POLITICAL SCIENCE 101
AMERICAN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

Westfield State University
Online Course (POL 0101-501: 10095)
Summer Session I
May 19, 2014 – June 27, 2014

Professor Y. Hugh Jo
HJo@westfield.ma.edu
Office: Parenzo 110
Office Hours: By appointment

This is an on-line version of American National Government, a college-level introductory course to American national politics. This course is part of the Common Core of Studies at Westfield State University and counts three credits in U.S. History & Government [HSGV]. By taking this class, Westfield State students earn 3 of the 12 required credits in the Social Science Section. For non-Westfield State students, this course can be easily transferred to other colleges and universities and count toward general education credits. The syllabus and course description for credit transfer can be obtained from the instructor upon request.

Since this course is taught on-line, students need to visit Westfield State University’s PLATO course webpage (https://bbl.westfield.ma.edu/) and become familiar with its usage. The website has the syllabus, instructor announcements, assignments, readings, and links to films. Students should turn to “Help Desk, eTutoring & WSU Library” on the left side bar of the course webpage for questions regarding the use of PLATO. Any remaining questions should be directed to the Center for Instructional Technology (CIT) in Wilson Hall 114 (phone: 413 572 8130 and email: cit@westfield.ma.edu).

A. Course Requirements and Grades

1. Students are expected to read assigned materials and complete postings by due dates each week. Students are required to participate in general/group discussions online. Student participation in the discussion forums will count for 60% of overall grade.
   a. Discussion Expectations
      - Students are expected to participate in each of the online discussions. Participation means contributing but also reading the contributions of fellow students.
      - Assignments are posted on Tuesday. “Initial Posts” are due by midnight following Sunday and “Reply Posts” are due by midnight following Tuesday.
      - Initial Post: Post one very substantive description of your views regarding the subject.
- Reply Post: Post one response to discussion postings by your fellow student and/or the professor.
- Two Different Days Minimum: Both posts cannot be on the same day and they must be spread out over at least two days. In other words, you can’t neglect discussion until say Saturday, swoop down, and make all your posts in one shot (I can see when you post and read).
- Grades will be posted after the Tuesday due date.

b. Weekly Assignment Grading Criteria

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<tr>
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<th>0-10 Points</th>
<th>11-15 Points</th>
<th>16-20 Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quality of Initial Post</strong></td>
<td>Posting not relevant to the questions posed.</td>
<td>Posting reflects the reading and some outside source material but outside source material not cited.</td>
<td>Posting reflects the reading and outside information with proper outside source material citation.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Understanding of Reading and Outside Source Material</strong></td>
<td>Responds to the questions posed but does not mention materials from the reading.</td>
<td>Responds to the questions posed and makes reference to the reading.</td>
<td>Responds to the questions posed and demonstrates understanding of material and outside source material and properly cites information.</td>
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c. My role as professor in discussion forums will be limited. This is intentional in that if I responded to every posting students would wait for me and the more I respond, I have found from my experience, the less students participate. I will remain on the sideline and jump in whenever it is necessary; that is, if students are inappropriate or giving misinformation I will step in. Hence you will not see many of my public postings in the forums.

2. Students are required to watch Alexander Hamilton and write a review. This PBS American Experience video is available on the course website (Click into “Start Here” on the left side bar, and you’ll see the “PBS American Experience Video – Alexander Hamilton” link on the bottom), and your review should address the questions below:
   a. Who is Alexander Hamilton? Where was he born and how did he grow up? What did he do for the independence and founding of the United States?
   b. Do you think Hamilton’s contributions as a revolutionary leader and a founding father undervalued or unappreciated? If so, why? If not, why not?
   c. What are some of strengths and weaknesses of Hamilton’s character and how did they affect his success/downfall as a political leader?
   d. What was politics like in the early years of the United States? How many political parties/factions were there and what policies (commercial development, industrialization, or agrarian economy) did they advocate?
e. What was political discourse like in the early years of the republic? Was it similar to or different from politics today?

