

**POLS 20100
AMERICAN POLITICS**

Fall 2009
MW 4:05 – 4:55, plus F sections
DeBartolo 140
<http://www.nd.edu/~cwolbrec/POLS20100.html>

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Office Hours: W 1 – 3
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course we examine the fundamental components of American politics and government, including political culture, interest representation, mass participation, government institutions, and public policy-making. The goal of this course is to help students develop a basic knowledge of American politics and the tools for careful and critical evaluation of current events and political phenomenon.

REQUIREMENTS

Readings

The following books are required, and available in the campus bookstore:

Ginsberg, Lowi, and Weir. *We the People: An Introduction to American Politics*.
Seventh Shorter Edition.

Miroff, Seidelman, and Swanstrom, eds. *Debating Democracy: A Reader in American
Politics*. Sixth Edition.

Students are responsible for material covered in both the lecture and the reading. Lecture will supplement, not replicate, the reading.

Debate Essays

Over the course of the semester, students will write three (3) debate essays of no more than 5-pages in length. *Your essays must meet the following requirements: double-spaced, 1 inch margins, 12 point Times New Roman font.* Each essay should consider one debate (2 articles in one chapter) from the Miroff, Seidelman, and Swanstrom *Debating Democracy* reader. In your essays, first briefly define the issue and present the various arguments presented by the authors, and then offer your own analysis, arguments, and critique. In other words, after briefly summarizing the terms of the debate and the arguments as outlined in the reading, the focus of your essay should be on evaluating the relative merits of the arguments made, arguing for or against a side, and/or offering a perspective or points not made by either author, and so on. Your essay should show that you understand the debate and the arguments on both sides, but *more importantly*, that you are able to formulate and articulate arguments based on logic and facts (as opposed to unsubstantiated opinion). A good essay does not just summarize the reading; it offers unique and original analysis and discussion. You are not expected to do research on the issue outside of the reading, and you will not be graded on which side you

take. Rather, your essays will be evaluated on your ability to explain a debate and offer thoughtful, well-supported analysis.

For each of the three essays, students will choose their topic from the *Debating Democracy* chapters covered during that section of the course. Thus, you can choose from the following *Debating Democracy* chapters for the following essay assignments:

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|-----------|---|--------------------------------------|
| Essay #1: | <i>Debating Democracy</i> , Chs. 1, 2, 3, 6 | DUE Monday, Sept. 14 th |
| Essay #2: | <i>Debating Democracy</i> , Chs. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 16 | DUE Wednesday, Oct. 14 th |
| Essay #3: | <i>Debating Democracy</i> , Chs. 4, 5, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17 | DUE Monday, Nov. 23 rd |

The penalty for a late assignment is 5 points (half of a grade) per day.

All essays must be submitted IN CLASS on the day they are due. I do not accept electronic submissions. Essays not handed to the TA within 5 minutes of the class start time will be considered one day late. If you have any questions or need assistance with your essay, arrange to meet with your TA or the professor as soon as possible.

Exams

There will be three (3) exams. Students are responsible for material covered in lecture and in both the textbook (*We the People*) and the debate reader (*Debating Democracy*). The exams will be a mix of multiple choice questions, short answers, and essay questions. Exams cover only that material from the preceding section (i.e., since the last exam).

Discussion Sections

You are **required** to attend scheduled discussion sections on Fridays. Your attendance and participation at these sections will account for 10% of your final grade. Discussion sections provide an opportunity to, among other things: discuss material covered in class and in the reading, particularly the selections from the *Debates* reader; consider applications of the concepts covered in the class to current events and political debates; and obtain clarification of ideas and facts in a smaller and more casual setting than regular lecture. Your discussion section grade will be based on your attendance and *active* participation. More information on discussion sections will be provided in class.

POLICIES

Exceptions (e.g., extensions, exam rescheduling) are only granted in the case of true emergencies. Except for the case of illness or family emergency, all such requests must be made in writing at least one week before the paper or exam due date.

Any requests (e.g., exceptions, meetings outside of office hours) *must* be made in writing via e-mail so that we both have a record of the request and decision.

If you have a disability, I am happy to work with you and the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) to provide appropriate accommodation. Please contact the OSD to register. The OSD will contact me regarding any accommodations. I can only provide accommodations to students who have registered through the OSD.

Students are expected to abide by Notre Dame's Code of Honor (<http://www.nd.edu/~hnrcode/>). Any violations of academic integrity, including plagiarism, will be pursued according to Notre Dame policies.

Plagiarism is a violation of the Honor Code and strictly prohibited in this course. I recommend you read the Philosophy Department's useful guide to plagiarism posted here: <http://www.nd.edu/~hnrcode/docs/plagiarism.pdf>. If you have any questions about proper attribution of the ideas, arguments, words, or phrases you use in your own writing, consult your TA and/or professor.

