**Introduction to Politics (790:101)**

Rutgers University-Camden

Fall 2015 Semester

Tuesdays and Thursdays 11 AM - 12:20 PM

Walt Whitman Center Auditorium

Dr. Maureen Donaghy

401 Cooper Street, Camden, NJ 08102

Maureen.Donaghy@Rutgers.edu

Office Hours: **Tuesdays, 1:15-3 PM, Thursdays, 4-5 PM**, and by appointment

**COURSE OVERVIEW**

The purpose of Introduction to Politics is to familiarize students with the principal concepts, theories, and sub-fields within the study of politics.  The course aims to define core concepts like “politics,” “power,” “participation,” and to define/evaluate various regime types, including both democratic and authoritarian regimes.  The course will also introduce and evaluate different modes of political activity, from the conventional (voting) to the unconventional (coups, protest, cultural modes of political expression). The overarching goal of this course is to guide students to grapple with key substantive concepts involved in studying politics, policy, citizenship, government, and governance. Our textbook selection (Douglas Van Belle’s *A Novel Approach to Politics*) uniquely emphasizes the many ways in which popular culture reflects, and is reflected in, contemporary political discourse. By the time students complete this course (required for political science majors and minors), they should have a clear understanding of the overall purpose and scope of the study of politics (while still recognizing that many political scientists disagree over the major theories and foci of the field).

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

In addition to providing students with an introductory overview of the field of political science as described above, this course has several distinct but interrelated learning objectives:

1. Identify types and characteristics of political institutions and understand how individuals and groups interact with them.
2. Explore types and characteristics of governmental regimes and analyze the merits and application of each.
3. Define power within a political context, identifying how power is allocated (Who has power? Who does not?), limited, and exercised, and the implications of this power distribution for individual and institutional realities.
4. Review other concepts central to the discipline as a whole (public goods, free-rider/collective action problems, principal-agent problems, pluralism, and other concepts as the professor sees fit)

**EXPECTATIONS**

1. *Accountability*: Students will be given clear deadlines and expectations, and will be held to them.
2. *Technological Expertise*: Students will work with classroom and learning technology in an effort to better prepare them for future academic and/or professional collaborative projects;
3. *Active Classroom Engagement*: The class will work to encourage proactive and professional student engagement through the course discussion in person and online. All students will work to the best of their abilities, so as to be active participants in their education, rather than passive or uncritical consumers of information; and
4. *Conceptual Application*: Students will strive to make creative connections between academic concepts and real-world politics through group research, discussion, and or writing assignments.

**TEXTBOOK**

Van Belle, Douglas A. 2013. *A Novel Approach to Politics: Introducing Political Science through Books, Movies, and Popular Culture*. Thousand Oaks, CA: C.Q. Press.

This textbook is our primary reading source for the semester, though **I may supplement it from time-to-time with brief additional readings**. In general, you will be expected to read one chapter a week. For more detail, please see the schedule at the end of this syllabus.

**TECHNOLOGY IN THE CLASSROOM**

Quizzes will be given using the Socrative web platform (http://b.socrative.com/login/student/). This website can be accessed on laptops, tablets and/or smart phones; Socrative Student is also available as a free application on Apple and Android Smart Phones. Once the instructor announces that a quiz is ‘open’, she will provide an access code enabling students to take the exam.

The course operates under the assumption that all students have access to a smart phone, tablet, or laptop computer, any of which can be used to complete class quizzes. If this is not the case, please see me as soon as possible, so that we can arrange an accommodation

**STUDENT EVALUATION**

**Letter grades will be based on the following distribution:**

**90-100% A**

**85-89.9$ B+**

**80-84.9% B**

**75-79.9% C+**

**70-74.9% C**

**60-69.9% D**

**Below 60 F**

**EVALUATION COMPONENTS**:

**Socrative Quizzes (3% each, 30% total):** each week we will have one in-class quiz (mostly consisting of five multiple choice questions) covering a specified component of weekly lectures.