This assignment is due midnight Thursday, June 6th. This assignment should be no longer than 4 pages (roughly 1200 words with double-space, Times New Roman letter type, 12-font letter size, and regular indentation) and count for 20% of overall grade.

3. Students are required to write a short paper about an interest group – “an organization of people with shared ideas and attitudes who attempt to influence public policy” – in the United States. Students can choose one of the following interest groups – The Sierra Club (an environmental advocacy group), American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT), National Organization for Women (NOW), National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Christian Coalition of America, Focus on the Family, National Mining Association (NMA), and National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), and American Chamber of Commerce, American Association for Justice, and American Medical Association, among others – conduct research about the group and write a short paper (4 pages). Each paper should address the following questions:
   a. What is the major area of operation of this body?
   b. What are its primary objectives and where is it based?
   c. How many subscribed members are represented in the organization?
   d. What is its organizational structure like (how is the president/secretary general chosen?; does the president/secretary general have veto power?; who holds legislative authority?)
   e. How does the organization make decisions and take action?
   f. What are some of its latest areas of involvement/projects?
   g. What are some of the biggest challenges, problems it faces?

These are general questions, and not all issues are relevant to each organization. You need to make sure though that the reader gets a good idea of what the organization does and what its distinct aspects are. Each paper should have about 4 pages (roughly 1200 words, excluding reference) with double-space, Times New Roman letter type, and 12-font letter size. Your paper should also have a reference page at the end. This assignment is due by midnight Tuesday, July 2 and will count for 20% of overall grade.

4. Grade Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>D+</th>
<th>C-</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>C+</th>
<th>B-</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>B+</th>
<th>A-</th>
<th>A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Numeric Grade</td>
<td>0 - 58.9</td>
<td>59 - 62.9</td>
<td>63 - 66.9</td>
<td>67 - 70.9</td>
<td>71 - 75.9</td>
<td>76 - 80.9</td>
<td>81 - 84.9</td>
<td>85 - 88.9</td>
<td>89 - 91.9</td>
<td>92 - 94.9</td>
<td>95 - 100</td>
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B. Academic Honesty Policy

While most students do not attempt to plagiarize, there are some who do inadvertently or otherwise. The real victims of these few people are their honest fellow students whose
hard-earned grades are devalued. The maximum penalty will be sought for all suspected cases of plagiarism and other violations of the University’s academic honesty policy (Please refer to Westfield State University’s 2012-2013 Undergraduate Bulletin, pp. 43-45).

**C. Online Discussion Etiquette**

As you participate in discussion forums for this course, please keep in mind some common courtesies.

1. Your posting must be “substantive” and actually say something important. Just saying “good point,” “I agree,” “Wow, I never thought of that” and such does not constitute a gradable post. Online discussion is all about the ideas and exchanging them. Online and texting language, emoticons, and such are all fine for discussion. Only exceptions are WTF, LMFAO, and others that indicate profanity…. Please refrain from using those. BTW, the discussions can be actually fun if you give them a real chance.

2. Be sensitive to your fellow classmates. Be careful when using humor or sarcasm. They are easily misinterpreted in the multicultural online environment. Frivolous, foul, abusive, or defamatory messages are never acceptable.

3. Don’t overuse capital letters. Capital letters are more difficult to read, and are considered SHOUTING on a discussion forum.

4. Keep your posting on topic and relevant to the discussion.

5. Keep posting short and to the point and make sure to connect with chapter or unit concepts/theories.

6. Always include a meaningful subject in the subject line. It helps others focus on your message.

7. Don’t attach large files to a posting, as this will slow down the functioning of the discussion forum. This is particularly true of graphics.

**D. Course Materials**

*The Democratic Debate* by Miroff, Seidelman, Swanstrom, and De Luca is required for this course. An ebook can be rented for $36. If you prefer a hard copy, the book is rentable for $45.40 and a used book can be purchased for $69.50. To purchase/rent the book, go to the campus bookstore’s website http://www.westfieldstate.bncollege.com/ or call 413 579 3103.


This textbook is henceforth referred to as MSSD (Miroff, Seidelman, Swanstrom, and De Luca).