

Diablo Valley College
Political Science 120 / Introduction to Politics
Fall 2014 Mondays 6-8:50pm SRC-W218

Instructor: **Kerri Ryer**
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Office Hours: 5:30-6pm
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COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course is designed to provide a general overview of the concepts of politics and the state. Adopting an interdisciplinary approach, American political institutions will be analyzed through multiple theoretical lenses. Methodological modes of inquiry in political science will be outlined and demonstrated. Our main discussions in politics will include the origin of government and the political with a focus on human nature. While this class will survey a history of political philosophers and theorists from Plato to Rawls, a more in-depth look at the social contract theories of Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau will be discussed in the context of American political institutions. We will also look closely at Madisonian democracy and its critics. Furthermore, the emergence of political parties in the American political system will be contrasted with that of other states. We will also compare the American political system with alternative political systems throughout the course and overview theories of international politics. Finally, we will look to the future of political science as a science and where the cutting edge research is headed.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. Compare and contrast the nature, foundations and interrelations of American government at all levels.
2. Identify alternative systems for public policy formation.
3. Locate themselves with some discernment and judgment among the assertions and choices in public life.
4. Formulate a political outlook that does some justice to the complexity of the world and to the contributions to other thinkers.
5. Recognize the origin of political conflict in their own values and expectations.

TEACHING AND EVALUATION: This course will consist of both in person and online lectures and discussions. Students are required to read the assigned readings prior to the class date they are assigned. Your performance will be evaluated by your participation in class discussion and collaborative projects, a midterm exam, weekly quizzes and a final research paper. Unexcused absences and late work will significantly lower your grade. Instructor reserves the right to drop anyone with more than two unexcused absences. Your final grade will be based upon the following rubric:

Class participation:	10%
Collaborative projects:	10%
Weekly quizzes:	10%

Mid-term exam:	30%
Research paper proposal	10%
Final Research Paper:	30%
Total	100%

*An extra credit assignment will be available upon request. You must request the assignment 3 weeks prior to the final class date. You may improve your final grade up to 5% with the extra credit assignment.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

1. Kenneth Minogue, *Politics: A Very Short Introduction* 2000.
2. Jonathan Wolff, *An Introduction to Political Philosophy*, 2006.
3. The instructor will also provide other assigned readings and media online.

CODE OF CONDUCT: All students are required to adhere to the college code of conduct and academic honesty policies. They can be found here:

<http://www3.dvc.edu/org/info/policies/code-of-conduct.htm>

<http://www3.dvc.edu/org/info/policies/academic-dishonesty-links.htm>

<http://www.dvc.edu/org/info/policies/pdfs/ADRF.pdf>

DISABILITY:

Students who require alternative formats for course materials or adaptive equipment because of a specific disability can request them through the Disability Support Services office. The High Tech Center in LC-107 (Pleasant Hill) is an adaptive technology computer lab available to students with disabilities and is open Monday-Thursday from 9am-5pm, and Fridays from 9am-1pm. Their phone number is 925-685-1230 ext. 2553 for more information.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE:

*Schedule is tentative and subject to change.

WEEK 1: August 18th

This week we will cover a basic introduction to the study of politics, theory and practice. A brief discussion of key political theorists will be presented followed by a light discussion of the topics that will be covered throughout the semester including methodologies of inquiry in political science, types of political systems, and elitist, pluralist and democratic theories.

WEEK 2: August 25th

This week we will discuss issues of justice and the law by examining the works of Greek scholars with a focus on Plato's *The Republic*, and Aristotle's *Politics*.

Readings: Minogue chapter 1, 2 & 11,

Online Readings: Plato & Aristotle handouts.

WEEK 3: September 1st **SCHOOL HOLIDAY NO CLASS**

WEEK 4: September 8th

This week we will discuss the rise of Christianity and individualism in the Roman and Middle Ages. We will look at St. Augustine's exploration of love in *The City of God*, and the creation of scholasticism in St. Thomas Aquinas' *On Kinship* and *Summa Theologica*. We will then watch a video of MLK's Letters from Birmingham Prison and discuss the influence of Christianity on modern politics.

