

American Politics: Political Science 385

American Politics “From Below”

Spring 2016 Online

February 1- May 14, 2016

Instructor: Ryan Knight
Email: raknight@hawaii.edu

Office: By Email or Skype/ Facetime
Office Hours: ?

Course Description:

This course will serve as an introduction to American politics through a study of an eclectic mix of histories that have shaped the contemporary United States’ political system and culture. The course will work from the arrival of Western colonization in 1492 to the present, taking stock of the concentrated capital, imperial wars, economic collapses, subversive ideas, social struggles and ordinary lives which have pushed the United States in the direction it has taken. Through this historical analysis, the course will introduce students to an American Politics “from below”, in order to reinforce the idea that politics are done more so in the struggles of “ordinary people” than in the narrow halls of our formal political institutions.

Course Learning Objectives:

- Develop skills of critical analysis
- Develop an understanding of the political and social history of the United States
- Develop an eye for a popular politics from below
- Refine written and argumentative skills
- Obtain a foundation on which to further study American politics

Course Requirements/ Grading Policy

Online Class Discussion: 20%

Current Events: 20%

Midterm: 20%

Final Paper: 40%

Online Class Discussion:

The online discussion will be the heart of the course, and will serve as the space of conversation we would otherwise have in the physical classroom. All students are expected to do the weekly readings and participate in the online discussion every week on *Laulima*. This means, you are expected to post your thoughts in relation to that days/ weeks reading engaging the posts from your classmates. Posts should reflect that you have read the material and are engaging with it critically.

Page Length: 1 page, Double-spaced

Current Event Reflection Papers:

During the course of the semester, you will choose four weeks in which you will find a current event happening in the world relevant to the readings for that week. In this current event, you will be expected to stage a conversation between the readings for that week and the current event. How do they relate to one another? How do they differ? What do they say to each other? How does using one or the others as a lens, help magnify the other one or others?

Page Length: 2 Pages, Double-spaced

Midterm Exam: March 16-March 18

The midterm will consist of a 48-hour, four-page essay examination. A prompt of two questions covering aspects of the material covered at that point in the class will be provided on the specified date at 8am. The responses will be due 48 hours later at 8am. Responses are expected to reflect an understanding of the material having been covered, with insight from the individual student's perspective. Responses are to be concise but thorough, engaging specific points and not vague generalizations.

Page Length: 4 pages, Double-spaced

Final Paper:

The final paper will cover a topic of the student's choosing, engaging in more depth a particular theme covered during the course of the semester. The paper topic will be chosen by the student so as to allow them to engage with something they are particularly interested in. Students will be required to submit a one-page paper proposal/ abstract on Lulima by the end of week 12 (April 22) outlining what they intend to write about. The final paper will be due on May 13 at 5pm.

Page length: 10-12 pages, Double-Spaced

Teaching Philosophy:

“Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.”

— Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

Education happens best when students develop the tools to think for themselves, rather than having the “facts” of history, politics, etc. authoritatively imposed upon them. With this in mind, I want to foster an “online” educational environment that allows for the free discussion of ideas, working to break down the power structure between teacher and student, as a means to question the larger authoritarian structures in our society. As a result, vibrant online discussion, respectable disagreement, and ongoing debate are encouraged to make education an engagement in the practice of freedom Freire speaks to above.

Academic Integrity: Please refer to the UHM website on Academic dishonesty and related issues. Matters of this nature will be referred to the Department chair.
<http://www.catalog.hawaii.edu/aboutFuh/campusFpolicies1.htm>

Disability Issues: Please see the professor and refer to the UH Kokua Program on issues related to disability. Accommodations will gladly be made.
<http://www.hawaii.edu/kokua/>

Readings: All course readings will be provided through the Lualima course page

*The syllabus is subject to change depending on the quality and direction of the course as it develops

Class Schedule:

Week 1: The “Discovery” of America

Monday, February 1

A People’s History of the United States- Chapter 1

By: Howard Zinn

Wednesday, February 3

Confronting Columbus Day: An Argument Based in International Law

By: Ward Churchill

Friday, February 5

A People’s History of the United States- Chapter 2

By: Howard Zinn

Week 2: Foundations of the Constitution

Monday, February 8

Federalist Papers- Federalist No. 9: The Union as a Safeguard Against Domestic Faction and Insurrection

