INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN POLITICS
Prof. O’Brien
PSC 72000 – 3 credits (CRN # 32186)
M 11:45 –1:45; Room 5382
Aug_31_version

Course Description:
This seminar reviews and surveys the secondary scholarly literature about American politics. First, it presents a number of competing conceptual frameworks or lens, such as new institutionalism, cultural supremacies, talk theory, and feminisms, to gain an understanding of the idea impact debates American thought leaders. Second, the historical, analytical, conceptual foundations of politics and the roots of cultures and traditions will be reviewed. Third, the seminar scrutinizes the moving parts (e.g. parties, movements, groups, and opinion or thought) as vehicles for change, either as “revolts from within” or sea changes. Fourth, it studies political institutions via legislators, executives, judges, and bureaucrats – emphasizing why, how, and what they govern. Finally, the seminar looks at policy solutions that yield inequities, inequalities, intolerances, information gaps, and supremacies.

Learning Goals & Objectives:
This seminar helps students who are preparing for college teaching at CUNY.

This seminar also helps students prepare for the First Examination (political institutions, political processes, federalism, and American Political Thought) if they are in the Ph.D. track (or aspire to apply to the Ph.D. Program in future), and/or the MA thesis.

Requirements:
1. Complete assigned readings before class. Before each seminar meets, students distribute an approximately 1-page written abbreviated outline of reading. Turn in a portfolio of notes for seminars attended. No copyediting for either notes or outlines required, and abbreviations are expected.
2. Midterm - In Class First Written Examination Question Answered
3. Final Take Home Paper (10 pages) derived from question(s), relying on required and recommended reading.

Weight: Participation = 25 percent; Midterm = 25 percent; and Final = 50%

Privacy: No taping, recording of any kind with any medium permitted without written permission by instructor and all participants each session. Printed-hardcopy notes sharing between and among students for peer-help purposes. Guests’ privacy must be respected also.
GC Calendar 2016
1M Aug 29 (No class M Sept 5)
2M Sept 12
3M Sept 19 moved to Tues Sept 20
4M Sept 26 (No class M Oct 3)
5TH Oct 6 class (TH follow M schedule)
6M Oct 17
7M Oct 24
8M Oct 31
9M Nov 7
10M Nov 14
11 M Nov21
12 M Nov 28
13 M Dec 5
14 M Dec 12
Final (Course material due unless incomplete warranted)

SUBJECT OVERVIEW
1. Introduction M Aug 29 (No class M Sept 5)

2. Abstract Lens M Sept 12

REQUIRED READING

RECOMMENDED READING:

3. SPECIAL 2016 ELECTION CLASS T Sept 20
RECOMMENDED READING
Anything from Elections section of AP reading list; attendance encouraged.

REQUIRED READING
Garry Wills, Explaining America: The Federalists Penguin Books, 19, Chapters 12, 13, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 28; David Brian Robertson, The Constitution and America's Destiny (Cambridge University Press, 2005), chapters 1, 2, 3, 8

RECOMMENDED READING

5. Constitutional Frameworks II – The Present (Federalism) TH Oct 6 class (TH follow M schedule)
REQUIRED READING
American Legislative Exchange Council https://www.alec.org/
State Innovation Exchange https://stateinnovation.org/

RECOMMENDED READING:
Michael Burgess, Comparative Federalism: Theory and Practice (Routledge, 2006).

6. American Political Thought, Traditions and/or Folks & Cultures? M Oct 17
REQUIRED READING
James Morone, Hell Fire Nation (Yale University Press, 2003), opening.

RECOMMENDED READING
Alexis de Toqueville, Democracy in America (any edition). Carol Nackenoff.
http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/tae/v013/13.2.norton.html.

7. In-Class Midterm M Oct 24


REQUIRED READING
Benjamin Peters, editor, Digital Keywords: A Vocabulary of Information Society and Culture (Princeton University Press, 2016), Chps TBA (On reserve).

RECOMMENDED READING

**9. Moving Parts - Movements M Nov 7**

**REQUIRED READING**
Jane McAlevey, *No Shortcuts: Organizing for Power in the New Gilded Age* (Oxford University Press, 2016), chps 1, 2, 7; Frances Fox Piven, *Poor People’s Movements* (Any edition) Intro or Chapter 1.

**RECOMMENDED READING**

**10. Groups M Nov 14**

**REQUIRED READING**
R.A.V. v. City of St. Paul; Citizens United v. FEC; American Booksellers Ass'n v. Hudnut; Hobby Lobby; McCutcheon v. FEC, Harris v. Quinn; Boy Scouts of America v. Dale; Elonis v. U.S. (dissent especially)
Note – get final decision, not cases going up to appeal. Download federal cases: https://www.supremecourt.gov/

**RECOMMENDED READING**

11. Executives M Nov 21

REQUIRED READING

RECOMMENDED READING

12 Bureaucrats M Nov 28

REQUIRED READING

RECOMMENDED READING

13. Judges M Dec 5

**REQUIRED READING**
T M. Keck, *The Most Activist Supreme Court in History: The Road to Modern Judicial Conservatism* (U of Chicago, 2004), TBA.

**RECOMMENDED READING**

14. Review M Dec 12 #