## PS 122: American Politics: Issues and Institutions

Instructor: Simon Gilhooley Class Sessions: T & Th 11.50am-1.10pm

Office: Aspinwall 207 Classroom: Olin 102

Email: sgilhool@bard.edu Office Hours: T 3.30-4.30pm, W 10-11am and by appointment

***Course Overview***

This course introduces students to the basic institutions and processes of American government. The class is meant to provide students with a grasp of the fundamental dynamics of American politics and the skills to be an effective participant in and critic of the political process. During the semester, we will examine how the government works, interpret current political developments and debates, and consider how to influence the government at various levels.

### *Attendance and Participation*

Because this course is intended to create a stimulating intellectual atmosphere and promote participatory learning, students are expected to attend all classes and be prepared to take part in discussions. Because absence is sometimes unavoidable, students will be excused in advance on up to three occasions. Thereafter a letter grade will be deducted from your final grade for every unexplained additional absence. In the event of sickness please contact the instructor with a note from the student health center. In the event of an absence you are strongly encouraged to find out from your peers what you missed during the session.

This course will be conducted as a seminar, meaning that students will be responsible for carrying the bulk of discussion and debate. However, talking for the sake of talking is not the goal. Rather, students should seek to make comments, ask questions, share ideas, and otherwise interact respectfully with one another.

***Accommodations***

In compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, Bard College is committed to providing otherwise qualified individuals with disabilities equal access to the College's academic courses, programs, and activities. In support of this mission, the College provides services and reasonable accommodations to self-identified students who present the appropriate documentation. Students who claim learning, psychological or physical disabilities should register with The Disability Support Coordinator in the The Learning Commons at the start of the semester or as soon as the diagnosis of disability is made.

***Academic Integrity***

All the work you submit in this course must have been written for this course and not another and must be original in form and content with all contributory sources fully and specifically acknowledged.

***University Policies and Regulations***

This instructor respects and upholds University policies and regulations pertaining to the observation of religious holidays; assistance available to the physically handicapped, visually and/or hearing impaired student; plagiarism; sexual harassment; and racial or ethnic discrimination. All students are advised to become familiar with the respective University regulations and are encouraged to bring any questions or concerns to the attention of the instructor.

***Requirements and Grading***

Students will be graded on the completion of 3 papers, a group presentation, contribution to online discussion, and participation. Assignments are due at the start of the seminar on the given date, unless otherwise noted. Late papers will be marked down one letter grade for every day they are late. When extraordinary circumstances arise beyond a student’s control, please notify me as soon as possible (and *before* the paper is due) so that we may work out an agreeable solution. The final grade for the course will be calculated as follows:

1) First term paper (20%)

2) Second term paper (20%)

3) Final term paper (25%)

4) Group presentations (10%)

5) Contribution to online discussion (10%)

6) Participation in class (15%)

Written assignments should reflect the following standards:

* All submitted written work should be word-processed; handwritten work is not acceptable.
* Assignments should use a standard, 12-point font, be double-spaced and use one inch margins.
* Assignments should be securely stapled in the top left hand corner and contain numbered pages.
* Assignments should have a cover sheet containing your name, the assignment number and name, the date, your instructor’s name, and the course name.
* All submitted work (and drafts to be used in class or individual conference) should be proofread and spellchecked.
* **All assignments should be submitted in hard copy in class AND in (identical) electronic format via Moodle (in .doc format) by the end of the day of the class in which they are submitted.**

***Textbooks and Readings***

There is a “textbook” for this course:

Theodore Lowi et al., *We the People: An Introduction to American Politics* [In syllabus WTP]

Chapters from this book (“WTP”) will be listed for certain sections. You should plan to read these chapters in order to have an understanding of the institutions and ideas we will discuss. However, these chapters will not be the focus of our discussions – I would suggest that you read these first and then turn to the reading listed for each particular class.

In addition, the following book is available for purchase at the bookstore:

Kay Lehman Schlozman et al., *The Unheavenly Chorus: Unequal Political Voice and the*

*Broken Promise of American Democracy* [In syllabus UC]

Other readings marked \* can found on the course’s Moodle 2 site. The access code is **civilF15**

Tuesday 1st Sept: *Introduction*

Thurs 3rd Sept: No class – I’ll be attending the American Political Science Association Conference. We will make this up later in the semester.

