Course Description

This course examines the philosophical underpinnings of American Government. From the first calls to revolution to the struggle for civil rights and beyond, the project of government in the United States has been informed, shaped, and justified by ideas. While many of these ideas have their roots in a larger philosophical tradition, others can be understood as uniquely American, produced as a result of our shared history. Over the semester, we will trace the history of American political thought by studying a selection of writings that have served as both sources and exemplars of American ideas about government.

This semester, you will:

- Hone your own understandings of contemporary American government through an engagement with the history of American political thought.
- Practice “analytical thinking” about politics. This requires you to provide reasons for what you believe and to consider counterarguments.
- Develop abilities to interpret texts and use textual evidence to support your claims.
- Develop your writing skills. Assignments stress informed and creative analysis, valid interpretations, clarity, proper grammar, and good organization.
- Practice your speaking and listening skills as we engage in both formal and informal discussion of the ideas informing American political thought.

The format of this class includes lectures, class discussions, group work, and a Reacting to the Past game simulation. Lectures will provide you with background information as well as fleshed-out conceptual frameworks for understanding the ideas we will be studying. Discussions will allow us to interrogate these ideas in greater detail, enhancing our understanding. Group work will not only give those of you who are shy a chance to participate in a less intimidating setting, but will also allow you to work together in puzzling out some of the problems and questions left to us by American political thought. Finally, the game will invite you to early-twentieth-century Greenwich Village where we will explore ideas of gender, suffrage, labor, and social arrangements as you compete with your classmates to decide what issues are most pressing to American political life.

Prerequisites

You should have completed POLS 101, POLS 122, or have my permission to be enrolled in this course.
Required Reading
The following required texts are available at the student bookstore:

American Political Thought (Kramnick and Lowi, editors)
The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin (Dover Thrift Edition)
Greenwich Village, 1913: Suffrage, Labor, and the New Woman (Mary Jane Treacy)

Additional readings will be available on Western Online (WO).

Because this class will largely be based on our discussions together, it is crucial that everyone has prepared the readings. This means that you should read carefully, taking notes in whichever style you find most useful (but one that involves some sort of writing), and review your notes before class. Reading and taking notes is one of the best ways to ensure success on your reading quizzes. You are required to bring your readings to class, which means that you will need to print the readings from Western Online.

Reading Quizzes
On random (with the exception of Thursday, September 17) days throughout the semester, as determined by a flip of the freakishly large coin, a five-question multiple-choice, true/false quiz will be administered in class. These quizzes will be closed book and open note, meaning that while you may not use the course texts, you may use any notes that you have taken on the readings. Your two lowest quiz grades will be dropped from the calculation of your quiz average. No make-up quizzes will be given.

Midterm and Final Exams
Two open book, open note 25-question multiple-choice exams will be administered, one mid-semester and one during the final exam period. The final will not be cumulative, and will cover only the material since the midterm exam. No make-up exams will be given without prior permission; if permission is granted, make-up exams will be administered during the final exam period. No finals will be rescheduled except in accordance with university policy.

Essay Exam
One four-to-five-page take-home essay exam will be assigned during the first half of the semester. Questions, instructions, and a detailed checklist of requirements will be handed out at least a week prior to the due date. Essays will be graded as satisfactory or unsatisfactory, with essays that complete all of the requirements on the provided checklist earning a designation of satisfactory. Unsatisfactory essays may be revised to satisfy missing requirements at the cost of one punch (see “Punch Cards,” below); one punch earns one revision attempt.

Reacting to the Past Game
In the second half of the course, you will compete with and against your classmates in an elaborate game set in Greenwich Village in 1913. This game pits suffrage activists against labor organizers for the support of Bohemians and other residents of the Village; considerable class time will be dedicated to preparing for and playing the game. As part of the game, each player will be assigned two writing assignments. The first assignment is a three- to five-page speech or position paper and the second is a three-page role-specific contribution for possible inclusion in the game’s magazine, The Masses. A detailed checklist of requirements will be distributed for each of these assignments, which will be graded as satisfactory or unsatisfactory. Assignments that complete all of the requirements on the checklist will earn a designation of satisfactory. Unsatisfactory assignments may be revised to satisfy missing requirements at the cost of one punch (see “Punch Cards,” below); one punch earns one revision attempt.

Attendance
Attendance will be taken and required during game sessions only (October 20 through December 1). However, there will be no make-up quizzes given. I am dropping your two lowest quiz grades so that you have two days to miss class for illness, deaths in the family, or other emergencies without your quiz grade being affected. If you will be missing class for any of these types of reasons, you do not need to notify me. However, I encourage you to save your two free absences for these sorts of emergencies,
because there will be **no make-up quizzes given**. If you will be missing class due to a university-sanctioned activity, such as participation in sporting events, you must let me know **prior to** the class you will be missing. If a quiz is given that day, you will not receive a zero. Instead, the average of all of your other quiz grades will be entered as the grade for the quiz you missed. If that day is a game session, we will negotiate alternate arrangements for you to make up for the material you missed. No matter why you miss class, it is your **responsibility** to find out what you missed from me and/or one of your classmates.