Readings: Minogue chapter 3 & 4.

Other Readings: Excerpts from Aristotle and St. Augustine.

WEEK 5: September 15th

This week we will finish our discussion of power and the monarchy with Machiavelli's *The Prince*. After a discussion of the fall of feudalism and the rise of the modern state we will turn to the introduction of the modern state and social contract theory. We will discuss, in depth, Hobbes's *Leviathan*, and then compare it to Machiavelli.

Readings: Minogue chapter 5 & Wolff 6-17, 34-48.

WEEK 6: September 22nd

This week we will continue our discussion of social contract theory; discuss and read excerpts from Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* and Rousseau's *The Social Contract*.

Readings: Wolff 17-33, 77-93.

WEEK 7: September 29th

This week we will begin our discussion of liberalism with a focus on the place of liberty in a democratic society. We will then look closer at liberalism and utilitarianism with an analysis of Mill's *Utilitarianism* and Rawls' *A Theory of Justice*.

Readings: Wolff 48-62, chapter 4 & 5.

WEEK 8: October 6th

The economy, means of production and class, will be the main focuses of our analysis of Marx's *The communist Manifesto*. In addition, we will discuss the global application of Marx's theory, followed by an overview of anarchist theory.

Readings: Minogue chapter 6 & Wolff p. 29-34.

WEEK 9: October 13th **MIDTERM**

WEEK 10: October 20th

This week we will delve a little deeper into democratic theory with a discussion on issues of pluralism and constitutionalism by examining the works; James Madison's *Federalist Papers* and Robert Dahl's *How Democratic is the American Constitution?*

Readings: Minogue chapter 10, Wolff p. 62-77, 93-101.

Online Readings: Federalist 10 & 51, and Dahl chapters 5 & 6.

WEEK 11: October 27th

This week we will look at the executive, legislative and judicial institutions. Specifically we will discuss different theories of leadership, theories of judicial interpretation and legislative systems and alternatives.

Online readings: Reading handouts, and videos posted online.

WEEK 12: November 3rd

This week we will discuss a brief history and functions of political parties in the U.S, and several different party systems. We will then survey current research findings on party polarization and the disappearing center.

Readings: Minogue chapter 9

Online Readings: Abramowitz, *The Disappearing Center* chapters 4, 7, 8. & Article from the Monkey Cage.

WEEK 13: November 10th **SCHOOL HOLIDAY NO CLASS**
***Term paper proposal due**

WEEK 14: November 17

This week we will discuss interest groups and campaign finance. Students will learn how to distinguish between political parties and interest groups, understand the main functions of interest groups and how they influence political outcomes. In addition, current research on the impact of campaign finance will be analyzed.

Online readings: Loomis, "Introduction The Changing Nature of Interest Group Politics", Cigler, "Interest Group Money in the 2008 Federal Election", and Hogan, "State Campaign Finance Laws and Interest Group Electioneering Activities" 2005.

WEEK 15: November 24th

This week we will discuss the construction and influence of public opinion upon current political issues. We will also look at the use of media as a tool to influence public opinion.

Online readings: Janda, chapter 5, Stimson, "Opinion and Policy: A Global View" 1994, Manza, "A Democratic Polity?: Three Views of Policy Responsiveness to Public Opinion in the United States" 2010, and Franz, "Interest Group Television Advertising in Presidential and Congressional Elections".

WEEK 16: December 1st

This week we will discuss international system theories, international law and international organizations.

Readings: Minogue Chapter 7.

Online readings: Nau, *Perspectives on International relations* chapter 1.

WEEK 17: December 8th

This week we will discuss the future of political science, rational choice theory and the intersection of psychology and politics. In addition, we will look at postmodernism, feminist and queer theories.

Readings: Minogue Chapter 12 & 13, Wolff chapter 6.

Online Readings: Readings from Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, Butler, *Gender Trouble*, Ferguson, *Aberrations in Black* and Sanbonmatsu, "Gender Stereotypes and Vote Choice", 2002.

WEEK 18: December 15th **Final term paper due by 5pm submitted through Turnitin.com.**

Enjoy your break and thanks for a great semester!