**PLSC 101-003: American Politics --- Spring 2019**

**Mondays, Wednesdays, & Fridays: 1:40 pm - 2:30 pm**

**Classroom: Crown Center, Room 114**

**Instructor: Kirstie Lynn Dobbs**

**Office: Coffey Hall Room 445**

**Office Hours: Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 3:40 pm – 5:00 pm**

**Email:** [**kdobbs@luc.edu\**](mailto:kdobbs@luc.edu\)

**Course Description**

This survey course focuses on political processes and procedures found in democratic political systems. It centers on the major institutions found in the United States such as the three branches of government, public opinion, the media, political parties, and interest groups. A specific emphasis on political participation in elections also serves as a cornerstone of this course. Topics covered include the impact of public opinion and the media on U.S. politics, Americans’ beliefs about how government should work, women and politics, representation, and elections and electoral participation.

The pedagogical method applied to this class is a mixture of a lecture-based and active model of teaching. Students are expected to take notes during lectures and are also expected to be actively engaged in classroom activities and discussions.

**Readings**

Hibbing, John and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse. (2002). *Stealth Democracy: American’s Beliefs about How Government Should Work*. Cambridge University Press: New York.

In addition to this book there will be supplemental readings that will be available on the course's Sakai page. Readings should be completed *before* coming to class to enhance and

facilitate lectures and class discussion. You should anticipate approximately 100 pages

of reading per week.

**Learning Outcomes**

After completing the course each student should:

* Have a solid understanding of democracy and different forms of government
* Be familiar with different democratic institutions and how they impact politics
* Articulate different theories and concepts of representation
* Understand the evidence surrounding the arguments related to whether public demands are effectively represented by policy makers
* Make an argument about democratic responsiveness in the United States
* Be better prepared to think critically about the health of contemporary American democracy

**Grading**

Final Exam 25%

Mid Term Exam 25%

Group Presentation 20%

Essay 20%

Participation 10%

*Grading Scale*

A 93-100 C 73-76

A- 90-92 C- 70-72

B+ 87-89 D+ 67-69

B 83-86 D 63-66

B- 80-82 D- 60-62

C+ 77-79 F 59 and below

**Due Dates and Late Policy:**

All assignments must be turned in on their due date through Sakai. Students must be present for exams and the group presentations. Only unforeseen emergencies with valid documentation will permit students to remake exams and their group presentation. Any assignments that are turned in late will receive a 5 percent deduction for each day (24 hours) that the assignment is tardy.

Assignments that are five days late will no longer be accepted, and you will receive a zero on the assignment.

Please anticipate all possible contingencies (computer failure, printer issues, etc.) and please

contact me before or as soon as possible if an issue arises. If a student contacts me about an issue after the assignment is a due, I can no longer make accommodations for that assignment.

Missed classes/Late Assignments: The only excusable reasons for missing a class or exam or handing in an assignment late are serious illnesses and family emergencies. In either case you must both 1) notify me of your situation in a timely manner and 2) provide appropriate documentation. Assignments handed in late without documentation will be penalized by 10% for each date they are late.

**Academic Integrity**

This course follows the guidelines on academic integrity set out by the College of Arts and

Sciences: “A basic mission of a university is to search for and to communicate the truth as it

is honestly perceived. A genuine learning community cannot exist unless this demanding

standard is a fundamental tenet of the intellectual life of the community. Students of Loyola

University Chicago are expected to know, to respect, and to practice this standard of personal

honesty. Academic dishonesty can take several forms, including, but not limited to cheating,

plagiarism, copying another student’s work, and submitting false documents.”

All acts of academic dishonesty including plagiarism, cheating, submitting false documents,

and copying another student’s work will be penalized by an F for the course without any

exception and leniency. If you are not sure what constitutes as academic dishonesty while

doing your research, you should consult me at once.

These guidelines further note: “Plagiarism or any other act of academic dishonesty will result

minimally in the instructor’s assigning the grade of ‘F’ for the assignment or examination.

The instructor may impose a more severe sanction, including a grade of ‘F’ in the course. All

instances of academic dishonesty must be reported by the instructor to the chairperson of

the department involved, and to the Dean.”

