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POLS 151-04, United States Politics, Fall 2008

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POLITICAL SCIENCE 151 UNITED STATES POLITICS

Marcus D. Pohlmann
Professor of Political Science
Office Hours:
TuTh 2:00 -- 5:00
or by appointment

PURPOSE OF THE COURSE

The course is designed as a critical introduction to United States politics, challenging many of the traditional explanations of the system's functioning. In particular, it analyzes the political process and the relationship between governmental policy and the individual citizen. The central questions being addressed are: How does the political system work, both by design and in reality? Are all interests served relatively equally as a result? Is the U.S. political system a "democracy"? What, if anything, could make it more democratic?

Hopefully, the student will come away with some essential knowledge of the political process, its problems, and alternatives to the status quo. The course also attempts to help stimulate and develop the student's creative thought, clarity of expression, study habits, and interest in politics and political science. In addition, it is hoped that this course will assist the student in coming to his/her own political self-awareness (where he/she fits in politically) and activate pursuit of his/her interests in the political arena.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Readings -- do them all carefully and critically prior to class.
Class Contribution -- attend all classes, come prepared, and participate.
Quizzes -- daily
Midterm Examination
Final Examination

REQUIRED TEXTS

Edward Greenberg and Benjamin Page, America's Democratic Republic (2007)
Howard Zinn, A Peoples' History of the United States (2003)

note: you also are required to stay up with each day's national news developments

GRADES

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| Daily Quizzes (20) | 40% |
| Class Participation | 10% |
| Election Project | 10% |
| Midterm Examination | 20% |
| Final Examination | <u>20%</u> |
| | 100% |

Exam Rule #1: NO MAKE-UP QUIZZES. I will drop your 2 lowest quiz scores (2 of the 27). That allows you to miss two classes without penalty (one week's worth of classes).

Exam Rule #2: You may take exams early but not late. Contact me ahead of the exam if you will miss it due to illness or other emergency! Otherwise, **NO MAKE-UP EXAMS.**

Exam Rule #3: Looking at previous years' test questions or answers is not allowed and will be viewed as a serious violation of the Honor Code. When you pledge your quizzes and exams, you will be pledging in part that you have not seen any such materials.

COURSE OUTLINE

Course Introduction August 28

I. Developing Democracy

A. Defining Our Terms September 2
Read: Greenberg & Page, chap. 1

II. Historical Context: A "Peoples' History" of the United States

A. Setting the Stage

1. Discovering America September 4
Read: Zinn chaps. 1, 2 and 3

2. The American Revolution September 9
Read: Zinn chaps. 4 and 5

II. Historical Context: A “Peoples’ History” of the United States (cont.)

B. Establishing the Nation

1. Westward Expansion September 11
Read: Zinn chaps. 6, 7 and 8
2. The War in the South September 16
Read: Zinn chap. 9
3. The War in the North September 18
Read: Zinn chap. 10 and 11
4. Combating the Socialist Challenge September 23
Read: Zinn chaps. 13 and 15

C. United States Foreign Policy

1. Early Internationalism September 25
Read: Zinn chaps. 12 and 14
2. WWII and Viet Nam September 30
Read: Zinn chaps. 16 and 18

D. United States Domestic Policy

1. The Civil Rights Movement October 2
Read: Zinn chaps. 17 and 19
2. The 1970s and 1980s October 7
Read: Zinn chaps. 20-22
3. Mounting Discontent? October 9
Read: Zinn chaps. 23-25

MIDTERM EXAM

October 11

III. U.S. National Government and Policy Making Process

- A. The U.S. Constitution October 16
Read: Greenberg & Page, chaps. 2, 4, 5

FALL BREAK

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| B. Public Opinion <u>Read</u> : Greenberg & Page, chap. 6 | October 23 |
| C. News Media <u>Read</u> : Greenberg & Page, chap. 7 | October 28 |
| D. Interest Groups <u>Read</u> : Greenberg & Page, chap. 8 | October 30 |
| E. 2008 Presidential Election Exercise Predictions (papers due) Election Review (de-brief due) | November 4 November 6 |
| F. Political Parties <u>Read</u> : Greenberg & Page, chap. 9 | November 11 |
| G. Campaigns and Elections <u>Read</u> : Greenberg & Page, chap. 10 | November 13 |
| H. Congress <u>Read</u> : Greenberg & Page, chap. 11 | November 18 |
| I. The Presidency <u>Read</u> : Greenberg & Page, chap. 12 | November 20 |
| J. The Bureaucracy <u>Read</u> : Greenberg & Page, chap. 13 | November 25 |

THANKSGIVING BREAK

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|--|------------|
| K. The Courts <u>Read</u> : Greenberg & Page, chap. 14 | December 2 |
| L. Domestic Policy <u>Read</u> : Greenberg & Page, chap. 15 | December 4 |
| M. Foreign Policy <u>Read</u> : Greenberg & Page, chap. 16 | December 9 |

FINAL EXAM

Monday, Dec. 15 (1:00 p.m.)

ELECTION RESEARCH PROJECT

You are to analyze the two (2) states assigned to you. Your analysis should include a brief description of how each party's presidential candidates have fared in that state in recent history, as well as major events in this year's campaign. It should culminate in an outcome prediction, including each candidate's predicted percentage of the vote. Your write-up should include a bibliography of the sources you used (including e-sources).

Each election analysis should fit on one page, with 3 succinct paragraphs. Your total paper should be 3 pages in length.

Page One: Election Analysis #1

Paragraph 1: partisan presidential electoral history of the state (50 years)

Paragraph 2: major events and issues affecting this year's campaign there

Paragraph 3: your percentage predictions and explanation why

Page Two: Election Analysis #2

Paragraph 1: partisan presidential electoral history of the state (50 years)

Paragraph 2: major events and issues affecting this year's campaign there

Paragraph 3: your percentage predictions and explanation why

Page Three: Bibliography