**POL 1100 E: Politics in the US – Spring 2020**

**Meeting Time: Mon/Wed 9:30 am – 10:45 am**

**Classroom: O’Reilly 306**

**Instructor: Dr. Kirstie Lynn Dobbs**

**Office: Cushing Hall 17b**

**Office Hours: Merrimack Campus (Tues/Thurs 9:30 – 11:30; 1:30 – 3:30); Lawrence High School (Tues. 2:45 – 3:45 pm)**

**Email: dobbsk@merrimack.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 debating issues in political science while considering alternative viewpoints also serves as a cornerstone of this course to encourage analytical thinking about politics. Topics covered include the impact of public opinion and the media on U.S. politics, the role of interest groups on public policy, 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. A “flipped” model of teaching will also be utilized in this course, where students are expected to have done the reading / learned the textbook material prior to coming to class. This will allow us to spend more time applying the concepts in active-learning sessions rather than lecturing on basic terminology. Attendance will be taken at the start of each class. If student is more than 15 min late without notice, they will be counted as tardy. Be on time!

**Readings**

Kollman, Ken. 2019 *The American Political System*, Third Edition. New York, London: W.W. Norton & Company.

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

facilitate lectures and class discussion. You should anticipate approximately 60 - 100 pages

of reading per week.

**Access to Google Classroom**

All course materials will be uploaded to Google Classroom. This includes class lectures, rubrics, and assignment sheets. Grades will also be posted on this site. To access the google classroom, go to the google classroom icon via your Gmail account and click “join class.” Then put in the access code **2tir5ga.**

**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 associated with political science and apply them to U.S. politics
* Understand the evidence surrounding the arguments related to whether public demands are effectively represented by policy makers
* Think critically about one’s personal political leanings and be able to engage in a healthy debate surrounding issues in American politics
* 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%

Semester Quizzes (10 quizzes total at 2.5 points each) 25%

Classroom Debate (Experiential Learning Component) 25%

In-class Activities 25%

*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

**Assignments**

**Final Exam (20%)**

The final exam will be taken on May 10th from 11:30 am to 2:30 pm. This exam is composed of 7 short answer questions (you choose 5 to answer). Each question should be answered fully in 1-2 paragraphs with 2 sources from class cited in each question. You will take the exam via classmarker.com and you will need to complete the final by the end of your scheduled exam period.

**Semester Quizzes (25%)**

You will take 10 quizzes throughout the semester. Each quiz consists of 5 multiple choice questions that are pulled directly from the Ken Kollman text. Each quiz is associated with the textbook chapter that we are discussing that week. The quizzes will be taken online via the classmarker website, and they are open book, open note, and untimed. Take your time on the quizzes and READ the chapter BEFORE taking the quiz. To access the quizzes, go to [www.classmarker.com](http://www.classmarker.com) and login via your login information and take the quiz! Login information will be emailed to you. I will also have a copy of your login info. Due dates for quizzes are located below in the course schedule.

**Classroom Debate (Experiential Learning Component) 35%**

You and your classmates will debate a current issue in U.S. politics (examples include, but not limited to gun control, abortion, healthcare, immigration, US intervention abroad…). This debate will fulfill the “service learning” component of this course because you will be working with the students in the early college program at Merrimack. These students come for Lawrence Highschool and are very eager to work with fabulous college students such as yourselves. This will be great opportunity to expose yourselves to many different perspectives on U.S. politics! **You will attend three class periods with the early college students for this debate. These class periods take place from 8:00 am – 9:15 am Monday – Thursday.** Two class periods will be devoted to researching your issue stance. The third-class period will be to present your debate. This will be a formal debate where teammates are expected to have an opening statement and to be prepared for rebuttals. After the debate, you will turn in a one-page reflection. A prompt for the reflection will be given. Dates for the debate activity are Feb. 26 - Mar. 4.

**In-class Activities (20%)**

Please be present in class to receive full points for the in-class activities. Each activity will have an associated worksheet that will be turned in at the end of the class period. **If you are not able to attend class on the day of a graded activity please notify me ASAP** so that we can make other accommodations. The grade activities are listed below.

* You Be the Judge! Acting as a District Court Judge
* Build Your Own Political Campaign
* Movie: 11/8/16
* Interest Group and Politician “Mixer”
* Investigating Media Bias

**Suggested News Outlets**

* *The Washington Post*
* *The New York Times*
* *The Economist*
* CNN
* NPR Politics Podcast; NPR’s Up First
* New York Times’ The Daily
* BBC Global News Podcast

**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 Accommodations from the Accessibility Services Office**

Merrimack College provides reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Students who have, or think they may have, a disability are invited to contact the Accessibility Services Office via the online request form found on the Accessibility Services [**website**](https://www.merrimack.edu/academics/academic-success-center/accessibility-services/)**,** email accessibilityservices@merrimack.edu or by visiting us on the third floor of McQuade Library.

Students are encouraged to contact the office as soon as possible to ensure adequate time to meet and create a plan. Accommodations cannot be made retroactively.

**Statement of Community Standards**

The following statement is taken from Merrimack College’s Student Handbook under Community Standards.

