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Seminar Meeting Time: MWF 9:30-10:20am

**Political Science 1113 - Honors
American Government**

A. Goals:

The course is designed to introduce the honors undergraduate student to key debates in American politics. We will read, discuss, and debate works by contemporary scholars and authors in the fields of political institutions, economic policy, domestic welfare policy, and foreign policy. We will also read one work from James C. Scott, one of the best-known political scientists today, and his arguments for why adopting certain anarchist sensibilities might just improve the functioning of democratic institutions. It is a provocative book designed to help us think about the nature of power.

The course is also designed to aid the development of general skills that will benefit the student in further academic studies as well as future employment. Employers in both the public and private sector have made clear that they want university graduates that can communicate effectively both orally and in writing. They also want graduates that have better critical thinking and analytic reasoning skills. They want employees that have the ability to innovate and be creative. This class is designed to help you improve in all these areas.

B. Motives:

The course is designed to spark lively debate and discussion about key policy areas in American politics. The world of politics rarely provides us with straightforward and easy answers to the problems of democratic governance. Unfortunately, our public space lacks thoughtful reflection on these problems, as politicians and political commentators offer what they claim are commonsense solutions to complex problems. Rarely is the public offered a forum for careful contemplation. Ultimately, American democracy is harmed by such lack of open discussion based upon factual information. This course is designed to work against these larger damaging trends.

With these goals and motives in mind, the course will be run as a seminar to encourage discussion. Students will have numerous opportunities to express themselves in class and in writing. The course is designed to help the student improve both written and oral expression.

C. Requirements:

Participation:

This class will be run as a seminar and will depend upon the active participation of all the members of the class. In order for a seminar to be successful, all the members of the class need to be attentive to doing the readings on time and attending the class regularly. Attendance and participation is mandatory and reflected in your final grade. While I will from time to time have more to say in the form of a brief lecture, this will be a collective endeavor focused on student input. Active student participation is critical.

Reaction Papers:

All of the students in the course are also responsible for writing a reaction paper each week. There is no reaction paper due for the first meeting. The reaction papers should be one-page in length (either single or double spaced) and offer your thoughts, reactions and questions related to the readings for the week. These are reaction papers, and nothing more. They are simply to provide yourself a chance to reflect upon the readings and then to share those thoughts with your classmates before the beginning of the seminar week.

You will post your reaction papers on D2L. Please cut and paste your text into D2L rather than using attachments. The reaction papers will be due by 5pm on Sunday evening, thus providing everyone with the opportunity to read some of them before class on Monday.

You are encouraged to read and respond to the posts by your classmates on D2L.

The reaction papers will not receive individual grades, but are required for the course and their importance is reflected in the grading. Papers that demonstrate a lack of thoughtful reflection upon the readings will not receive credit. Do not provide summaries of the texts – instead, react, critique, reflect. Furthermore, late reaction papers are of no value to the class and no credit will be given.

Debate and Post-Debate Paper:

We will hold a debate each Friday after we finish reading one of the books. Each student will be given the opportunity to argue either for or against one of the six debate resolutions (see below in the course schedule). One student will argue for the resolution, the other against.

The length of the debates will be about 25 minutes. Both sides will be given 5 minutes for an opening argument. This will be followed by 10 minutes of questions from the class and then the closing statements, each about 2 minutes.

The paper should be between 6-7 pages, 1-inch margins on all sides, size 12 typeface and double-spaced. Pages must be numbered. Include a bibliography for all cited material. The style

of citation is open, but must conform to a recognized standard. The paper should argue either for or against the debate resolution the student has already argued. The student need not take the same position as was assigned for the in-class debate. The paper will be graded based on the strength of the arguments presented and the quality of the written presentation.

Only those students that have participated in the debate need to submit a debate paper. Each student is responsible for only one debate paper for the semester.

Take Home Final Exam:

The exact format for the final exam will be specified later, but it will be approximately 10 typewritten pages in length. The question or questions will draw extensively upon the assigned readings for the course. The student will want to have access to all these books to write the final exam, and not all the books will be available on reserve – or if on reserve – they will be in high demand during the final exam. Plan accordingly. The final exam must be delivered in person during the regularly scheduled final exam period.

Late Work:

There is no way to ‘make up’ reaction papers, nor can class participation be ‘made up’. The final exam will be due during the regularly scheduled exam period with no late exams. Late debate papers will receive a 5% deduction for each day they are late.

D. Grading Criteria:

Reaction Papers	10%
Overall Class Participation	20%
Debate Performance	10%
Post-Debate Paper	30%
Take Home Final Examination	30%

A= 90-100%, B=80-89%, C=70-79%, D=60-69%

E. Readings:

The University Book Store has been asked to order the following books. A copy of each book has been placed on reserve in the library, if the library owns a copy.