**Democracy**

Tues 8th Sept: *Democracy as an idea*

**Readings:**  \*Michael Saward, *The Terms of Democracy,* Chapters 1 & 3

Thurs 10th Sept: *Sovereignty and Revolution*

**Readings:**  \*Edmund Morgan, *Inventing the People*, Chapters 3 & 11

Tues 15th Sept: *Representation*

**Readings:**  \*Edmund Burke, “Speech to the Electors of Bristol”

 \*David R. Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection*, 13-77

**The Representative Institutions**

Thurs 17th Sept: *Congress: Legislative Activity*

**Readings:** We The People (WTP), Chapter 9

 \**The Federalist Papers* Nos. 10, 51, 57

Tues 22nd Sept: *Congress: Oversight & Bureaucracy*

**Readings:** We The People (WTP), Chapter 11

\*Mathew D. McCubbins & Thomas Schwartz, “Congressional

Oversight Overlooked: Police Patrols versus Fire Alarms,” *American Journal of Political Science* 28 (1)

Thurs 24th Sept: *Congress: Gridlock & Effectiveness*

**Readings: \***Jacob Hacker & Paul Pierson*,* *Winner-Take-All Politics: How*

*Washington Made the Rich Richer--and Turned Its Back on the Middle Class*, Chapter 10

 \*Charles M. Cameron, *Veto bargaining: Presidents and the*

*Politics of Negative Power*, Chapter 4

 *Recommended:* \*Richard F. Fenno, Jr., “U.S. House

Members in Their Constituencies: An Exploration,” *American Political Science Review* 71 (3)

Tues 29th Sept: *Political Parties: Structure & Collective Action*

**Readings: \***John Aldrich, *Why Parties? A Second Look*, Chapters 1 & 2

*\**Kathleen Bawn, Martin Cohen, David Karol, Seth Masket,

Hans Noel & John Zaller, “A Theory of Political Parties: Groups, Policy Demands and Nominations in American Politics,” *Perspectives on Politics* (10) 3

**\*\*Weds 30th Sept: Film screening, RKC 103, 6.30pm**

Thurs 1st Oct: *Political Parties: Polarization*

**Readings:** Kay Lehman Schlozman et al., *The Unheavenly Chorus: Unequal*

*Political Voice and the Broken Promise of American Democracy*, (UC) Chapter 9

 \*Morris P. Fiorina, “America’s Missing Moderates: Hiding in

Plain Sight,” *The American Interest*, February 12th, 2013

*Recommended*: \*Fiorina-Abramowitz exchange, *The*

*American Interest*, March 11th, 2013

**\*\*First Paper Due\*\***

Tues 6th Oct: *Interest Groups - Presentations*

**Readings:** WTP Chap. 8

 UC Chapter 11

Thurs 8th Oct: *Presidency: The Strong Leader*

**Readings:** WTP Chap. 10

 \*Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Imperial Presidency,* selections

 \*David E. Lewis, “Presidential Appointments and Personnel,”

*Annual Review of Political Science* 14

Tues 13th Oct: No class – Fall Break

Thurs 15th Oct: Arendt Conference – see extra credit assignment

Tues 20th Oct: *Presidency: The Weak Leader?*

**Readings:** \*Richard Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern*

*Presidents: The Politics of Leadership From Roosevelt to Reagan,* selections

\*Stephen Skowronek, *Presidential Leadership in Political Time*,

selections

Thurs 22nd Oct: No class

**\*\*Mon 26th Oct: Film screening, RKC 103, 6.30pm**

Tues 27th Oct: *The Judiciary: In Theory*

**Readings:** WTP Chap. 12

 \*Marbury v. Madison

 \*Antonin Scalia, “Common-Law Courts in a Civil-Law System:

The Role of United States Federal Courts in Interpreting the Constitution and Laws,” in Antonin Scalia, *A Matter of Interpretation: Federal Courts and the Law*

Thurs 29th Oct: *The Judiciary: In Practice*

**Readings: \***Jeffrey A. Segal and Harold J. Spaeth, *The Supreme Court and*

*the Attitudinal Model Revisited*, pp. 86-115

 \**National Federation of Independent Business et al. v. Sebelius,*

selections (File name: Roberts on Individual Mandate)

Tues 3rd Nov: *Participation*

**Readings:** UC Chap. 8

 \*David E. Campbell, “Social Networks and Political

Participation,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 16

**\*\*Weds 4th Nov: Film screening, RKC 103, 6.30pm**

Thurs 5th Nov: *Media*

**Readings:** WTP Chap 6

UC Chapter 16

 *Recommended: \**Markus Prior. “Media and Political

Polarization,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 16 (2013)

