

**Linn Benton Community College**  
**PS-201 Syllabus, Winter 2017**  
**Introduction to American Politics & Government – Lebanon Center**  
CRN 33416

Instructor: Michele Colborn Harris  
Office: LC-214  
Office Hours: 3:30-4:30 p.m. on Thursday (or by appointment)  
Class Meets: 2:00-3:20 p.m., Tuesdays/Thursdays in LC-222  
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### **Course Description**

Introduces and analyzes the American Political system. Studies the development and operation of the institutions of national government, the political process (elections, public opinion, interest group activities, policy-making), the American political culture, American political-economy (capitalism and American politics). Includes case studies of federalism, election rules, civil society and lobbying.

“Politics is defined as who gets what, when and how.” (Harold Lasswell)

### **Course Objectives**

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Articulate an understanding of the history and operations of the institutions of national government.
- Analyze political processes using democratic theory and the philosophy of U.S. constitutional government.
- Appraise and assess political culture and political economy.
- Synthesize diverse perspectives and ideologies and apply them to the national political agenda.

### **Text, Readings and Instructor Expectations**

*American Difference* by L.M. Poloni-Staudinger and M.R. Wolf. (REQUIRED).

Additional readings and resources will be listed under the Readings and Assignments link on Moodle.

Discussion of current events occurs at each class meeting. Daily news gathering is key to success in this course. I will not recommend a particular news sources but major print news outlets such as the New York Times, the Washington Post and the Los Angeles Times are reputable places to start.

Attendance in class is essential.

### **Methods of Instruction and Evaluation**

There is no expectation that students have prior knowledge of the subject. However, there is an expectation that students enrolled in the course are interested in pursuing the content to further their own understanding of the unique features of the American political system and culture.

In addition to lectures, much of our class time will be spent engaging in discussion and viewing and analyzing video and web-based content. This course will be demanding and absences are costly in terms of the loss of opportunity to master the course content. Participation earns a grade, and absent students cannot participate. Please plan to complete all readings as assigned and attend all class meetings. I do not reteach the material during office hour, students need to be in class **every day**.

All quizzes are based on textbook reading assignments, unscheduled and taken at the beginning of class.

### **Grades**

All grading is on a straight scale: 90-100% = A, 80-89%=B, 70-79%=C, 60-69%=D, 0-59%=F. The grade book will be available to students on Moodle.

### Assignments:

Quizzes (4 x 10 points each) = 40 points

Issue Statement = 20 points

Political Party Analysis = 30 points

Interest Group Research = 40 points

Individual Presentation = 30 points with briefing notes 10 points

Final paper (take home) = 80 points

Participation = 50 points

Late assignments: Late work is not accepted; however, papers may be turned in early. Quizzes may be made up.

### **Academic Issues**

Plagiarism – This is defined as attempting to gain an unfair advantage, by presenting the work of others as your own. Consequences for cheating or plagiarism include receiving a zero on the assignment and a referral to the Dean of Social Sciences.

Support – Students who may need accommodations due to documented disabilities, or who have medical information which the instructor should know, or who need special arrangements in an emergency, should speak with the instructor **during the first week of class**. If you believe you may need accommodations, but are not yet registered with Center for Accessibility Resources (CFAR), please go to <http://linnbenton.edu/cfar> for steps on how to apply for services or call 541-917-4789.

### **Class Schedule and Reading Assignments**

#### **Week 1 (Jan 10/12)**

- Introduction, Political Socialization and American Political Culture
- By Jan 12, read Chapter 4 of *American Difference*

**Week 2 (Jan 17/19) & Week 3 (Jan 24/26)**

- Constitutional Underpinnings
- By Jan 17 read Chapter 5 of *American Difference*
- Readings listed on Moodle

**Week 4 (Jan 31/Feb 2)**

- Individual Rights and the Constitution
- By Jan 31, complete readings listed on Moodle
- Issue Statement due Feb 2

**Week 5 (Feb 7/9)**

- Political Parties & Public Opinion
- By Feb 7, read Chapter 7 of *American Difference*

**Week 6 (Feb 14/16) & Week 7 (Feb 21/23)**

- Campaigns & Elections
- By Feb 14, read Chapter 8 of *American Difference*
- By Feb 16, complete readings listed on Moodle
- Political Party Analysis due Feb 14

**Week 8 (Feb 28/Mar 2)**

- Interest Groups & Lobbying
- By Feb 28, read Chapter 6 of *American Difference*

**Week 9 (Mar 7/9)**

- Application of Policy Making Model: Health Care Policy
- By Mar 7, complete readings listed on Moodle
- Interest Group Research due Mar 7

**Week 10 (Mar 14/16)**

- Individual Presentations with briefing notes
- Take home final assigned

**Week 11 (Mar 21) – FINAL EXAM: Tuesday, 4:30-6:20 p.m.**

- Attendance is Mandatory – Take Home Final Due at 4:30 p.m.
- Discussion & Reflection

**Written Assignment Requirements**

ALL written assignments must be word-processed/typed, double-spaced format with no larger than 12-point font, printed on white paper. No presentation or folder covers, just stapled in upper left hand corner. Written work must conform to college writing standards (such as: grammar, punctuation, spelling and organization).

## **Writing Resources**

If you need help, please go to the Learning Center in LC-202 or on the Albany Campus. Do not wait until the last minute.

### **Issue Statement (1 page)**

Identify one issue you are particularly interested in researching during the course of the term. This issue must be appropriate to a political science course. Write a brief (no more than one typewritten page, double-spaced) statement identifying the issue, providing an explanation of why this issue would be a suitable topic to pursue during the term. For example, students might argue the need for a law to protect a wildlife area. The instructor reserves the right to guide the student in selecting appropriate issues.

### **Political Party Analysis (2 – 3 pages)**

Research, review and select one CURRENT registered political party in the State of Oregon , refer to the Secretary of State’s Office: <http://sos.oregon.gov/voting/Pages/voteinor.aspx> There is a link listed to all registered political parties for Oregon. You will want to review their issues, platforms, or “about” sections to obtain information on their stances on various issues. Do not neglect the minor parties, which are sometimes a “better fit” than the major parties. Find the party which most closely aligns with your political views. In a two to three page paper, explain which issue areas are essential to YOU in making the decision to register as a member of a particular political party. If you disagree with your party’s stance on an issue of lesser importance, explain the nature of your disagreement and identify a different party’s stance you find more agreeable. Sources must be cited. This assignment is not an opinion piece.

### **Interest Group Research (3 – 4 pages)**

Based on the issue previously selected for focused research, identify one interest group in support of your position and one interest group in opposition to your position. In a three to four page paper, provide a brief profile about each group: when were they established? How many members do they have? What are their successes? Analyze which actions each group use to advance their agenda and the degree to which you find those methods effective. Explain carefully and support your argument. Sources must be cited. Be objective in your presentation of the facts.

### **Individual Presentation with Briefing Notes (1 page)**

Prepare a three to five minute presentation to the class about your issue area and what you have learned about the policy-making process as it relates to your issue over the course of the term. How did you view it at the beginning of the course? What have you learned in the course of your research? What are your “next steps”? The briefing notes should be in the form of a one page outline that would

provide your audience with sufficient information to follow your presentation. Briefing notes are due at the time of the presentation.