**Grading**

Students who achieve all of the following will earn an **A**:

- a reading quiz average of 90% or above.
- a combined score of 42 or above on the midterm and final exams.
- satisfactory completion of three writing assignments.
  - Essay Exam
  - Position Paper
  - Role-Specific Assignment
- an individual total of at least 20 “Player Influence Points” in the game.
- attendance at no fewer than nine of the ten game sessions.

Students who achieve all of the following will earn a **B**:

- a reading quiz average of 80% or above.
- a combined score of 37 or above on the midterm and final exams.
- satisfactory completion of three writing assignments.
  - Essay Exam 1
  - Position Paper
  - Role-Specific Assignment
- an individual total of at least 15 “Player Influence Points” in the game.
- attendance at no fewer than nine of the ten game sessions.

Students who achieve all of the following will earn a **C**:

- a reading quiz average of 70% or above.
- a combined score of 32 or above on the midterm and final exams.
- satisfactory completion of two writing assignments.
  - Essay Exam
  - Position Paper
- an individual total of at least 15 “Player Influence Points” in the game.
- attendance at no fewer than eight of the ten game sessions.

Students who achieve all of the following will earn a **D**:

- *either* a reading quiz average of 70% or above *or* a combined score of 32 or above on the midterm and final exams.
- satisfactory completion of two writing assignments
  - Essay Exam
  - Position Paper
- an individual total of at least 10 “Player Influence Points” in the game.
- attendance at no fewer than seven of the ten game sessions.

Students who do not complete the requirements for any of the grade categories above will earn an **F**.

Plus and minus grades will be determined based on the number of punches remaining on a student’s card at the end of the semester (see below).
Punch Card

Each student will be issued a card (attached) with places for five punches. One punch may be traded for each of the following (punch card must be present at time of request):

- a 72-hour extension on an assignment. See me in person before 72 hours have passed from the original date/time the assignment was due.
- the opportunity to revise a failing writing assignment. Students will have ten days from the day assignments are returned to revise. See me in person before the ten days is up.
- a third dropped quiz. See me in person to request this.

It is your responsibility to keep your punch card safe. I will not be keeping track of how many punches you each have left—that’s what the card is for!—so if you lose your punch card, you will not have any punches available to you.

On the last day of class, punch cards will be collected. Students will be assigned their earned grades for the course (see above) with a “+” or “-” as follows:

- 4-5 punches remaining = + (e.g., B becomes B+)
- 0-1 punches remaining = - (e.g., B becomes B-)

Because I am unable to assign a grade of A+, students fulfilling all other requirements for an A, who earned at least 40 points on the midterm, and who have four or five punches remaining on their cards as of the last day of class will be rewarded by being excused from the final exam.

It is your responsibility to submit your card at the end of the semester; students who do not submit a card—either because they have lost it or forgotten it—will be assumed to have one punch or less remaining. Students who are not in class on the last day to submit their cards are responsible for turning them into me by the final exam period or will be assumed to have one punch or less remaining.

Lateness & Other Standards of Classroom Behavior

When class begins, the door will be closed and locked. Each of you will receive one “Get Into Class Late” card at the beginning of the semester (attached); to be allowed late entry, you must hold your card up to the window and I will open the door for you and take your card. If you do not have a card in your possession, you will not be admitted into class late. If you do not use, lose, sell, or give away your card by the end of the semester and have not missed more than two quizzes, your card can be redeemed for a punch being erased from your punch card (i.e. if you have three punches remaining, you will get credit for having four punches). Remaining “Get Into Class Late” cards will be collected on the last day of class and must be submitted to earn the extra punch.

Please show respect for me and your classmates by avoiding the following: leaving class early, taking frequent or daily trips to the restroom, holding conversations with your neighbors when someone else (me or a classmate) is talking, sleeping during class, and using tobacco during class. Students who make a habit of engaging in these or any other disruptive behaviors will receive one kind and gentle email warning and, if the behavior continues, a second public and potentially embarrassing in-class warning. After that, repeat offenders will be asked to leave.

Cellular Phones, Laptops, & Tablets

At the beginning of the semester, there will be a bank of five extra credit points available. Each time I see a cell phone or any other wireless communication device after class has begun I will deduct one point from this bank. At the end of the semester, the number of points left in the bank will be added to each student’s final quiz average. The use of laptops or tablets during class is also prohibited. If you are registered with the Disability Resource Center and require the use of a laptop as one of your accommodations, please speak to me (see below).
Email

I will usually respond to email within 24 hours, though it may take longer during breaks and on the weekends. Please remember when drafting your messages to me that I am your professor, someone you should be trying to impress with your academic skills. This means that you should proofread your messages carefully, attempting to use standard English, correct grammar, and proper punctuation in all writing that I will see, including emails.