Before all else, the students, faculty, staff, and administration of Merrimack College form an Augustinian community that supports and challenges its members in the pursuit of truth. We declare and celebrate our common purpose, and commit ourselves:

* to serious study, generous service and courageous leadership
* to academic integrity and personal growth
* to civilized discourse in the exchange of ideas
* to friendship, diversity, and mutual respect
* to primacy of conscience and the spiritual life
* to responsibility for the common good, and
* to pride in our school and ourselves

Students have the right to express their views so long as there is nether use nor threat of force, nor interference with the rights of others to express their views (Faculty Handbook 2016, 50).

**Academic Integrity Code**

The following excerpt is taken from Merrimack’s Faculty Handbook and addresses issues surrounding plagiarism. “Plagiarism is intellectual theft. At Merrimack, the failure to acknowledge the intellectual contributions of others is considered plagiarism. It is important to avoid even unintentional plagiarism by being familiar with accepted ways to acknowledge sources and by developing good note-taking and research habits.” Violations of academic integrity also include cheating on exams, fabrication, complicity, appropriation, multiple submissions, and unsanctioned collaboration. Please refer to the following link for a detailed review of the academic integrity code and penalty procedures. <https://www.merrimack.edu/live/files/365-faculty-handbook>.

The academic course penalty will be determined by your instructor. A student who violates the academic integrity code in a course may receive an F for the course, or, at the discretion of the instructor, a less severe penalty. If you withdraw from any course in which you have been accused of an academic integrity violation for which the penalty is F for the course, the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs will record the grade of WF on your transcript (Faculty Handbook 2016). Further action will be taken at the college level.

COURSE SCHEDULE

**1/22** Introduction to course

**1/23** American Politics and Political Science

* Ch. 1 Introduction (KK)
* Fault Lines: Ch. 1. What does it mean to be American?

**1/27** American Politics and Political Science

* Ch. 1 Introduction (KK)
* QUIZ I DUE BEFORE CLASS

**1/29** The Constitution

* Ch. 2 The Constitution (KK)
* History.com. (2018) “Constitution.” Accessed at: [https://www.history.com/topics/united- states-constitution/constitution](https://www.history.com/topics/united-%20%20states-constitution/constitution).
* QUIZ 2 DUE BEFORE CLASS

**2/3** The Constitution

* Ch. 2 The Constitution (KK)
* Fault Lines: Ch. 4

**2/5** Federalism

* Ch. 3 Federalism (KK)
* QUIZ 3 DUE BEFORE CLASS

**2/10** The Judiciary

* Ch. 8 The Judiciary (KK)
* You Be the Judge! Acting as a District Court Judge (**In-Class Activity 1)**
* QUIZ 4 DUE BEFORE CLASS

**2/12** Congress

* Ch. 5 Congress (KK)
* Fault Lines: Ch. 5
* QUIZ 5 DUE BEFORE CLASS

**2/18** Movie Day! *11/8/16* **(In-Class Activity 2)**

**2/19** The Presidency

* Ch. 6 The Presidency (KK)
* Fault Lines. Ch. 6. Should the Electoral College Be Replaced?
* QUIZ 6 DUE BEFORE CLASS

**2/24** Civil Rights and Liberties

* Ch. 4 Civil Rights and Liberties (KK)

**2/26** Debate Day Work Day and MA Education Policy

**3/2** Debate Day Work Day and MA Education Policy

**3/4** Debate Day Presentation and Post Debate Reflection

**3/16** \*\*\*FLEX DAY\*\*\*

**3/18** Public Opinion

* Ch. 9 Public Opinion (KK)
* Fault Lines: Ch. 9 Public Opinion and the Media

**3/23** Political Participation

* Ch. 10 Political Participation (KK)
* Martinez, Michael. “Why is American Turnout so low, and why should we care?”
* QUIZ 7 DUE BEFORE CLASS

**3/25** Political Participation

* Ch. 10 Political Participation (KK)

**3/30** Interest Groups and Social Movements

* Ch. 11 Interest Groups and Social Movements (KK)
* Gilens, Martin, and Benjamin page. “Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest groups, and average citizens.” Perspectives on Politics.
* QUIZ 8 DUE BEFORE CLASS

**4/1** Interest Groups and Social Movements

* Movie: The Impact of Interest Groups

**4/6** Interest Groups and Social Movements

* Interest Group and Politician “Mixer” **(In-Class Activity 3)**

**4/8** Political Parties

* Ch. 12 Political Parties (KK)
* Fault Lines: Ch. 11Political Parties: Should the United States Encourage Multi-Party Politics?
* <https://www.diffen.com/difference/Democrat_vs_Republican>
* <http://www.gp.org/>
* <https://www.lp.org/>
* QUIZ 9 DUE BEFORE CLASS

**4/15** Elections and Campaigns

* Fault Lines: Ch. 10. Elections and Voting: Voter ID Laws
* QUIZ 10 DUE BEFORE CLASS

**4/20** In-class activity: Build your own party campaign! **(In-Class Activity 4)**

* POLICY/ISSUE ESSAY ROUND 2 DUE

**4/22** The Impact of the Media

* Ch. 14 Mass Media and the Press (KK)

**4/27** The Impact of the Media

* Investigating Media Bias **(In-Class Activity 5)**

**4/29** Final Exam Review

**5/10 FINAL EXAM (11:30 am – 2:30 PM)**