I do not take attendance at Monday and Wednesday lecture. While attendance is not required, it is highly recommended. You will be held responsible for all information provided in class. You *are* required to attend Friday discussion sections. Unexcused absences will negatively affect your discussion section grade.

You must complete all course assignments (exams and papers) in order to pass this course.

GRADING

Grading is based on the following distribution:

Exam I	20%
Exam II	20
Final	20
Essay #1	10
Essay #2	10
Essay #3	10
Discussion	<u>10</u>
	100%

I use a basic grade distribution: 90s are the A range, 80s are the B range, and so on. A B grade indicates that you have met the minimum standards of the course: knowledge of central facts and information, good understanding of relevant processes, theories, developments, and ideas, and an ability to think critically and thoughtfully about the information covered in readings, lecture, and discussion sections. In other words, a B grade indicates good work that meets basic expectations for students in this course. A C grade (or less) indicates deficiencies in meeting those standards. An A grade indicates exemplary and outstanding work that exceeds the minimum standards. Work that merits an A indicates mastery of the topic, and is particularly thoughtful, insightful, and creative.

SCHEDULE

The following is a tentative battle plan and may be subject to future adjustment as necessary.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Reading Assignment</u>	
8/26	W	Introduction; Overview of the Course	
8/28	F	<i>Discussion sections</i>	<i>Debating Democracy</i> , Chs. 1 & 2
8/31	M	American Political Culture	<i>We the People</i> , Ch. 1
9/2	W	U.S. Constitution	<i>We the People</i> , Ch. 2
9/4	F	<i>No discussion sections</i>	
9/7	M	Federalism	<i>We the People</i> , Ch. 3
9/9	W	Constitutional Rights and Liberties	<i>We the People</i> , Ch. 4
9/11	F	<i>Discussion sections</i>	<i>Debating Democracy</i> , Chs. 3 & 6
9/14	M	Constitutional Rights and Liberties FIRST ESSAY <u>DUE</u> IN CLASS	<i>We the People</i> , Ch. 5
9/16	W	Public Opinion	<i>We the People</i> , Ch. 6
9/18	F	<i>Discussion sections</i>	<i>Debating Democracy</i> , Chs. 7 & 8
9/21	M	Public Opinion	
9/23	W	EXAM I	
9/25	F	<i>Discussion sections</i>	<i>Debating Democracy</i> , Ch. 9
9/28	M	Media	<i>We the People</i> , Ch. 7
9/30	W	Political Participation and Voting	<i>We the People</i> , Ch. 8
10/2	F	<i>Discussion sections</i>	<i>Debating Democracy</i> , Ch. 10
10/5	M	Political Participation and Voting	
10/7	W	Political Parties	<i>We the People</i> , Ch. 9

10/9	F	<i>Discussion sections</i>	<i>Debating Democracy, Ch. 11</i>
10/12	M	Political Parties	
10/14	W	Elections and Vote Choice SECOND ESSAY <u>DUE</u> IN CLASS	<i>We the People, Ch. 10</i>
10/16	F	<i>Discussion sections</i>	<i>Debating Democracy, Ch. 16</i>
<i>Mid-semester Break</i>			
10/26	M	Elections and Vote Choice	
10/28	W	Organized Interests	<i>We the People, Ch. 11</i>
10/30	F	<i>Discussion sections</i>	<i>Debating Democracy, Chs. 4</i>
11/2	M	Organized Interests	
11/4	W	EXAM II	
11/6	F	<i>Discussion sections</i>	<i>Debating Democracy, Ch. 5 & 17</i>
11/9	M	Congress	<i>We the People, Ch. 12</i>
11/11	W	Congress	
11/13	F	<i>Discussion sections</i>	<i>Debating Democracy, Ch. 13</i>
11/16	M	Presidency	<i>We the People, Ch. 13</i>
11/18	W	Bureaucracy	<i>We the People, Ch. 14</i>
11/20	F	<i>Discussion sections</i>	<i>Debating Democracy, Ch. 12 & 14</i>
11/23	M	Judiciary THIRD ESSAY <u>DUE</u> IN CLASS	<i>We the People, Ch. 15</i>
<i>Thanksgiving</i>			
11/30	M	Judiciary	
12/2	W	Policy Making	

12/4	F	<i>Discussion sections</i>	<i>Debating Democracy, Ch. 15</i>
12/7	M	Policy Making / Catch-up	
12/9	W	Final Exam Review	
12/17	Th	FINAL (4:15 – 6:15 p.m.)	