

**SEMINAR IN
AMERICAN INSTITUTIONS AND VALUES SINCE 1900
Honors 201B**

Spring 2004
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THE COURSE

This course is a sophomore honors seminar that partially meets the American and California institutions requirement. Additionally it deals with some of the major events and recurring issues in American society since 1900. We will discuss the important political and social developments of the past century; the institutions both public and private that influence policy; the important issues that leaders are debating today; and the recurrent themes in American politics, including democracy, class, race and ethnicity and freedom of thought and speech.

The objective of the course is nothing less than to help you become a more involved and effective citizen by understanding how public decisions are made in America; as well as understanding the public debate that precedes these decisions. In other words the goal of this course is not only to help you understand how policy is made, but how this debate is structured by our cultural and political history. We will try to understand why some issues occur time and again but never seem to be resolved; and why some issues are not considered to be suitable issues for public action. We will also discuss how this knowledge can be used to influence policy.

This is a very broad course covering political social and cultural history; political institutions; and current and recent issues. You will read material by historians, political scientists, journalists, political commentators and popular writers. It is important not just to read this material but to think about it and try to understand it. Often it is difficult to understand what you believe about an issue until you are forced to clarify your ideas through writing or preparing an oral presentation; or until your ideas are challenged by others. Opportunities for this clarification will occur in this course and is in keeping with additional course objectives that include helping you to hone your thinking, writing and speaking skills. These are valuable skills that one can, and many do, develop in college.

Since this course is a seminar, there will be relatively few lectures and a great deal of discussion. In each class we will discuss the readings as well as relevant events. (Since it is my sad experience that some students will not do the readings unless tested on them, there will be regular quizzes on the readings.) The course structure will be flexible. I am willing to discuss any topic that is relevant and want to discuss those topics that you find interesting or find in need of greater explanation or exploration. This does not mean that we will ignore the assignments, rather that there is sufficient room for additional discussion.

Because of the nature of the course, much of what is on this syllabus is subject to change, including readings and the class schedule. You will be notified immediately by e-mail of any changes. An ability (and willingness) to communicate by e-mail is a requirement of the course as is the ability (and willingness) to use Blackboard.

CLASS

The class will meet from 1:00-2:15 PM on Mondays and Wednesdays. Since the success of this class depends on full participation, **attendance is required**. Students missing class sessions or arriving late will be penalized in the class participation grade. The participation grade is determined mostly by attendance and being able to discuss the assigned readings and other relevant material in a knowledgeable manner. However, this grade also includes: timeliness in turning in material; keeping in touch with me outside of class; and general cooperativeness in meeting class requirements. Appropriate behavior is always expected in class. All electronic devices including telephones and audible signals on any device must be turned off. Everyone must be treated

with respect, even in the midst of heated exchanges. Disruptive behavior may significantly affect the class participation grade

Office hours will be announced in class and are subject to change. Since I am a political science advisor I have generous office hours scheduled, but they are often filled by appointments and I encourage you to make appointments by calling 278 3521. Appointments can be made outside of these hours and I am easily reached by e-mail. I am more than willing to discuss aspects of your academic experiences and plans that go beyond the scope of this course.

REQUIRED READINGS

One purpose of this course is to help you understand our political system in its contemporary context. Therefore in addition to the readings listed below, **reading a daily newspaper is an assigned reading for this course.** The following books are available at the bookstore and should be purchased. Additional readings will be handed out in class, including chapters from a book in preparation on California politics. You are responsible for all material handed out in class as well as for all changes in assignments.

Dahl	<i>How Democratic is the American Constitution</i>
Flippin	<i>The Best American Political Writing 2003</i>
Greene	<i>Praying for Sheetrock</i>
Hays	<i>History of Environmental Politics Since 1945</i>
Leuchtenburg	<i>In the Shadow of FDR: from Harry Truman to Ronald Reagan</i>
Waldman	<i>The Bill</i>
Zinn	<i>Twentieth Century: A People's History</i>

GRADING

Grades will be based on the following

Attendance and participation (including quizzes)	30%
Written work (see below)	35%
Oral presentations	10%
Final Exam	25%

Written Work

Several short papers will be required in this course

Interview with parents/grandparents (2 Pages)	5%
Summary/Interview of city council Meeting (2 Pages)	5%
Book analysis of "The Bill" (3 Pages)	10%
Issue paper (6 Pages + oral report)	15%

Extra Credit

Book review and analysis of choice (2 Pages + oral report)	5%
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Oral Presentations

