

Department: POLS

Course No: 173/W

Credits: 3

Title: Introduction to American Political Process

Contact: Jennifer Sterling-Folker

Content Area: CA2 Social Sciences

WQ: Writing

Catalog Copy: POLS173/W. Introduction to American Political Process. Prerequisite: ENGL 105 or 110 or 111 or 250. POLS173 Introduction to the American Political Process. Either semester. Three credits. Analysis of the organization and operation of the American political system.

Course Information: a. Briefly describe in 2-3 sentences the course, stating course goals and objectives: This is an introductory course designed to help the student relate, organize, and analyze in a meaningful and coherent way various facets of the American political process. The course explores the way that different theories of American politics provide explanations and justifications for events and policies that mark the American political system. It also specifically examines how the different institutions and systemic features of American politics interact as part of our constitutional system of government.

b. Describe the course requirements (Specify exam formats, nature and scope of weekly reading assignments, nature and scope of writing assignments, problem sets, etc.): The course requirements include reading a basic text, supplementary articles, and assigned reading from a weekly or daily news periodical. The course generally requires one or two midterms, a final, and occasional short papers or quizzes at the discretion of the professor. When the course is taught with discussion sections, it has a 2 day lecture format and a 1 day discussion section with participatory activities in the sections. Otherwise it has a lecture format with in-class discussion and activities as size permits.

c. List the major themes, issues, topics, etc. to be covered: The course considers such topics as 1) the foundations of American Politics, including the historical and political origins of our constitutional system of government; 2) the institutions of American government, including the Congress, the presidency, the judiciary and the bureaucracy; 3) aspects and systemic features in American politics such as parties, elections, interest groups, public opinion and the media; and (4) domestic and foreign policy issues facing these American political institutions

Meets Goals of Gen Ed.: 2. Acquire intellectual breadth and versatility : American politics encompasses the study of political, economic, social, environmental, anthropological, and psychological factors. As such, students learn the value of certain types of interdisciplinary work and the intellectual breadth and versatility such work provides at its most fundamental level.

4. Acquire moral sensitivity: The moral choices that are made in political arenas are evoked and examined by the very subject of the course itself. POLS 173 examines subjects such as the moral dilemmas facing politicians who must weigh constituent interests against greater national interests, and who must weigh the need to protect fundamental rights against the need for greater national security. The rights of various minority groups and analysis of how they receive support from the constitutional system is also featured. Discussions of all of these topics involve the promotion of greater moral sensitivity.

5. Acquire awareness of their era and society: The focus of POLS 173 is on contemporary and historical affairs in the political, military, economic, environmental, and social realms of United States politics. Students who take the course acquire an awareness of how our own system of government relates to the various elements of American society. They also acquire a basic understanding of relations between the federal government and other entities such as state governments, interest groups, the media, and the public at large.

CA2 Criteria: 2. Introduce students to methods used in the social sciences, including the ethical problems social scientists face: The course surveys the variety of methods available and at the disposal of the American politics scholar. Hence the student is acquainted with such techniques as experimental studies, field research, detailed news analysis and research, and archival research. The study of American politics addresses the ethical dilemmas faced by politicians as they try to balance personal and public lives, as well as represent the views of their constituents in ethically based democratic setting. It also examines the ethical problems scholars of American politics face in researching and collecting data on topics that are politically charged and divisive.

3. Introduce students to ways in which individuals, groups, institutions or societies behave and influence one another and the natural environment: The course discusses a variety of topics that involve the way in which individuals, groups, institutions, and societies influence one another and the natural environment. These include the study of constitutional rights, federalism, the separation of powers, executive-legislative relations, judicial processes, and policy analysis. In other words, it examines agents at various levels-of-analysis and the structures and process of interaction among them.

4. Provide students with tools to analyze social, political or economic groups and social issues at the societal, regional, national and international levels: The methodology of American politics provides students with the tools to analyze all of these entities and issues, because it provides them with the analytical tools to critically examine current debates and issues in the American political arena. Such critical analysis is encouraged not only through class lecture and discussions but also via the variety of course activities that engage the student in independent analysis, such as reading news periodicals on a daily or weekly basis, or role playing exercises in discussion sections. In addition, most American politics textbooks consider race, gender, class, and power to be fundamental concepts in the study of American politics.

W Criteria: 1. W Components to Course: Students are required to produce three research papers of 7-8 pp. in length for a total of 21-24 pp. of work. Paper topics are on subjects integral to the course such as on campaign finance reform, the politics of abortion, smoking or the environment, or public health policy, for example. These papers allow students to go more deeply into these topics and they not only write on them but they also do brief class oral reports to the class and engage in interactive learning. Students over the last decade have learned much about both writing and political processes from their enrollment in this type of 'W' course at the 100's level. The papers are significant in terms of the course grade accounting for 30 % of the total grade. Enrollment in the 173 "W" sections of this course are restricted to no more than 19 students so that the students and instructor can work more closely together on writing excellence.

2. Primary Modes of Writing Instructions: This course utilizes class lectures on basic social science writing and writing improvement along with student exposure to anonymously written previous papers selected from papers submitted in the past which have been marked up and graded so that students can become familiar with what is acceptable or unacceptable as draft and final writing submissions. Individual conferences with students occur even prior to the beginning of writing in that students are asked to first submit a paper topic for prior approval along with a one paragraph description of the topic/subject/ problem, a formal paper outline, a list of proposed and available references from both print and non-print sources. Students are also referred to and we discuss in class both the APA and Electronic style manuals so their student referencing skills can be improved.