**Liberalism**

Tues 10th Nov: *Liberalism as an idea*

**Readings: \***John Locke, *Second Treatise*, Chapters 5 & 8

 \*John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, Chapter 4

 **\*\*Second Paper Due\*\***

Thurs 12th Nov: *Civil Liberties*

**Readings:**  WTP Chap 4

 \*Peter Irons, *A People’s History of the Supreme Court*, Chap 31

 *Recommended:* \*Peter Irons, *A People’s History of the*

*Supreme Court*, Chap 30

Tues 17th Nov: *Capitalism*

**Readings: \***Lawrence Mishel, Josn Bivens, Elise Gould, & Heidi Shierholz,

*The State of Working America,* 12th Edition, Chapter 1

\*Sean Wilentz, “America’s Lost Egalitarian Tradition,” *Daedalus*

131 (1)

**\*\*Weds 18th Nov: Film screening, RKC 103, 6.30pm**

Thurs 19th Nov: *Capitalism in politics*

**Readings:**  \*Maria Currinder, “Campaign Finance: Campaigning in a Post-

*Citizens United* Era,” in Michael Nelson, *The Elections of 2012*

 WTP Chap. 8

 *Recommended: \**Alexander Hertel-Fernandez, “Who Passes

Business’s “Model Bills?” Policy Capacity and Corporate Influence in U.S. State Politics,” *Perspectives on Politics* 12 (2014)

Tues 24th Nov: *Capitalism as inequality*

**Readings:** UC Chapter 3

\*Jeffrey A. Winters and Benjamin I. Page, “Oligarchy in the

United States,” *Perspectives on Politics* 7 (4)

\*Charlie LeDuff, “Come See Detroit, America’s Future,” *New*

*York Times*, July 25th 2013

Thurs 26th Nov: No Class – Thanksgiving

Tues 1st Dec: *Race*: *History and Trends*

**Readings:**  \*Stephen Tuck, “The Reversal of Black Voting Rights after

Reconstruction,” in Desmond King, Robert C. Lieberman, Gretchen Ritter, & Lawrence Whitehead, *Democratization in America: A Comparative-Historical Analysis*

 *\**Keith G. Bentele & Erin E. O’Brien, “Jim Crow 2.0? Why States

Consider and Adopt Restrictive Voter Access Policies,” *Perspectives on Politics* 11 (4)

*Recommended:* \*Zoltan L. Hajnal & Jeremy D. Horowitz, “Racial

Winners and Losers in American Party Politics,” *Perspectives on Politics* 12 (1)

Thurs 3rd Dec: *Race: Redistricting & Incarceration*

**Readings:**\* Joshua Guetzkow & Bruce Western, “The Political

Consequences of Mass Imprisonment,” in Joe Soss, Jacob S. Hacker, & Suzanne Mettler, *Remaking America: Democracy and Public Policy in an Age of Inequality*

 \*Raymond La Raja, “Redistricting: Reading Between the Lines,”

*Annual Review of Political Science* 12

 *Recommended:* \*Eric M. Patashnik & Julian E. Zelizer, “The

Struggle to Remake Politics: Liberal Reform and the Limits of Policy Feedback in the Contemporary American State,” *Perspectives on Politics* 11 (4)

Tues 8th Dec: *Civil Rights Movement & Social Movements*

**Readings:** \*Doug McAdam, “The U.S. Civil Rights Movement: Power from

Below and Above, 1945-1970,” in Adam Roberts and Timothy Garton Ash (eds.), *Civil Resistance and Power Politics*

\*Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and*

*Contentious Politics*, Chapter 1

Thurs 10th Dec: *Gender*

**Readings:** \*Gretchen Ritter, “Gender and Democracy in the American

Constitutional Order,” in Desmond King, Robert C. Lieberman, Gretchen Ritter, & Lawrence Whitehead, *Democratization in America: A Comparative-Historical Analysis*

 \*Kim L. Fridkin & Patrick J. Kenney, “How the Gender of U.S. Senators

Influences People’s Understanding and Engagement in Politics,” *Journal of Politics* 76 (2014)

Tues 15th Dec: Debate – details to be circulated in class.

Thurs 17th Dec: No Class – Enjoy the winter break!

 \***Final Paper Due via Moodle\***