topics: Media and Politics**

PICK FINAL PAPER TOPICS BY WEDNESDAY. POST TOPIC IDEA IN FINAL PAPER TOPIC DISCUSSION BOARD. TOPICS ARE ASSIGNED ON A FIRST COME, FIRST SERVED BASIS. THE EARLIER YOU PICK, THE BETTER CHANCE YOU HAVE OF GETTING YOUR FIRST CHOICE.

Reading: Domhoff, Chapters 1 and 2

Wednesday, November 12  
Question due to Week 12 Discussion board by midnight

Friday, November 14  
Response due to Week 12 discussion board  
Journals due by midnight – Please post journal in weekly Lulima assignments tool.

**Week 13: The Corporate Community (SLO 2, 3)**

**Lecture Topics: Politics and Social Welfare AND Politics and the Economy**

Reading: Domhoff, Chapters 3 and 4

Wednesday, November 19  
Question due to Week 13 discussion board by midnight

Friday, November 21  
Response due to Week 13 discussion board  
Journals due by midnight – Please post journal in weekly Lulima assignments tool.

**Week 14: Public Opinion, Parties and Elections, Elite Politics (SLO 2, 3)**

**No Lecture due to Thanksgiving holiday**

Reading: Domhoff, Chapters 5, 6 and 7

Wednesday, November 26

Question due to Week 14 Discussion board by midnight

**Submit thesis to Assignments tool by midnight.**

Friday, November 28

Response due to Week 14 discussion board

**No journals due – Thanksgiving Holiday**

**Week 15: Potential Challenges to Class Domination (SLO 1, 2)**

**Lecture: TBA**

Reading: Domhoff, Chapters 8 and 9

Wednesday, December 3

Question due to Week 15 Discussion Board by midnight

Friday, December 5

Response due to Week 15 discussion board by midnight.

Journals due by midnight – Post to Laulima Assignments tool.

Sunday, December 7

**PLEASE EMAIL YOUR PAPER DRAFT TO THE PERSON BEFORE YOU IN THE LAULIMA MAILTOOL. THE LAST PERSON IN THE ALPHABETICAL LIST MUST SEND TO THE FIRST PERSON ON THE LIST. BE SURE TO COMPLETE YOUR PEER REVIEWS ASAP.**

**Week 16: Work on Final Research Papers**

Friday, December 12

**PLEASE POST FINAL PAPERS TO INSTRUCTOR VIA LAULIMA ASSIGNMENTS TOOL BY MIDNIGHT.**