Syllabus - PSI 101-7 American Politics
Doane College, Grand Island

Credits: 3 hours

Instructor: Peter Kortum E-Mail: peter.kortum@doane.edu Phone: 402-705-9674

Day & Time: Wednesday - 6:00 P.M. Location: College Park - Grand Island

Course Description: An analysis of American political institutions and behavior.

Foundational Area of Knowledge (FAK): PSI 101 American Politics fulfills the requirement for a Foundational Area of Knowledge in Community and Identity.

FAK Description: Students will gain a greater understanding of themselves and the communities in which they live and work, and how identity is formed through the interaction of the individual and larger society.

FAK Community and Identity Learning Outcomes:
Students will work to:

- explore dimensions of human experience with regard to perceptions of self
- understand how individuals interact to form communities and social structures
- analyze the practical and ethical implications of interactions between individuals and those social structures

In addition to the FAK outcomes listed above, students will:

- Understand the historical foundations of American politics.
- Be acquainted with the influence on American politics from the media.
- Be acquainted with current policy issues within the American political system.
- Develop critical thinking skills necessary to evaluate and analyze the issues in American politics.

This course will attempt to achieve all of these outcomes.

- Through readings and lecture, the student will gain an understanding of some of the sources of conflicts in American politics to include; differences in an individual’s cultural values, race, gender, and ethnicity.
- Through readings and lecture, the student will gain an understanding of how the U.S. Constitution sought to protect minority rights in a system of majority rule.
- Special FAK Project: Each student will select a Special Interest Group for an in class presentation. The students will gain an understanding of the reasons people will join and support an interest group as well as the methods used by these groups to influence public policy.

**Learning Strategies:** Methods of instruction include lecture, in class debates and discussion, video of relevant political topics, and presentations by students.

**Grading and Assessment of Student Performance:**
Grading points (100 maximum) will be a combination of class participation, miscellaneous assignments, and a final paper with an in-class presentation.

**30 Points - Written Topic Paper and Oral Presentation.** This is a five to ten page written report on a current piece of federal or state legislation, regulation, or major policy issue. The report will examine the themes common to political issues, as well as the pro and con arguments on the selected topic.

In addition, the student will present their findings in a 20 minute oral presentation that will be followed by classroom discussion. The topic is to be agreed upon by the student and instructor.

**50 Points – Weekly Assignments.** All weekly assignments will be handed out at the first class meeting.

**20 Points - Class Participation.** Student participation is an integral part of this class. We learn from you and you will learn from the group. The student will be evaluated for their analysis skills, ability to support their position, and level of class participation.

**Grading:**

- 90-100 = A
- 85-89 = B+
- 80-84 = B
- 75-79 = C+
- 70-74 = C
- 65-69 = D+
- 60-64 = D
- 59 or less = F
Course Policies:

The Doane College Academic Integrity policy will be adhered to in this class. All projects and tests will represent your own work. Any use of others’ ideas and words without proper citation or sources is plagiarism and will result in penalties to be determined by the instructor and/or the dean of undergraduate studies.

In the event a student needs to miss a class, any assignments that were due will need to be turned in by the opening of the next scheduled class. The student will be unable to earn participation points for any missed class.

If a student misses more than one class session, additional assignments will be required to confirm to the instructor that the student thoroughly understands all of the learning objectives. The additional assignments will be extensive. It would be much better to attend class.

Papers/Assignments are due as assigned, otherwise, no credit.

Advance Assignment: Prior to our first meeting complete the following:

- Read Chapter 1. Understanding American Politics.
- Read Chapter 2. The Constitution and the Founding.