**Current Events Blog (2.5% each, 10% total):** Four times during the semester each student must post a blog entry using the “Blog” tool on Sakai. Blog posts should be relatively short (i.e. 2-3 paragraphs). Students should choose one Opinion piece from a national or international newspaper or magazine (New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Washington Post, the Economist, Time etc.) and respond to the following questions: 1) What is the author’s main argument? 2) What is the author’s political or ideological orientation? 3) What would be an opposing argument to the author’s claims? 4) Do you find the argument compelling? Why or why not?

**Midterm Examination** (25%) and **Final Examination** (35%): both the midterm and final exam will feature a combination of multiple choice and short answer questions; the final exam will include an additional take home essay of approximately 4-5 pages.

**CLASS POLICIES**

**Attendance**: class attendance is mandatory, and attendance will be taken during most class sessions. Students with three to four unexcused absences will have their final semester grade reduced by ½ letter grade (for example, from a B+ to a B); students with five or more unexcused absences will have their final grade reduced by a full letter (from B+ to C+). Students who arrive later and miss quizzes will not be able to make them up, nor will extra time be granted to accommodate students who arrive after a quiz has begun. Absences may be excused for religious observation, excused university activities like field trips, and documented illnesses.

**Academic Integrity**: Cases of plagiarism and/or cheating on exams will be referred to university authorities under the Rutgers Academic Integrity Policy. Please carefully read the materials available at <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/>.

**Exam/Classroom Accommodations**: Any students requiring special accommodations relating to military service, documented disabilities, and so on should speak to me individually as soon as possible so that appropriate accommodations can be made.

**SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND ASSIGNMENTS**

**WEEKS 1 AND 2:** **INTRODUCING THE ANCIENT DEBATE—THE REAL & IDEAL IN POLITICS**

Tuesday, September 1 - Introduction

Thursday, September 3 – CLASS CANCELLED. Read Van Belle, Chapter 1

Tuesday, September 8 – NO CLASS, follow a Monday schedule

Thursday, September 10, Conclude Van Belle, Chapter 1

**WEEK 3: WHY GOVERNMENT?**

Tuesday, September 15 – Van Belle Chapter 2

Thursday, September 17 –

**WEEK 4: GOVERNING SOCIETY**

Tuesday, September 22 – Van Belle Chapter 3

Thursday, September 24 – **ONLINE CLASS**

**WEEK 5: GOVERNMENT AND ECONOMY**

Tuesday, September 29 – Van Belle Chapter 4

Thursday, October 1 – **ONLINE CLASS**

**WEEK 6: STRUCTURES AND INSTITUTIONS**

Tuesday, October 6 – Van Belle Chapter 5

Thursday, October 8 –

**WEEK 7: EXECUTIVE INSTITUTIONS**

Tuesday, October 13 – Van Belle Chapter 6

Thursday, October 15 –

**WEEK 8: MIDTERM**

Tuesday, October 20 – Midterm Review

Thursday, October 22 – **Midterm (In Class)**

**WEEK 9: LEGISLATIVE INSTITUTIONS AND THE BUREAUCRACY**

Tuesday, October 27 – Van Belle Chapter 7

Thursday, October 29 – Van Belle Chapter 8

**Week 10: THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL**

Tuesday, November 3 – Election Day, Van Belle Chapter 10

Thursday, November 5 -

**WEEK 11: COURTS AND LAW**

Tuesday, November 10 –Van Belle Chapter 9

Thursday, November 12 -

**WEEK 12: MEDIA, POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT**

Tuesday, November 17 – Van Belle Chapter 11

Thursday, November 19

**WEEK 13: INTERNATIONAL POLITICS**

Tuesday, November 24 – Van Belle Chapter 12

Thursday, November 26 – Thanksgiving, NO CLASS

**WEEK 14: POLITICAL CULTURE**

Tuesday, December 1 – Van Belle Chapter 14

Thursday, December 3 –

**WEEK 15: CONCLUSIONS, THE STUDY OF POLITICS, AND REVIEW**

Tuesday, December 8 – Van Belle Chapter 15

Thursday, December 10 – LAST CLASS

Tuesday, December 15 - **Final Exam – 11:30-2:30**