You can find the university’s academic honesty policy at this web page: <http://www.luc.edu/cas/pdfs/CAS_Academic_Integrity_Statement_December_07.pdf>

**Assignments**

**Exams (50%)**

There are two exams in this class: a midterm (Wednesday March 13th, in-class) and a final (Thursday May 2nd, 1:00-3:00 pm). Each exam is worth 25% of the total grade and will be multiple choice with 2-3 short answer.

**Group Presentation (20%)**

**Due February 25th-March 1st**

Each group will present a major current political issue in American politics. ALL sides of the debate must be presented. You are not making a case for which side is right or wrong, you are simply presenting multiple sides to an argument.

**Essay (20%)**

You will write a 2-3-page essay. This paper should be an evidence-based argument- drawing on course materials about the quality of democracy in the United States. The prompts for this essay include “Is democracy waning or growing stronger?” “Are democratic institutions/processes in America functioning as they *should* be or are expected to? Do our representatives reflect the will of the people? In order to do this, it is important to begin with a clear definition of democracy. You do not need to do additional outside research, but you can if you desire. A grading rubric for this paper will be provided.

**Participation (10%)**

During the semester students are expected to regularly attend class and to participate in class

discussions. Students are permitted 2 unexcused absences during the semester, but once a

student accumulates more than 2 unexcused absences then their participation grade will be

reduced by 10% for each unexcused absence thereafter. It is impossible to participate when a student is not in class! An unexcused absence in this class will be defined as any absence that was not cleared with the instructor prior to not attending class, or the student failed to communicate with the instructor immediately after missing class.

COURSE SCHEDULE

**1/14 Syllabus / Introduction to American Politics**

**1/16 What is Democracy?**

* Tilly, Charles. “What is Democracy” in Democracy. pp. 1-24.

**1/18 The Constitution**

* History.com. (2018) “Constitution.” Accessed at: <https://www.history.com/topics/united-states-constitution/constitution>.
* Excerpts from Federalist 10, 51, 55, 57, and the Anti-Federalist Ppaers
* Take the “World’s Smallest Political Quiz.” https://www.theadvocates.org/quiz/

**1/21 MLK DAY – NO CLASS**

**1/23 The Three Branches of American Government: a 3-ring circus**

* Watch video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lrk4oY7UxpQ&list=PL8dPuuaLjXtOfse2ncvffeelTrqvhrz8H

**1/25 Political Parties**

* <https://www.diffen.com/difference/Democrat_vs_Republican>
* <http://www.gp.org/>
* <https://www.lp.org/>

**1/28 Movie Day!**

* I will be away at a workshop. A handout to be completed during the video will be given in class. Handout will be turned in for participation points.

**1/30 Movie Day!**

* I will be away at a workshop. A handout to be completed during the video will be given in class. Handout will be turned in for participation points.

**2/1 Movie and Discussion**

* I will be away at a workshop. Students should be able to complete video handout and this handout will be turned in during this class period.

**2/4 Americans’ Beliefs About How Government Should Work**

* Stealth Democracy: pp. 1-35

**2/6 Americans’ Beliefs: Process Space**

* Stealth Democracy: pp. 36-60

**2/8 Americans’ Beliefs: Using Process Space to Explain Features of American Politics**

* Stealth Democracy: pp. 61-106

**2/11 Americans’ Beliefs: Public Assessments of People and Politicians**

* Stealth Democracy: pp. 107-162

**2/13 Americans’ Beliefs: Improving Government and People’s Attitudes toward it**

* Stealth Democracy: pp. 209-20

**2/15 Models of Representation**

* Mansbridge, Jane. (2003). “Rethinking Representation”
* Rehfeld, Andrew. (2009). “Representation Rethought”

**2/18 Do Representatives Respond?**

* Miller, Warren, and Donald Stokes. (1963). “Constituency Influence in Congress”
* Bafumi, Joseph and Michael Heron (2010). “Leapfrog representation and Extremism”

**2/20 Interest Groups**

* Gilens, Martin, and Benjamin page. “Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest groups, and average citizens.” Perspectives on Politics.

**2/22 Take A Stance!**

* <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2018/05/31/the-surprising-way-gun-violence-is-dividing-america/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.06865382dbf4>

**2/25 Issue Politics**

* Group presentation work day

**2/27 Issue Politics**

* Group presentations (1-4) and discussion

**3/1 Issue Politics**

* Group presentations (5-8) and discussion

**3/11 Study Guide for Midterm**

**3/13 MIDTERM**

**3/15 The Role of Public Opinion**

* Public Opinion and Democratic Accountability, Chapters 1 and 8.

