INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN GOVERNMENT RPOS 101-0004

Spring 2018

Tuesday/Thursday 5:45 – 7:05 HU 137

Instructor: Heather Trela heather.trela@rockinst.suny.edu

Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday 5:00 – 5:30 HU B-16 and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

POS 101 is an introduction to the study of American Politics. The course will provide broad and critical examination of the ideas, processes, institutions, and public policies that are central to the American political system. Students will not only learn the essential mechanics and facts pertinent to American politics; more important, they will be presented with the concepts, issues, and debates that foster comprehension of the deeper dynamics of American politics. It is expected that you to read the assignments carefully and critically and that you express your views by participating in class discussions. The course will provide a foundation for the further study of American politics and political science and for more informed participation in the political process.

COURSE AND GENERAL EDUCATION LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course, students are expected to be able to:

1. Understand the debates and conflicts during America's Founding period and their connections to politics today;
2. Understand the role of various political institutions, actors and policies that are a part of the political process and how they interact;
3. Have a better understanding of current events and policies

In addition, this course fulfills both the U.S. History and Social Science requirements in the General Education program (https://www.albany.edu/generaleducation/).

Social Science courses enable students to demonstrate:

1. an understanding that human conduct and behavior more generally are subject to scientific inquiry;
2. an understanding of the difference between rigorous and systematic thinking and uncritical thinking about social phenomena;
3. an understanding of the kinds of questions social scientists ask and the ways they go about answering these questions;
4. knowledge of the major concepts, models and issues of at least one discipline in the social sciences;
5. an understanding of the methods social scientists use to explore social phenomena, such as observation, hypothesis development, measurement and data collection, experimentation, evaluation of evidence, employment of mathematical analysis, employment of interpretive analysis.

U.S. History courses enable students to demonstrate:
1. knowledge of a basic narrative of American history (political, economic, social, and/or cultural), including an awareness of unity and diversity in American society;
2. knowledge of representative institutions in American society and how they have shape and been shaped by different groups;
3. an understanding of the relationship(s) between America and other parts of the world;
4. an understanding of various tools and approaches used in interpreting U.S. history.

**Course Materials**
The required texts for this course are available at The University at Albany Book Store and online: Bruce Miroff, Raymond Sidelman, Todd Swanstrom and Tom DeLuca, *The Democratic Debate: An Introduction to American Politics* Sixth Edition (Houghton Mifflin, 2015)

**Course Outline**

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>January 23</td>
<td>Overview of the Course</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 25</td>
<td>American Political Theory: From the Revolution to the Constitution</td>
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<td><em>The Democratic Debate (TDD) CH 1 &amp; 2</em></td>
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<td>February 1</td>
<td>Federalism</td>
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<td><em>TDD CH 3</em></td>
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<td>February 6</td>
<td>Congress</td>
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<td>February 8</td>
<td>Congress</td>
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<td><em>TDD CH 12</em></td>
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<td>FIRST PAPER DUE</td>
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<td>February 13</td>
<td>The Presidency</td>
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<td><em>TDD CH 13</em></td>
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February 15   The Presidency
             TDD CH 13

February 20   Foreign Policy
             TDD CH 18

February 22   FIRST EXAM

February 27   The Judiciary
             TDD CH 15

March 1      The Judiciary
             TDD CH 15

March 6      Civil Rights and Civil Liberties
             TDD CH 16 pages 365--380

March 8      Civil Rights and Civil Liberties
             TDD CH 16 pages 381- 478
             SECOND PAPER DUE

March 13 & 15 NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK

March 20   The American Political Economy
             TDD CH 4

March 22   Economic and Social Policy
             TDD CH 17

March 27   Bureaucracy
             TDD Ch 14

March 29   EXAM 2

April 3    Public Opinion
             TDD CH 5
April 5          Political Parties          TDD CH 8
April 10        Campaigns and Elections    TDD CH 7
April 12        Campaigns and Elections    TDD CH 7
April 17        Interest Groups            TDD CH 10
April 19        Mass Movements             TDD CH 11
April 24        Mass Movements             TDD CH 11
                        THIRD PAPER DUE
April 26        The Media                  TDD CH 9
May 1           The Media                  TDD CH 9
May 3           Democracy and Voting        TDD CH 6
May 8           Course Wrap-Up and Review

MAY 15          FINAL EXAM
                    5:45-7:45PM

GRADES:

The grades (A-E) will be computed using the following formula:

Exam 1 – 20%
Exam 2 – 20%
Final – 20%
Papers 1, 2 & 3– 30% (10% each)
Participation: 10%
**Exams** – There will be three exams given over the course of the semester. The final exam is on **May 15**. No make-ups will be given without a medical excuse (https://www.albany.edu/health_center/medicalexcuse.shtml)

**Papers** – You will write three short papers over the duration of this course. The papers are to be emailed to me before the beginning of the class that it is due. Late papers will be marked down a grade for each day late (example: 1 day late- papers is marked down from an A to an A-). The papers must be 3-5 full pages. The format is 1 inch margins, 12 point font, Times New Roman, double spaced. While this is not an English class, grammar and spelling are taken into consideration during grading. Make sure to properly cite – need source and page number for a proper citation.

**Topic for Paper 1:** The Federalists and Anti-federalists had six key areas of disagreement: human nature, representation, scale of political life, separation of powers, purpose of government and stability and change. Pick two of these areas and explain how the Federalists and Anti-federalist differed. What were their positions regarding how to address the areas you selected? What were their main arguments to support this? Finally, who do you agree with more- the Federalists or the Anti-federalists? Why?

**Topic for Paper 2:** The Supreme Court can be viewed as both a democratic and undemocratic institution. Explain this dichotomy by giving examples on both sides and then take a position on whether you consider the Court to be a democratic or undemocratic institution overall.

**Topic for Paper 3:** A lot of focus in the study of American political parties has been focused not on realignment, but the “dealignment” of the electorate and the weakening of political parties. Do you believe that parties in the modern political system are strong or weak? What roles do they currently play? How does the strength of political parties impact the political system?

**Academic Dishonesty:** Every student is responsible for understanding what constitutes plagiarism and cheating according to the University at Albany’s policy on academic integrity (https://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/regulations.html). Violations in this course will result in disciplinary action.

**Participation and Attendance:** It is expected that you will come to class prepared and ready to discuss the assigned material and answer relevant questions that I may ask. I am looking for the quality of your participation, not the quantity. I expect you to respect differing viewpoints and the other students in the class.

**Current Events:** We will start every class with a brief discussion of what is going on in the world, with a special focus on events in American politics. This is an easy way to help your participation grade.