Required:

Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Strategic Vision: America and the Crisis of Global Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2012).

Robert A. Dahl, *On Democracy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

Chris Hedges and Joe Sacco, *Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt* (New York: Nation Books, 2012).

Paul Krugman, *End This Depression Now* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2012).

Thomas Mann and Norman J. Ornstein, *It's Even Worse Than It Looks: How the American Constitutional System Collided with the New Politics of Extremism* (Basic Books: 2012).

James C. Scott, *Two Cheers for Anarchism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

F. Course Outline:

1 - Organization - Democratic Theory Part 1 **12 January**

Monday Syllabus, Course Discussion
Wednesday Dahl Chapters 8-9
Friday Dahl Chapters 10-11

2 - Democratic Theory Part 2 **19 January**

Monday Holiday – No Class ***Reaction Papers Due Tuesday 5pm
Wednesday Dahl Chapters 12-13 / Dahl Chapters 14-15
Friday Debate #1 Dahl

A democratic state coupled with a capitalist market economy offers the best possible guarantee for human freedom.

3 – Anarchism - A Critique of State Power Part 1 **26 January**

Monday Watch “The Corporation”
Wednesday Scott Preface + Chapter 1
Friday Scott Chapter 2-3

Debate #1 Paper Due

4 – Anarchism - A Critique of State Power Part 2 **2 February**

Monday Scott Chapters 4-5
Wednesday Scott Chapter 6
Friday Debate #2 Anarchism

If more Americans adopted Scott’s idea of an anarchist sensibility, American democracy would be enhanced.

5 – Collapse of American Political Institutions? Part 1

9 February

Monday Watch Bill Moyers “Capital Crimes” Part 1
Wednesday Watch Bill Moyers “Capital Crimes” Part 2
Friday Finish “Capital Crimes” and Discussion

Debate #2 Paper Due

6 – Collapse of American Political Institutions? Part 2

16 February

Monday Mann & Ornstein Introduction, Chapter 1
Watch Mann & Ornstein Interview on PBS NewsHour
Wednesday Mann & Ornstein Chapter 2
Friday Mann & Ornstein Chapter 4

7 – Collapse of American Political Institutions? Part 3

23 February

Monday Mann & Ornstein Chapter 5
Wednesday Mann & Ornstein Chapters 6-7
Friday Debate #3 Mann and Ornstein

The United States' basic political institutions are failing and are in need of major reform.

8 – Foreign Policy Part 1

2 March

Monday Brzezinski Introduction
Watch interview with Brzezinski on PBS NewsHour
Wednesday Brzezinski Part 1
Friday Brzezinski Part 2

Debate #3 Paper Due

9 – Foreign Policy Part 2

9 March

Monday Brzezinski Part 3
Wednesday Brzezinski Part 4 + Conclusion
Friday Debate #4 Brzezinski

While the military must remain a component of American foreign policy it cannot be our primary foreign policy tool. In order for the USA to exercise influence in the world, it must set a better example that others will feel encouraged to follow.

10 – SPRING BREAK

16 March

11 – Economic Policy Part 1

23 March

Monday Paul Krugman Discussion with Bill Moyers
<http://billmoyers.com/segment/paul-krugman-on-recessions-and-recovery/>
Wednesday Krugman Introduction Chapters 1-2
Friday Krugman Chapters 3-4

Debate Paper #4 Due

12 – Economic Policy Part 2

30 March

Monday Krugman Chapters 5-6
Wednesday Krugman Chapters 7-8
Friday Krugman Chapters 9

13 – Economic Policy Part 3

6 April

Monday Krugman Chapters 10-11
Wednesday Krugman Chapter 12, 13 + Postscript
Friday Debate #5 Krugman

To meet the challenge of the Great Recession, the United States needs to use Keynesian policies, as presented by Paul Krugman.

14 – Domestic Policy Part 1

13 April

Monday Hedges & Sacco Introduction + Chapter 1
Wednesday Hedges & Sacco Chapter 2
Friday Hedges & Sacco Chapter 3

Debate #5 Paper Due

15 – Domestic Policy Part 2

20 April

Monday Hedges & Sacco Chapter 4
Wednesday Hedges & Sacco Chapter 5
Friday Debate #6 Hedges & Sacco

The best way to address the hardships faced by the groups and individuals, as discussed in "Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt," is through direct action by the US Federal Government.

16 – Documentary Film Week

27 April

Monday
Wednesday
Friday

Debate #6 Paper Due

17 - Final Exam Week

4 May

Final Exam Due In Class During Regularly Scheduled Final Exam Period

Any act of plagiarism carries very serious consequences.

<http://academicintegrity.okstate.edu/>