

American Government and Politics (AP/POLS 3540 3.00 W 2020)

Lecture 2:30- 5:30 Wednesdays – ACE 009

Office Hours: 12:00-1:00 Wednesdays

Andrew Jones - email@andrewjones.info

"All nationalism is wounded nationalism" - John Dolan.

This course will provide a survey of the significant institutions of the American political environment in the contemporary period, both public and private. The primary focus of this course will be domestic rather than international American Politics. This course will cover the era of decline within the American State since the Nixon Administration and Watergate with a focus on post 9/11 America. The objective of this course is to provide a survey of the major cultural, economic and political forces within the contemporary American Politics. This course assumes a basic level of awareness of American politics and 20th and 21st century American history, for those who are unfamiliar with American politics please see the supplementary readings for additional information.

The first six weeks will cover 20th century American history, the different branches of government and electoral politics. This will allow us to understand how the American System works and understand the American election cycle. The final five weeks will cover ten major topics in contemporary American politics.

Evaluation:

25% Midterm – February 26th

- This midterm will focus on the material covered during the first 6 weeks of the course. It will be a mixture of multiple choice, fill in the blank, short answer and essay questions

40% Term Paper – April 1st

- This term paper will be a 3000-word paper on a contemporary political event in American Politics within the last year and what interest groups shaped that story. For example, the impact of the New Hampshire 2020 Primary on the Democratic Party or the “Ukraine-gate” impeachment process in relation to the intelligence community. The objective of the paper is to demonstrate your ability to use course material to understand current events.
- 2% Penalty per day for lateness
- To be submitted on Moodle

35% Final Exam - TBD

- 2 long essay questions based on the topics covered in the last 5 weeks.

Mandatory Texts (that are not available on Moodle):

Hate Inc. – Matt Taibbi

Listen Liberal – Thomas Frank

What's the Matter with Kansas – Thomas Frank

The New Jim Crow – Michelle Alexander

Course Schedule:

Week 1 – January 8th - Introduction and a History of America until 1968

Week 2 – January 15th - America from 1968 to 2016

- Bowling Alone – Robert Putnam – Introduction
- What's the Matter with Kansas – Thomas Frank – Chapter 1
- The Liberal Tradition in America – Louis Hartz – Chapter 1

Week 3 – January 22nd - Branches of Government –

- The United States Constitution – Articles 1 – 7 and Amendments 1 -27

Week 4 – January 29th – The Republican Party

- What's the Matter with Kansas? – Thomas Frank – Chapter 2, 3 and 5
- The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism – Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson– Chapter 5

Week 5 – February 5th – The Democratic Party

- Listen Liberal – Thomas Frank – Chapters 1, 2 and 3

Week 6 – February 12th – Primaries and General Elections

- Dark Money – Jane Mayer – Introduction
- Hate Inc – Matt Taibbi – Chapters 1 - 6

Week 7 – February 26th – Midterm

Week 8 – March 4th – The Media and Big Tech

- Hate Inc – Matt Taibbi – Chapters 7 to 12
- Manufacturing Consent – Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky – Chapter 1 and 2
- The Age of Surveillance Capitalism – Shoshana Zuboff - Chapter 18

Week 9 – March 11th – The Military Industrial Complex and Intelligence Community

- The Military Industrial Complex Speech – Dwight D. Eisenhower
- Surveillance Valley – Yasha Levine – Chapter 6

- Permanent Record – Edward Snowden– Chapter 12 and Chapter 17
- War Nerd: The Worst Thing about Drones – Gary Brecher (John Dolan) - <https://www.nsfwcorp.com/dispatch/cheap-drones/>

Week 10 – March 18th – Racism, Drugs, and the Prison Industrial Complex

- The New Jim Crow – Michelle Alexander – Introduction and Chapters 1 and 2

Week 11 – March 25th – The Financial Sector and the Healthcare Sector

- Crashed – Adam Tooze – Chapter 2
- Understanding Health Policy – Thomas Bodenheimer and Kevin Grumbach – Chapter 2

Week 12 – April 1st – The Alternative Right and the Left-Wing Revival

- Insurgent Supremacists – Mathew Lyons - Introduction
- Alt-America – David Neiwert - Chapter 11
- The Kids are Alt-Right – Andrew Jones – Chapter 3
- Hate Inc - Matt Taibbi – Chapter 13 to 15