

Political Science 1101

U.S. Government

Dr. Tracy L. R. Lightcap

Office: Room 204, Callaway Academic Building

Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday 11:00 - 12:00 am or by appointment.

Required Readings

Two books will be used in this course. They are:

David McKay. 2005. *American Politics and Society*. 6th ed. New York: Blackwell.

Jamin B. Raskin. 2003. *We the Students*. Washington: CQ Press.

William Offutt. 2006. *New York City in the American Revolution, 1775 - 1776*. New York: Pace University.

William Offutt. 2006. *New York City in the American Revolution, 1775 - 1776: Document Package*. New York: Pace University.

The basic material for the course is found in these four books. *American Politics and Society* is the main source of information about the institutional structures and processes of our government. It is the raw material that we will digest to acquire skills in analyzing how that government works (or doesn't). *New York City in the American Revolution, 1775 - 1776* and the document package accompanying it provide the instructions for the Reacting to the Past game that will be the starting point for the course. *We the Students* has a different role. This book will provide the data and the exercises for periodic applications of the Constitution to the everyday workings of government. It is intended to provide you with an opportunity (which you would be wise to seize) to use your judgment and the skills you will develop in the *New York* game to evaluate our institutions and see how they work.

Course Objectives

This course is an introduction to political science through the study of the government of the United States. At its conclusion students should have a working knowledge of :

... the structure of government institutions in the United States and their limitations and powers,

... of the methods and institutions used to co-opt, form, mobilize, and adapt to the influence of public opinion,

... of how government institutions function and interact within a federal structure,

... and of the basic ideas and social forces affecting policy formation in foreign and domestic affairs.

There will be an ongoing review of how the tools and methods of political science can be used to illustrate the character of American political institutions and behavior as well.

Course Requirements

Course Structure

This course is the second Reacting to the Past course taught at LaGrange College. It will be much different from the courses you have already had in high school and it will differ almost as much from the other courses you will have here. The course begins with a multi-week Reacting game, *New York City in the American Revolution, 1775 - 1776*, that you will play with your classmates - and try to win. The experience you will have in the *New York* game will provide you with a deeper understanding of the ideas and controversies surrounding the establishment of our nation; controversies that continue to shape American politics to this day. We will then move on

to a mixture of more conventional lectures and discussions with further simulations to create understanding of our political system

Trying to describe in detail what will go on in the course would be profitless in this syllabus; you have whole books to help you with that and, as usual, much of what you get from the course will depend on what you put into it.

Grades

Your grade for the course will depend on several endeavors. The first component will be the *New York* game. There will be a reading quiz and two papers (around 8 - 12 pages total) as part of the game. You will also be graded for your participation. In addition, winning factions or individuals can earn a "winner's increment" to their grades in each game. All of this will become clearer as we lay out the way the games will work and you begin to play them. Your work in the game will constitute **25%** of your total grade. You will also have a mid-term examination counting for **25%** of your final grade and a cumulative final examination counting for **35%** of your final grade. Your participation in the other exercises in the course and in class will account for the remaining **15%**. As you will see, the substantial increment of participation makes sense in this course.

I will give make-up tests under the right circumstances, but I will not give a make-up test due to an unexcused absence. You will find me willing to accommodate your scheduling problems, within reason, but I must be informed before hand if you must miss a test. I will give make-up examinations if and only if I receive an adequate excuse. If I am not informed prior to the examination date that you will miss it, I will deduct 10 points from your grade, regardless. Of course, true emergencies (i.e. serious illness or family emergencies) will be addressed on a case by case basis. Needless to say, there can be no makeup for missed exercises, though partial credit may be awarded for required written work.

The *New York* game is another story. I will look at any absences during the game with *extreme* displeasure. Nothing but the most dire circumstances will be accepted as an excuse. When you are absent during the game itself you let down the entire class and, especially, other members of your faction. Attend and you'll have fun. Don't and you *will* pay for it.

Material from lectures, discussions, the game, exercises, and the readings will be covered on your examinations. Don't assume that you aren't going to be questioned about a lecture topic that isn't in the book or about part of the assigned readings that I didn't cover in class. You can also expect that what we learn from the exercises will be included in every examination.

