

American Politics: Political Science 385

American Politics “From Below”

Spring 2017 Online

January 23- May 12, 2017

Writing Intensive (WI)

Instructor: Ryan Knight
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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. Ultimately, this will be a continual workshop to improve reading, writing, and critical thinking skills throughout the semester.

Page Length: 1 page, Double-spaced, every week. 13 pages total

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?

Students will get feedback on each current event reflection paper assignment allowing them to improve their critical thinking/ writing skills as the semester progresses.

Page Length: 2 Pages, Double-spaced, 8 pages total.

Midterm Exam:

The midterm will consist of a week long, **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 Monday March 20 at 8am. The responses will be due that Friday March 24 by 5pm. Responses are expected to reflect an understanding of the material having been covered thus far in the course, 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 Laulima by the end of week 12 (April 14) outlining what they intend to write about. The final paper will be due on May 12 at 5pm.

I will provide feedback on the abstract, as well as be available to help the students in the development of their final paper.

Page length: 8-10 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 Lulima 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 (January 23-27)

A People’s History of the United States- Chapter 1, 2

By: Howard Zinn

Confronting Columbus Day: An Argument Based in International Law

By: Ward Churchill

Week 2: Foundations of the Constitution (January 30-February 3)

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

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

Public Goods as Commonstock: Notes on the Receding Commons

By: Anatole Anton

Week 3: The Early Women's Movement (February 6-February 10)

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

By: Howard Zinn

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 (February 13- February 17)

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

By: Howard Zinn

On the Duty of Civil Disobedience

By: Henry David Thoreau

Week 5: The Legacy of Slavery (February 20- February 24)

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

By: Howard Zinn

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

By: Frederick Douglass

On the Eligibility of Colored Members to Seats in the Georgia Legislature

By: Henry McNeal Turner

Week 6: The Growth of US Imperialism (February 27- March 3)

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

By: Howard Zinn

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

By: Keanu Sai

The First Vietnam: The US-Philippine War of 1899

By: Luzviminda Francisco

Week 7: Taylorism/ Fordism and the Agitated Working Class (March 6- March 10)

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

By: Howard Zinn

Americanism and Fordism

By: Antonio Gramsci

Not Required, But Relevant:

Watch Film: Sacco and Vanzetti

Week 8: The Ongoing Legacy of Slavery (March 13- March 17)

A People's History of the United States- Chapter 15, 17

By: Howard Zinn

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

By: Paul Robeson

Week 9: (March 20- March 24)

Midterm Week

Week 10: (March 27-March 31)

Spring Break

Week 11: The Ongoing Legacy of Slavery (April 3- April 7)

Coming of Age in Mississippi

By: Anne Moody

Who Will Revere the Black Woman?

By: Abby Lincoln

The Ballot or the Bullet

By: Malcolm X

Week 12: Old Problems, New Social Movements (April 10- April 14)

A People's History of the United States- Chapter 18, 19

By: Howard Zinn

Week 13: Old Problems, New Social Movements (April 17-April 21)

The Combahee River Collective Statement

By: The Combahee River Collective

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

By: Huey P. Newton

Refugees From Amerika: A Gay Manifesto
By: Carl Wittman

Week 14: State Repression and the COINTELPRO (April 24- April 28)

Watch Movie: The Black Power Mix tape

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

The Bombing Story of Judi Bari
By: Judi Bari

Week 15: Democracy From Below (May 1-May 3)

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

By: David Graeber

Week 16: (May 8-May 12)

Finals Week: Papers due May 12 by 5pm