Students with Disabilities

In accordance with University values and disability law, students with disabilities may request academic accommodations where there are aspects of a course that result in barriers to inclusion or accurate assessment of achievement. To file an official request for disability-related accommodations, please contact the Disability Resource Center at 309-298-2512, disability@wiu.edu or in 143 Memorial Hall. Please notify the instructor as soon as possible to ensure that this course is accessible to you in a timely manner.

Student Rights and Responsibilities and Academic Integrity

You are required to familiarize yourself with the university’s Student Rights and Responsibilities Policy, which is available at the following URL:

http://www.wiu.edu/provost/students/  http://www.wiu.edu/policies/acintegrity.php

Please pay special attention to the Academic Integrity Policy. I take academic integrity very seriously, and all violations of this policy will be punished in accordance with the guidelines it describes; all assignments submitted containing any plagiarism will automatically fail and will be ineligible for revision.

Calendar

Readings should be done by the date under which they are listed. You are required to bring readings to class.

Part I: Introduction

Thursday, August 27
The Debate Over American Identity
Smith (WO)

Tuesday, September 1
Puritan Roots, Part I
John Winthrop, pp. 11-23

Thursday, September 3
Puritan Roots, Part II
John Wise, pp. 31-42

Tuesday, September 8
Benjamin Franklin: An American Original
Autobiography, pp. 1-31

Thursday, September 10
Franklin: Continued
Autobiography, pp. 32-53

Tuesday, September 15
Franklin: Virtue, Industry, and Individualism
Autobiography, pp. 55-72

First Essay Exam Questions Distributed

Thursday, September 17
Writing Workshop & QUIZ
Read: Exam Question & Checklist

Tuesday, September 22
Revolutionary Ideas
Samuel Adams, pp. 108-113
Thomas Paine, pp. 131-149
Declaration of Independence, pp. 151-154

Thursday, September 24
In Favor of Ratifying the Constitution
Madison, pp. 199-205 and 209-223

Tuesday, September 29
Against Ratifying the Constitution
Pennsylvania Minority (WO)
Lee, pp. 248-256
Henry, pp. 266-274
**Part II: Democracy, Individualism, & Conscience**

**Thursday, October 1**  
The Vibrancy of American Public Life  
Tocqueville (WO)  
*First Essay Exams Due Monday, October 5*

**Tuesday, October 6**  
The Complications of Individualism and Equality  
Tocqueville (WO)

**Thursday, October 8**  
 Democracy and Self-Reliance  
 Emerson, pp. 471-484

**Tuesday, October 13**  
Democratic Dissent  
Thoreau, pp. 484-497

**Thursday, October 15**  
In-Class Exam #1

**Dissident Voices: Reacting to the Past**

**Tuesday, October 20**  
Game Session 1: Women’s Rights and Suffrage  
Historical Background, pp. 16-30  
Cady Stanton, pp. 101-103  
“The Constant,” p. 104

**Thursday, October 22**  
Game Session 2: Labor and Labor Movements  
Historical Background, pp. 31-50  
Marx, pp. 153-161

**Tuesday, October 27**  
Game Session 3: The Spirit of the New  
Historical Background, pp. 46-67  
The Game, pp. 68-84  
Hapgood, pp. 210-215  
Bourne, pp. 220-221  
Lippmann, pp. 222-225

**Individual Roles Distributed**

**Thursday, October 29**  
Getting Set: Conferences and Faction Meetings  
Review The Game, pp. 68-84  
Individual Role Sheet

**Tuesday, November 3**  
Game Session 4: The Suffrage Cause  
Cady Stanton, pp. 104-112  
Childe Dorr, pp. 112-117  
Tarbell, pp. 120-128  
*Suffrage Faction Speeches Delivered*

**Thursday, November 5**  
Game Session 5: Labor Has Its Day  
Addams, pp. 168-172  
Haywood, pp. 180-184  
*Socialist Party Platform*, pp. 185-187

**Labor Faction Speeches Delivered**

**Tuesday, November 10**  
Game Session 6: The Feminist Mass Meeting  
Perkins Gilman, pp. 194-199  
Clews Parsons, pp. 199-204  
Dell, pp. 216-219

**Villagers and Friends Position Papers & Suffrage and Labor Written Speeches Due**

**Thursday, November 12**  
Game Session 7: Mabel Dodge’s Evening  
Mabel’s Choice, TBA

**Contributions to The Masses Due**

**Tuesday, November 17**  
Game Session 8: Thus Speak The Masses and Vote

**Thursday, November 19**  
Game Session 9: 1917—Facing the Future  
The Quill (handout distributed 11/17)

**Tuesday, November 24**  
No Class: Have a Great Break!

**Thursday, November 26**  
No Class: Happy Thanksgiving!

**Tuesday, December 1**  
Game Session 10: Debriefing the Game

**Where Do We Go From Here?**

**Thursday, December 3**  
Alienation and the American Dream  
Death of a Salesman (in-class film)

**Tuesday, December 8**  
Alienation and the American Dream  
Death of a Salesman (in-class film and discussion)

**Thursday, December 10**  
The Debate Over American Identity Revisited  
Smith (WO)

**Thursday, December 17**  
Final In-Class Exam  
8 am, MG 316