I expect everyone to become familiar with their obligations under LaGrange College Honor Code and to strictly abide by them.

Attendance

I will be taking attendance at each class. **More than three (3) unexcused absences will result in withdrawal from the course (either a W or WF depending).** Since being late to class disturbs both me and your classmates, I will charge you with an absence if you are late twice (i.e. two late appearances = 1 absence). *If you are late, be sure to check with me after class to see that you were marked present!* This is your responsibility and yours alone.

A Word of Advice

As you'll see when we play the *New York* game, politics can be a deadly serious business and what you say in political discussions in a democracy like ours *counts!* Remember, however, that there is no requirement that you agree with me about the issues we discuss. As we shall see, political opinions tend to be the product of personal backgrounds and, in this as in other things, I assume that we will differ. I will say what I think about politics and make every effort to back up my statements; you have the same right. Political science is a set of

methods and theories that help us to analyze politics. It is not now and never will be a set of “right” answers. But that doesn’t mean we don’t have a responsibility to think before we talk; political questions *matter* and if you want to be taken seriously you’ll act accordingly.

Course Outline

The course will follow the outline below. I will make every effort to stick to this schedule, but if revisions are required I will inform you before hand. If we must reschedule any aspect of this syllabus, you and your classmates will be consulted.

1. Introduction to the Course (Feb 5, 7)

American Politics, chap. 1

New York City in the American Revolution, 1775 - 1776: Document Package, begin readings.

Begin distributed readings by Wood and Schechter

2. *New York City in the American Revolution, 1775 - 1776: Background* (Feb 9 - 14)

New York City in the American Revolution, 1775 - 1776: Document Package, complete readings.

Complete distributed readings by Wood and Schechter

Reading Quiz - Feb 14

3. *New York City in the American Revolution, 1775 - 1776: The Game* (Feb 16 - 26)

New York City in the American Revolution, 1775 - 1776, follow assignments on pp. 36 - 41 (except readings)

4. *New York City in the American Revolution, 1775 - 1776: Uncovering the Game* (Feb 28 - Mar 2)

5. The United States Today: Social and Constitutional Values (Mar 5 - 9)

American Politics, chaps. 2 - 4

We the Students, pp. 1 - 28

Exercise: Soft Drinks, Hard Choices, *We the Students*, pp. 28

6. Organized Interests and Public Opinion: How Opinions Develop and How They Are Influenced (Mar 12 - 16)

American Politics, chaps. 7, 13

We the Students, pp. 55 - 70

Exercise: Drafting An Editorial Policy For Your School Newspaper, *We the Students*, pp. 64

7. Parties and Elections (Mar 19 - 23)

American Politics, chaps. 5 - 6

Mid-Term Examination - Mar 26

8. Congress: How to Lose Dominance, Then Regain It ... Kind Of (Mar 28 - Apr 13)

American Politics, chaps. 8 - 9

We the Students, pp. 219 - 237

Exercise: Legislative Decisionmaking, *We the Students*, pp. 236

9. The Executive Branch: How the Presidency Became Imperial ... Sort Of (Apr 16 - 20)

American Politics, chaps. 10 - 12

We the Students, pp. 93 - 120

Exercise: School Board Exercise - With a Twist, *We the Students*, pp. 119

10. The Judiciary: How to Use Discretion to Gain Power ... In a Way (Apr 23 - 27)

American Politics, chaps. 14 - 15

We the Students, pp. 29 - 70

Exercise: Too Hot To Handle - With a Twist, *We the Students*, pp. 66

11. Domestic Public Policy: Political Economy for Beginners (Apr 30 - May 4)

American Politics, chaps. 16 - 17

We the Students, pp. 161 - 201

Exercise: Public Displays of Intolerance?, *We the Students*, pp. 200

12. Foreign Policy: It's A Jungle Out There (Or Is It?) (May 7 - 9)

American Politics, chaps. 18 - 19

Final Examination - May 12 at 3:00 pm