3. Structured Opportunities for Revision: In addition to the initial outline review process, students are asked to submit a first draft of a paper that is then read and commented upon by the instructor. This draft

in turn is returned to the student for revision including a follow up opportunity for an additional conference about how the student's writing can be improved in future in the next paper. Usually the student's find the extensive corrections and commentary to be enough for their purposes. Students are also given two grades on a paper, one for writing and one for content, but they must pass the writing component to pass the course. The objective is to help the student produce about 25 pages of excellent writing which is of high quality in terms of both writing/style and content.

a. Describe how the writing assignments will enable and enhance learning the content of the course. Describe the page requirements of the assignments, and the relative weighting of the "W" component of the course for the course grade.

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As a W course, Students are required to produce three research papers of 7-8 pp. in length for a total of 21-24 pp. of work. Paper topics are on subjects integral to the course such as on campaign finance reform, the politics of abortion, smoking or the environment, or public health policy, for example. These papers allow students to go more deeply into these topics and they not only write on them but they also do brief class oral reports to the class and engage in interactive learning. Students over the last decade have learned much about both writing and political processes from their enrollment in this type of 'W' course at the 100's level. The papers are significant in terms of the course grade, and students who fail the writing component of a W course fail the course. Enrollment in the 173 "W" sections of this course are restricted to no more than 19 students so that the students and instructor can work more closely together on writing excellence.

b. Describe the primary modes of writing instruction in the course (e.g. individual conferences, written commentary, formal instruction to the class, and so on.) This course utilizes class lectures on basic social science writing and writing improvement along with student exposure to anonymously written previous papers selected from papers submitted in the past which have been marked up and graded so that students can become familiar with what is acceptable or unacceptable as draft and final writing submissions. Individual conferences with students occur even prior to the beginning of writing in that students are asked to first submit a paper topic for prior approval along with a one paragraph description of the topic/subject/ problem, a formal paper outline, a list of proposed and available references from both print and non-print sources. Students are also referred to and we discuss in class both the APA and Electronic style manuals so their student referencing skills can be improved.

c. Explain how opportunities for revision will be structured into the writing assignments in the course.

In addition to the initial outline review process, students are asked to submit a first draft of a paper that is then read and commented upon by the instructor. This draft in turn is returned to the student for revision including a follow up opportunity for an additional conference about how the student's writing can be improved in future in the next paper. Usually the student's find the extensive corrections and commentary to be enough for their purposes. Students are also given two grades on a paper, one for writing and one for content, but they must pass the writing component to pass the course. The objective is to help the student produce about 25 pages of excellent writing that is of high quality in terms of both writing/style and content.

5. Because this W course is a W variant of POLS173, Anne Hiskes has asked that we answer the following questions related to it:

a. How many sections of the W course will you offer per semester? What is the relation between a nonW section and a W section? NonW and W students in the same lecture session but different work? Independently offered sections?

We do not know how many sections of 173W we will offer at the Storrs campus in the future, but our ability to offer it on a regular basis in the past has been hampered by a lack of resources. When it has been taught in the past, only one section per year has been offered (if that), it has always been by a regular faculty member and the enrollment cap has been 25 students. Under the new GEOCs that cap would go to 19. There is no relationship between a nonW section and a W section of POLS173. The W course has been taught as a separate course from the POLS173 sections we offer each semester. POLS 173W has been available on a regular basis at the Avery Point, Hartford, Tri-campus, and Waterbury regional campuses. The latter's availability at other regional campuses is contingent on the availability of appropriately-trained graduate students, lecturers, and adjuncts who could teach it at those locations.

Role of Grad Students: Every semester this course is taught by several regular faculty members in the department at Storrs, including Professors Yalof, Simien, Ladewig. Select graduate students who are concentrating in this field serve as Teaching Assistants (TAs), who either grade for a faculty member or, if advanced in their studies, teach their own sections. All political science TAs are required to attend the Teaching Institute's roundtables on pedagogy offered prior to the start of Fall semester. International students are additionally required to take teaching tests and to attend a three-day training session at the Institute. Every Fall the department sponsors a TA information session to offer advice and discuss potential problems they may encounter. The department offers roundtables on pedagogical issues throughout the academic year. Finally, the appropriate faculty member, Department head, and the Department's Teaching Mentor supervise the TAs work throughout the semester.

b. Are Graduate students used and supervised in the same way in both nonW and W sections?

Our non-W 173 GEOC proposed course is taught every semester by several regular faculty members in the department at Storrs, including Professors Yalof, Simien, Ladewig. Select graduate students who are concentrating in this field serve as Teaching Assistants (TAs), who either grade non-W sections for a faculty member or, if advanced in their studies, teach their own non-W sections. All political science TAs are required to attend the Teaching Institute's roundtables on pedagogy offered prior to the start of Fall semester. International students are additionally required to take teaching tests and to attend a three-day training session at the Institute. Every Fall the department sponsors a TA information session to offer advice and discuss potential problems they may encounter. The department offers roundtables on pedagogical issues throughout the academic year. Finally, the appropriate faculty member, Department head, and the Department's Teaching Mentor supervise the TAs work throughout the semester. The department has not relied on graduate students to teach W courses or sections in the past (see answer above). The extent to which graduate students may be used in 173W sections in the future depends on GEOC W requirements and expectations. Our regular faculty resources do now allow us to provide enough Ws for all of our majors at this time. The absence of a 173W variant will only make this situation more acute.

analysis of activity in the United States political system across multiple levels-of-analysis. These include analysis of the role that the individual, certain groups and the government itself play in determining outcomes and processes in the American constitutional system. The course also introduces students to various forms of government as a means of placing the American system into context. The roots and practice of democracy and totalitarianism will be briefly explored in order that students may gain a more sophisticated understanding of the nature of the American rep