**3/18 The Role of Public Opinion**

* Page, Benjamin and Robert Shapiro. (1983). Effects of Public Opinion on Policy.”
* Monroe, Alan. (1998(). “Public Opinion and Public Policy”

**3/20 The Role of the Media**

* https://sites.bu.edu/cmcs/2017/11/16/from-television-to-twitter-how-media-influence-the-presidential-election-in-the-united-states/
* <https://www.huffingtonpost.com/pierre-omidyar/social-media-enemy-of-the_b_4867421.html>

**3/22 The Role of the Media**

* Hutchings, Vincent (2005). Public Opinion and Democratic Accountability. Ch. 1 and 2.

**3/25 Economic Inequality and Representation**

* Gilens, Martin. “Inequality and Democratic Responsiveness”
* Homer Gets a Tax Cut: Inequality and Public Policy in the American Mind”

**3/27 Descriptive Representation**

* Mansbridge, Jane. (1999) “Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women?”
* Broockman, David. “Black Politicians are more Intrinsically Motivated to Advance Black’s Interests”

**3/29 Women in Politics**

* Nancy Burns (2002) “Gender: Public Opinion and Political Action”
* Karen Kaufmann (2008) “Soccer Mon’s and Other Myths about the Gender Gap”

**4/1 Women in Politics**

* Kristin Kanthak and Jonathon Woon (20150. “Women Don’t Run”
* Kathleen Dolan (2014) “Gender Stereotypes, Candidate Evaluations, and Voting for Women Candidates.”

**4/3 Elections and Representative Responsiveness**

* Giffin, John, and Brian Newman. (2005) “Are Voters Better Represented”
* Thomas, Martin (1985). “Election Proximity and Senatorial Roll Call Voting.”

**4/5 Participation in Elections**

**DEMOCRACY ESSAY DUE IN CLASS AND ON SAKAI**

* Martinez, Micheal. “Why is American Turnout so low, and why should we care?”
* McDonald, Micheal. American Voter Turnout in a historical perspective”
* Digital Democracy: How politics online is changing electoral participation

**4/8 Vote Choice**

* Hillygus, Sunshine. “Campaign Effects on Vote Choice”
* Holbrook, Thomas. “Forecasting US Presidential Elections”

**4/10 Interests, Self-and Otherwise**

* Linn, Suzanna, et al. “Economics, Elections, and Voting Behavior”
* Green, John. “Gauging the God Gap: Religion and Voting in US Presidential Elections”

**4/12 Elections Other than Presidential**

* Burden, Barry, and Amber Wichowsky. “Local and National Forces in Congressional Elections”
* Norrander, Barbary. “Primary Elections”

**4/15 Elites and Institutions**

* Powell, Lynda. And Clyde Wilcox. “Money and American Elections”
* Francia, Peter. “Organized Interests: Evolution and Influence”

**4/17 Voter Participation in a Comparative Perspective**

* Franklin, Mark, and Till Weber. “American Electoral Practices in Comparative Perspective”
* https://heavy.com/news/2016/11/eligible-voter-turnout-for-2016-data-hillary-clinton-donald-trump-republican-democrat-popular-vote-registered-results/
* Take Survey \*\*\*\*\*

**4/19 Youth and Political Participation: Knowledge and Interest**

* https://mic.com/articles/102490/new-study-shows-how-young-people-are-influencing-the-political-conversation#.NJCchLSyk
* <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2014/07/millennials-economics-voting-clueless-kids-these-days/374427/>
* <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/06/01/political-news-habits-by-generation/>

**4/22 Youth and Political Participation: Voting**

* <https://bigthink.com/ideafeed/why-young-people-dont-vote-part-apathy-part-frustration>
* <https://www.npr.org/sections/itsallpolitics/2014/10/08/354187589/millennial-voters-are-paying-attention-so-why-don-t-more-actually-vote>

**4/24 Youth and Political Participation: Other Forms of Participation**

* Dieter, Rucht. “The Spread of Protest Politics”
* <https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/posts/millennial-generation-prefers-grassroots-political-approach>

**4/26 Finals Study Guide Day**

**May 2nd FINAL EXAM (1:00-3:00 pm)**