

AMERICAN POLITICS
POLITICAL SCIENCE 313A, Fall 2015
THE POLITICS OF THE UNITED STATES

Professor: Colin J. Bennett
Class Session: Mon and Thurs: 11.30am to 12.50am
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About the Course

Political Science 313A introduces students to the political system of the United States, and concentrates on democratic processes: parties, groups, movements and elections. It is aimed at those students who have completed some political science, have some knowledge of American politics through the media, but who have never had a systematic introduction to the operation of US political institutions. By the end of the course, you should have gained a solid appreciation of the US constitutional system, the operation of legislative, judicial and executive institutions within that system, and the contemporary electoral and party systems. The course is designed to be taken in conjunction with POLI 313B (which addresses the US constitutional system, civil rights and civil liberties and the role of the Supreme Court), and POLI 313C (on US indigenous politics).

This course will help you to develop your research, writing and analytical skills. Your term paper will give you the opportunity to build independent research skills and develop a well-organized analytical paper, which tells a coherent story about some aspect of democratic politics in the US. Both the paper, and the written exams, will allow you opportunities to improve your prose.

About the Instructor

My research focuses on the range of issues that are captured by the broad term “personal privacy protection.” I have written about theories of privacy and surveillance, the various policy instruments at domestic and international levels, the political economy of personal information and the complicated and diverse attitudes of citizens toward the introduction of new technologies and the implications for their privacy. In the American context, these interests require me to follow the various intrusions upon the civil liberties protected by the US Bill of Rights, and the responses of US legislative and judicial institutions. More about my publications and research interests can be found at: www.colinbennett.ca

Requirements and Evaluation

- 1) A one-hour in-class midterm short answer exam (scheduled for October 26th) (30%)
- 2) A 3000 word case-study on an aspect of American democratic practice (see below) (30%)
- 3) A final examination in the April exam period (40%)

Readings

There are two required texts available for purchase in the UVIC bookstore:

Edward S. Greenberg and Benjamin I. Page, *America's Democratic Republic* (Fourth Edition).

A digital version of this text is also available at a discount price for 180 days from CourseSmart:

http://www.coursesmart.com/IR/1737187/9780205029983?_hdv=6.8

Stephen J. Wayne, *Road to the White House 2016* (Tenth Edition, 2016)

All other required readings are linked from Coursespaces, where you can also find the lecture and reading schedule. I have also suggested a few recommended texts and websites that students in prior classes have found valuable, and which you should consult for your term papers.

In preparing for the exams, please bear in mind that attention should be paid to both reading assignments and class notes. The lectures and discussions will go beyond the information found in the readings, so you should attend every class. It goes without saying that you will find the class discussion more rewarding if you read the assignments before the scheduled class period.

Keeping in Touch

I receive many e-mails every day and am responsible for the teaching of a large number of students this term. Therefore, I am not able to respond to every inquiry in detail. Please take a moment before e-mailing me to ask yourself three questions: 1) Is the answer to the question on the syllabus or on Moodle? 2) Can the question wait until next class so others in the class can benefit from the answer? 3) Can the question wait until my office hours? I will keep my office hours diligently, and will be available at other times if you would like to make an appointment. Office hours are a great opportunity for me to get to know you one-on-one and to have an extended conversation about your work.

Student Etiquette

In the spirit of collegiality, please come to class on time and do not disrupt the class with late arrivals. Please turn off your cell phones during class. Laptops are permitted in the classroom, but limited to appropriate usage - taking of notes or accessing the materials on the Course Spaces site. It is inappropriate to surf the web, use Facebook or play games during class. Extracurricular computing is a disturbance to the people sitting around you.

RESEARCH PAPER ASSIGNMENT

This assignment gives you an opportunity to research a contemporary American issue in some depth, and to present a well-written and organized research paper. You are each to address one of the following topics through the CHOICE function on Coursespaces.

The final paper should be uploaded by 5pm on Monday, DECEMBER 7th. THE SYSTEM WILL NOT ACCEPT PAPERS POSTED AFTER THAT TIME. No extensions will be given unless an Academic Concession form with a proper medical note is provided. I will respond to your work electronically, and send back a corrected copy with track changes and comments. No paper copies will be accepted or returned. Please ensure that your paper is labelled as follows: [lastname]313a.doc

This paper counts for 30% of your grade, and cannot be completed adequately in less than 12 pages (c. 3,000 words, not including footnotes and bibliography). Please do not go over 3500 words. Papers should be typed (double-spaced) and should include in-text citations and a bibliography. Citations guides can be found at the library website: <http://library.uvic.ca/site/erf/citation.html> Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Please ensure that you are familiar with University and departmental rules about academic integrity: http://web.uvic.ca/~polisci/department_policies/plagiarism.php

A wide variety of material may be useful (from newspaper and magazine articles to more scholarly and analytical works). Do NOT cite Wikipedia. Those papers that delve into some original sources. I have listed some recommended texts and resources on Course Spaces. The required texts also contain plenty of references to appropriate cases. But if you need assistance with selecting and refining a topic, or obtaining sources, consult me during my office hours.

I also encourage you to visit *The Writing Centre* for assistance with your term paper. Assistance from the writing centre can make a huge difference in your confidence and writing skills. For an appointment, visit their website at: <http://lwc.uvic.ca/servicesprograms/twc/students.php>

Time Management. At one time or another, most of us have problems managing our time. Learning how to manage your time and workload is an important skill. Counseling services offer excellent courses on time management and provide one-on-one assistance. Visit them or their website at: <http://coun.uvic.ca/learning>