Introduction to American Politics

Political Science 11L – Fall 2008
Fridays: 1:00-4:40pm Room
Office Hour: Friday: 12-1:00pm Rm: L14

Professor Blake Respini
email: brespini@comcast.net

Course Description:
Welcome! Whether or not you have an interest in politics, politics affects your life. Democracy is not meant to be a spectator sport and because an informed citizenry is essential to democracy, this course will be designed to encourage students to think critically and knowledgeably about politics and thus become engaged in the democratic process. We will examine both the formal structures of government as well as the informal structures of American political culture, including political values, interest groups and the media. In the process, we will see that democracy is not an utopia to be arrived at but rather an ideal that must be constantly struggled for.

Required Texts:
3. On-line lecture notes by your instructor.

Attendance and Participation:
Regular and timely class attendance is expected. In order to assure that all students have the opportunity to gain from time spent in class, for full credit please arrive at class on time and stay the entire period. Missing one session will not result in a grade penalty, but absences beyond that will affect your participation grade.

As this class will be enhanced by your comments and questions, I encourage you to feel free to raise your hand if you have comments or questions during our discussions. Though disagreements and animated discussions are often part of politics, students are expected to treat each other with respect and civility. Class will be far more interesting if everyone feels comfortable in participating and students are expected to assist in maintaining a classroom environment that is conducive to learning.

Grading:
All assignments regardless of their weight will be graded as a percentage (90’s being A’s, 80’s being B’s and so forth). Assignments will be weighted in the following manner when determining your course grade:

Homework/Participation Component (26% total): There will one or two are relatively short assignments each week. Be sure to consult the Week Sheet to see what is due. Assignments will always be graded out of 100 points and will be weighted equally. Superb class attendance and participation can also affect this portion of your grade. As speaking in class can be intimidating for some students, I take into account substantive email communication and discussions during office hours. As noted above, poor attendance may also affect your participation grade.

Editorial: (11%): This will be a 3-4 page formal research piece on a public policy issue of your choice. Details on this assignment will be forthcoming.

Three Multiple Choice Exams (9% each): These will be open book tests based on the material in the text and lectures consisting of 40 to 50 questions. (The first one will be take home.)

Three In Class Analytical Essay Exams (12% each): There will be three analytical essay exams. Each exam will contain two 500 – 600 word essays which should be thoughtfully answered in your best writing. Review the analytical questions on the weekly guide to prepare for these exams.

Email Communications:
Feel free to communicate directly to me via email at brespini@comcast.net. If you do not understand what you are supposed to do for an assignment or are having trouble understanding the material I would like to help you. (You can also use respiniblake@deanza.edu)
Eight Keys to Success in this Class:
1. READ the texts and lecture notes and come to class prepared to discuss the issues raised by the readings.
2. Take thorough class notes.
3. REVIEW your notes, the ilearn notes, and texts regularly.
4. Ask questions in class.
5. Communicate with me through email or by seeing me during office hours. See me if you need accommodations for a learning disability.
6. Keep up with current events.
7. Get help from a writing tutor if necessary.
8. Come to class and turn in all assignments!

A Few Important Notes:
1. Plagiarism: All written work should be your own. When using direct quotes or even ideas from published or unpublished written sources, or directly from another person, you must acknowledge your sources with a parenthetical citation, footnote or an endnote using any recognized form of academic citation (usually the author and page number is sufficient). There is nothing wrong with borrowing other people's ideas, as long as you acknowledge you are doing this and either put the ideas into your own words or put them in quotation marks. Basic facts that can be found in multiple sources don’t need to be cited, but they should be able to be found in the sources you list. Your reference list must contain all sources you use and include full bibliographical information using a standardized form. (The only exception to this is you do not need to list the required texts on homework assignments regarding those texts – I know what the books are.) Failure to follow these procedures could result in immediate termination from the class.

2. Late Work: Keep on top of the work! Late assignments will be docked 3 full grades if turned in a week late and will not be collected after that. If you need an extension on something, you must make arrangements ahead of time. Make up tests for the exams will only be given in extreme circumstances. If you miss class, assignments may be email to avoid a late penalty, but a hard copy must be brought to the following class.

3. Class Etiquette: Be respectful of divergent points of view. Though disagreements and animated discussions are often part of politics, students are expected to treat each other with respect and civility. It is fine to disagree with a perspective or correct a factual error, but do so using language that is kind and helpful so that all class members will feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and ideas. Please participate, listen to your classmates, and allow all voices to be heard.

Please arrive on time and stay for the entire period. Drinks are always fine, snacks as long as they are low key and non-disruptive. (and please clean up after yourself)

4. The WEEK SHEET: Each week you will receive a handout which list the readings and assignments for the week. I will also try to post these over the weekend after class in case you miss class. If it is not posted and you miss class, you need to email me to request a copy be emailed back to you.

5. As needed, revisions to the assignments, calendar, and course requirements may take place.

GOOD LUCK WITH YOUR WORK AND ENJOY THE COURSE!
Course Outline

(ADR refers to America’s Democratic Republic.) Reading should be done PRIOR to the session for which it is assigned.)

**Week 1: 9/26**
Liberty and Equality: ADR 1 and 2 (Read as soon as you are able to.)

**Week 2: 10/3**
The Constitution: ADR 2, Rourke 1 and 3, Federalist Paper #10 (found in appendix of your text)

**Week 3: 10/10**
Political Ideology and The Demographics of Public Opinion: ADR 6, Rourke 5
The Media: ADR 7

**Week 4: 10/17**
Special Interest Groups: ADR 8
**Midterm One (M.C. due, Essay last 60 minutes of class)**

**Week 5: 10/24**
Political Parties: ADR 9

**Week 6: 10/31**
Elections: ADR 10, Rourke 10

**Week 7: 11/7**
Federalism: ADR 3, Rourke 2

**Week 8: 11/14**
**Midterm Two**
The Legislative Branch: ADR 11
The Executive Branch - The President: ADR 12

**Week 9: 10/21**
The Executive Branch - The Bureaucracy: ADR 13, Rourke 13
Rights and The Judiciary – ADR 14, Rourke 14

**Week 10: 11/28**
Thanksgiving No Class

**Week 11: 12/5**
**Editorial Due**
Civil Liberties and Civil Rights: ADR 4 and 5, Rourke 4

**Week 12: 12/12**
**Final:**
Tocqueville: Handout