By: Alexander Hamilton

Federalist Papers- Federalist No. 10: The Same Subject Continued

By: James Madison

Wednesday, February 10

Federalist Papers- Federalist No. 39: The Conformity of the Plan to Republican Principles

By: James Madison

Federalist Papers- Federalist No. 51: The Structure of the Government Must Furnish the Proper Checks and Balances Between the Different Departments

By: James Madison

Friday, February 12

Public Goods as Commonstock: Notes on the Receding Commons

By: Anatole Anton

Week 3: The Early Women's Movement

Monday, February 15

Holiday- President's Day

Wednesday, February 17

A People's History of the United States- Chapter 6

By: Howard Zinn

Friday, February 19

The Seneca Falls Declaration and Resolutions (1848) and Address to the New York State Legislature (1860)

By: Elizabeth Cady Stanton

Appeal to the Christian Women of the South

By: Angelina Grimke

Week 4: Mexican-American War and Resistance

Monday, February 22

A People's History of the United States- Chapter 7

By: Howard Zinn

Wednesday, February 24

On the Duty of Civil Disobedience

By: Henry David Thoreau

Friday, February 26

On the Duty of Civil Disobedience

By: Henry David Thoreau

Week 5: The Legacy of Slavery

Monday, February 29

A People's History of the United States- Chapter 9

By: Howard Zinn

Wednesday, March 2

On the Meaning of the 4th of July for the Negro

By: Frederick Douglass

Friday, March 4

On the Eligibility of Colored Members to Seats in the Georgia Legislature
By: Henry McNeal Turner

Week 6: The Growth of US Imperialism

Monday, March 7

A People's History of the United States- Chapter 12

By: Howard Zinn

Wednesday, March 9

The American Occupation of the Hawaiian Kingdom: Beginning of the Transition From Occupied to Restored State- Chapter 4 p. 124-153

By: Keanu Sai

Friday, March 11

The First Vietnam: The US-Philippine War of 1899

By: Luzviminda Francisco

Week 7: Taylorism/ Fordism and the Agitated Working Class

Monday, March 14

A People's History of the United States- Chapter 14

By: Howard Zinn

Wednesday, March 16

Americanism and Fordism

By: Antonio Gramsci

Friday, March 18

Americanism and Fordism

By: Antonio Gramsci

Not Required, But Relevant:

Watch Film: Sacco and Vanzetti

Midterm: March 16-18

Week 8: No Class- Spring Recess March 21- 25

Week 9: The Ongoing Legacy of Slavery

Monday, March 28

A People's History of the United States- Chapter 15

By: Howard Zinn

Wednesday, March 30

Paul Robeson's Unread State before the House Committee on Un-American Activities

By: Paul Robeson

Friday, April 1

A People's History of the United States- Chapter 17

By: Howard Zinn

Week 10: Old Problems, New Social Movements

Monday, April 4

Coming of Age in Mississippi

By: Anne Moody

Who Will Revere the Black Woman?

By: Abby Lincoln

Wednesday, April 6

The Ballot or the Bullet

By: Malcolm X

Friday, April 8

Port Huron Statement

By: SDS

Week 11: Old Problems, New Social Movements

Monday, April 11

Port Huron Statement

By: SDS

Wednesday, April 13

A People's History of the United States- Chapter 18

By: Howard Zinn

Friday, April 15

A People's History of the United States- Chapter 19

Week 12: Old Problems, New Social Movements

Monday, April 18

The Combahee River Collective Statement

By: The Combahee River Collective

Wednesday, April 20

Huey P. Newton Reader- Introduction and Pages 49-66

By: Huey P. Newton

Friday, April 22

Refugees From Amerika: A Gay Manifesto

By: Carl Wittman

Week 13: State Repression and the COINTELPRO

Monday, April 25

Watch Movie: The Black Power Mix tape

Wednesday, April 27

The Bloody Wake of Alcatraz: Political Repression of the American Indian Movement During the 1970's By Ward Churchill

Friday, April 29

The Bombing Story of Judi Bari

By: Judi Bari

Week 14: Democracy From Below

Monday, May 2

Selections from *The Democracy Project: A History, a Crisis, a Movement*

By: David Graeber

Wednesday, May 4

Selections from *The Democracy Project: A History, a Crisis, a Movement*

By: David Graeber

Friday, May 6

No Class- Study Day

Week 15:

Wednesday, May 14th

Final Paper due by 5 pm