You will prepare a short presentation for late in the course

CLASS MEETINGS

WEEK	Beginning Date	Topic
I.	FEB 2	Introductory classes READING: Zinn, <i>The Twentieth Century</i> , (begin)
II.	FEB 9	History I READING: Zinn, <i>The Twentieth Century</i> , pp. 1-212
III.	FEB 16	History II No class on FEB 16: meet only on FEB 18 READING: Zinn, <i>The Twentieth Century</i> , pp. 213- 475
IV.	FEB 23	Is the Constitution democratic? And library research session READING: Dahl, <i>How Democratic is the American Constitution</i> (all) Applied research: special library session (Feb. 23) The class will meet with librarian Cynthia Bruns to learn about new and unique research sources available only in our library. The class will meet at the usual time in Library North room 420 . Be on time. Attendance is required and there will be a sign-in sheet.
V.	MAR 1	Candidates and Elections READINGS: Dionne, "...and Sets the Tone," in <i>Political Writing</i> p.316 Toobin, "Candide," in <i>Political Writing</i> p.318 Draper, "Is John Edwards the Next Bubba?" in <i>Political Writing</i> p.332 Gordon, "The Unlikely Rise of Howard Dean," in <i>Political Writing</i> p 345 Klein, "The Long War of John Kerry," in <i>Political Writing</i> p.357 Cottle, "How the Dems Created Al Sharpton," in <i>Political Writing</i> p.382
VI.	MAR 8	Race and affirmative action READINGS: Greene, <i>Praying for Sheetrock</i> (all) Section on Affirmative Action in <i>Political Writing</i> pps. 164-180
VII.	MAR 15	Iraq and the World READINGS: Pollack, "Next Stop Baghdad," in <i>Political Writing</i> p. 182 Woodward, "Bush at War," in <i>Political Writing</i> p.193 Bush, "A Decade of Deception and Defiance," in <i>Political Writing</i> p. 205 Section on The Iraq Conflict in <i>Political Writing</i> pps 232-252. Ignatieff, "The Burden," in <i>Political Writing</i> p.254 Lewis, "Bush and Iraq," in <i>Political Writing</i> p.269 Fallows, "The Unilateralist," in <i>Political Writing</i> p.278 Kaplan, "White Lie," in <i>Political Writing</i> p.285 Kaplan, "A Post-Saddam Scenario," in <i>Political Writing</i> p.290 Section on Winning the Peace in <i>Political Writing</i> pps. 298-313

- VIII. MAR 22 The Media**
READINGS:
Kutter, "The Ideological Impostor," in *Political Writing* p.60
Nader, "The Media: an ongoing non-debate," in *Political Writing* p.131
Taibbi, "Cleaning the Pool," in *Political Writing* p.142
Orwell, "Politics and the English Language," (distributed in class)

SPRING BREAK MARCH 29-APRIL 2

- IX. APR 5 Environmentalism and interest groups**
READINGS:
Hays, *Environmental Politics Since 1945*, (all)
Green, "The Evil of Access," in *Political Writing* p.99
- X. APR 12 Taxes, spending, corporations (and class)**
READINGS:
Chait, "Special K," in Flippin, *The Best American Political Writing, 2003*, (Hereafter referred to as *Political Writing*) p. 52
Tumulty, "Govs Under the Gun," in *Political Writing* p.92
Beatty, "The Enron Ponzi Scheme," in *Political Writing* p.95
Krugman, "For Richer," in *Political Writing* p. 107
Mencimer, "Children Left Behind," in *Political Writing* p.125
Section on Debt and Taxes in *Political Writing* pps. 72- 89
- XI. APR 19 Activism, dissent and the courts**
READINGS:
Thoreau, "On Civil Disobedience," (distributed in class)
Lapham, "Cause for Dissent," in *Political Writing* p.212
Wolcott, "What if They Gave a War and Nobody Cared," in *Political Writing* p.221
Lazarus, "The Most Dangerous Branch?" in *Political Writing* p.145
Moore, "One Big Happy Prison," in *Political Writing* p.152
- XII. APR 26 Congress I**
READING: Waldman, *The Bill* (all)
- XIII. MAY 3 Congress II**
READING:
- XIV. MAY 10 The Presidency I**
READING: Leuchtenburg, *In the Shadow of FDR* (all)
- XV. MAY 17 The Presidency II (plus implementation in the executive branch)**
READINGS:
Carney and Dickerson, "W. and the 'Boy Genius,'" in *Political Writing* p. 2
Suskind, "Why Are These Men Laughing ?" in *Political Writing* p. 10
Brookhiser, "The Mind of George E. Bush," in *Political Writing* p.30
- XVI. MAY 24 EXAM WEEK**