

**American Politics**

**Professor Julia Azari**

**Political Science 020, Section 1005**

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“Every two years the American politics industry fills the airwaves with the most virulent, scurrilous, wall-to-wall character assassination of nearly every political practitioner in the country - and then declares itself puzzled that America has lost trust in its politicians. “ - Charles Krauthammer

“Politics is the art of looking for trouble, finding it whether it exists or not, diagnosing it incorrectly, and applying the wrong remedy.” - Ernest Benn

“Politics is the art of the possible.” - Otto von Bismarck

“We are not afraid to entrust the American people with unpleasant facts, foreign ideas, alien philosophies, and competitive values. For a nation that is afraid to let its people judge the truth and falsehood in an open market is a nation that is afraid of its people.” - John F. Kennedy

**Course Description:** The purpose of this course is to develop an understanding of the basic ideas, institutions, and issues in American politics. We will cover a variety of material ranging from political thought to political behavior. The first objective of this course is to impart information about the fundamental aspects of American politics, including (but not limited to): how American political institutions work; what trends have emerged in voting behavior; and what ideas were behind the formation of the federal system. The second objective of the course is to improve your critical reading, writing and thinking skills. You will be expected to demonstrate your knowledge of American politics concepts and ideas, as well as to link concrete events to abstract ideas. Finally, you will be expected to engage critically with the analysis presented in the readings.

Political Science 020 falls under the “Individual and Social Behavior” section of Marquette’s Course of Common Studies. As such, included among the aims of this course is to enhance your ability to understand concepts, theories, and methods used to explain individual and social behavior in the context of American politics and to use this theoretical knowledge to analyze examples of individual and social behavior.

Assignments and grading for the course are outlined in subsequent sections on the syllabus. The assignments will directly contribute to the desired learning outcomes of the course by allowing you to engage with the material presented in class in your workbook exercises as well as written assignments. Two other components are critical: the application of course themes to the current

political events; and your contribution to discourse with your peers in classroom discussion and activities. Classroom discussions, debates, and small group work will be a critical component of your learning experience in this course. As such, you may be asked to entertain and respect opinions that differ from your own. In this class, we will respect different views and backgrounds, but all claims will be subject to rigorous academic debate.

**Course Policies:** Everyone has a chance to do well in this course, and I hope that you do. In order to be successful in this course, it is necessary to attend class and be a regular, active and **PREPARED** participant. I expect that you will attend each class meeting, and be prepared to discuss the assigned reading. Academic dishonesty (i.e. cheating and plagiarism) is a violation of university policy and as such will not be tolerated. In written assignments, attribution of ideas that are not your own is of crucial importance. This includes material found on the internet. When in doubt, **CITE!**

### **Grading Breakdown:**

Attendance and Participation: 20%

Midterm: 20%

Article assignments: 30%

Final Exam: 30%

### **Assignments and Expectations**

Active participation is a requirement in this course. Attendance is required, and you will be expected to have completed the readings. You should be prepared to discuss the readings and participate in class activities.

In addition to class participation, you will write three short (1-2 page) papers describing a news article and how it relates to topics covered in class. You will choose three of the six units of the course write your papers. **Papers will be due on the last day of each unit, as listed on the syllabus.** Guidelines for this assignment will be handed out in class and posted on D2L. No late assignments will be accepted.

### **Textbooks**

Two textbooks will be available for purchase at the Marquette Bookstore.

David T. Canon, John J. Coleman, and Kenneth R. Mayer, *The Enduring Debate: Contemporary and Classic Readings in American Politics*

Kent M. Brudney and Mark E. Weber, *Critical Thinking and American Government*.

The Brudney and Weber textbook includes workbook exercises for each chapter. The purpose of these exercises is to help you understand and synthesize the material. I will collect these exercises every two weeks at the beginning of the Thursday class meeting, and their completeness will be factored into your participation grade.

All other readings will be available on D2L.

January 15: Introductory Meeting

January 17 - The study of politics

Reading: "The Logic of American Politics," 3-6 (D2L)

### **Unit One: The American Founding**

January 22 - Articles of Confederation, Constitutional Convention

Readings: Brudney and Weber, Chapter 1, Constitution of the United States (p. 323-336)

January 24 - American constitution in global perspective

TED- 37-55

January 29 - Federalism, amendment exercise part 1

Reading: Brudney and Weber, Chapter 2

January 31 - Amendment exercise part 2

Reading: TED - 69-85

### **Unit Two: Governing Institutions**

February 5 - Congress

Reading: Brudney and Weber, Chapter 6

February 7 - Congress

Reading: *TED*- Hibbing and Theiss-Morse , page 151-157

February 12 - Presidency

Reading: Brudney and Weber, Chapter 7

February 14 - Presidency

Reading: TED - 175-184, 193-199

February 19 - Judiciary

Reading: Brudney and Weber- Chapter 9

February 21 - Bureaucracy

Reading: Brudney and Weber, 8

### **Unit Three: Culture and Ideas**

February 26 - Equality

Readings: Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, selections

Brooks, "The American Way of Equality," *New York Times* (link provided)

February 28 - Hartz and America's "liberal tradition"

Reading: *TED* -17-26

March 4 - Culture war

Reading: Keynote Address of the 1992 Republican National Convention, Patrick Buchanan (D2L)

*TED* 410-415

March 6 - Culture, language, and immigration

Readings: Huntington, "The Hispanic Challenge" (D2L)

Fukuyama, "Identity Crisis" *Slate Magazine* (link provided)

March 11- Midterm

#### **Unit Four: Political Behavior**

March 18 - Parties, role and purpose

Reading: Selection, Schattschneider, *Semisovereign People* (D2L)

March 20 - Parties, historical context

Reading: TED- Fiorina, "The Decline of Collective Responsibility in American Politics," 374-384

Reading: Party platforms, 2004 (link provided)

March 25 - Elections, historical context

Reading: Brudney and Weber, p. 65-81

March 27 - Elections, voter turnout

Reading: Brudney and Weber, 83-103

Lowi, "Let's Take 'No' For an Answer"

March 28 - Elections, voting behavior

Reading: TED- V.O. Key selection 330-344

April 1 - Media

Reading: Brudney and Weber, Chapter 3

April 3 - Media

Reading: TED- Last, "The Not-So-Swift Mainstream Media," 306-310

April 8 - Interest groups

Reading: Brudney and Weber, Chapter 5

## **Unit Five: Civil Rights and Civil Liberties**

April 10 - Civil Rights

Reading: Brudney and Weber, Chapter 10

April 15 - Civil Liberties

Reading: Brudney and Weber, Chapter 11

## **Unit Six: Policy**

April 17 - Policy and the economy

Reading: TED- 507-517

April 22 - Welfare

Readings TBA

April 24 - Social issues

Readings TBA

April 28- Foreign policy

Readings TBA

May 1 - Review and wrap-up