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## POLS 485-01, Senior Seminar, Spring 2008

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**Political Science 485**  
**Spring 2008**  
**Senior Seminar**

Instructor: Mr. Cullen  
Buckman 306

Office hours: Monday and Wednesday 11:00-1:00, and by appointment.

The senior seminar is a capstone course that examines the current state of American politics and political culture. The course readings reflect on enduring questions of constitutional government and timely issues of politics and policy. The precise topics of the course will be considered with constant reference to America's founding principles and the enduring debate about the truth and adequacy of those principles.

Our seminar will involve intensive discussion, which presupposes careful preparation and probing reflection on your part in advance of each class meeting. Every student will be responsible for framing issues, initiating and advancing discussion, and making connections among the readings and arguments as we proceed through the semester. At times you will be assigned a more formal role in this process.

You will be required to prepare a short type-written response (approximately 1 page single-spaced) to the reading for each class. These are to be handed in at the start of class.

Since we meet only once a week, it is imperative that you attend every class; unexcused absences will result in a lowering of your grade.

There will be an in-class comprehensive essay examination on  
You will write a 12-15 page research paper on a topic of your choosing; however, you may not select a topic that you have written on (or will write) for another course. If you have any uncertainty about the eligibility of your topic, please consult me. You will be assigned a slot near the end of the semester for an oral presentation of your paper (which should be completed in draft form); your final paper will be due one week after your presentation.

## REQUIRED BOOKS

James Bowman, *Honor: A History*  
George Carey ed., *Freedom and Virtue: The Conservative/Libertarian Debate*  
Tyler Cowen, *Creative Destruction: How Globalization is Changing the World's Culture*  
Carol Swain ed., *Debating Immigration*

Other required readings may be distributed electronically or in handouts.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

12- 15 page research paper	35%
Class participation	25%
Examination	25%
Miscellaneous writing assignments	15%

## SCHEDULE

January 14:	Introduction and Overview  Wednesday January 23: Please Attend Charlie Cook's talk 7:30 PM Barret 051
January 28:	Question selected by the class Readings TBA <b>Research topic due (1-2 page description)</b>
February 4:	The Republicans and Democrats Readings TBA
February 11:	Carey, <i>Freedom and Virtue</i> , pp. ix-xxii, 1-37, 55-78, 102-171 <b>Research bibliography due</b>
February 18:	Bowman, <i>Honor: A History</i>
February 25:	TBA, Meeting with journalist and author David Shipler
<b>Spring Break</b>	
March 10:	Swain, Chapters 1-8
March 17:	Swain, Chapters 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 18
March 24:	Tyler Cowen, <i>Creative Destruction</i>
March 31:	<b>Examination</b>
April 7-21:	Research Presentations

## Sample Paper Topics

Gun control and the second amendment

Should the presidential nomination process be reformed?

Political Influence of the blogosphere

Is there a culture war between Red and Blue States?

The future of feminism in politics and culture

Race and American politics

Interpreting politics through film

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