

Capstone: The Politics of College
PSC 390-101: Autumn 2015

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Class Meets: Arts & Letters 208

Course Description

As you approach the end of your undergraduate career, you have a unique opportunity to reflect on your college experience. This capstone course is designed to give you the time, space and guidance to do just that. In particular, this course will ask you to think about your major coursework in political science in light of your more general coursework for your liberal studies requirements. So, although it is a political science course, the assigned readings draw from a variety of disciplines – and you will be asked to consider the breadth of your academic experiences, not just your political science classes, as we work through the material. It is also designed to help you reflect on your time here, to think about your values (and how they have developed or changed), to evaluate your education, and, in the process, refine your critical and creative skills.

Importantly, the focus of this class is not the acquisition of new information. You are not adding to your understanding of the American political system, or the peace process in the Middle East, or dictatorships in Latin America. (Although most of us – myself included – will be learning a lot of new things throughout the 10 weeks.) Instead, we will be using the readings to think critically about both *what* you have learned in college and *how* you have learned it. This class should also provide a bridge to your future as an intellectually engaged, critically thinking citizen, who will seek out knowledge for knowledge's sake, not because it is a course requirement.

The specific theme for this class focuses on the various ways in which issues related to academia are political – from the process of getting in (admissions) to the books that form the “core” curriculum. We'll look at issues of athletics on campus, free speech, academic integrity, faculty politics, and student activism. These weekly topics will serve as starting points for analysis about and reflection on your own academic experiences.

Course Requirements

Grades will be based on the following:

Participation: 25%
Short reviews of the readings: 25%
Personal curriculum assessment: 25%
Take Home Final: 25%

You are required to read a total of eight books, all of which are available for purchase at the bookstore or from many online outlets. I recommend purchasing them all second hand. Completing the reading is absolutely necessary to succeed in this class. You will not be able to complete the written reviews, participate in class discussions or benefit from our collective assessment of the topic unless you are prepared to discuss the material. You are expected to bring the books to class so that you can reference specific passages.

It is a requirement of the Political Science Department that you receive at least a C- in order to get credit for this course. Please keep this in mind as you work on your assignments.

All written assignments must be turned in on *hard copy* to me in class. No electronic submissions will be accepted. Anything received late receives a *one letter grade deduction for every day that it is late*.

Participation (*including comments posted to the class blog before each class meeting*) (25%)

Because this is a seminar course, you will be expected to be able to substantively discuss the assignments. Your participation grade is based not just on showing up in class (which earns you a C), but on contributing to our discussion in positive, informed, reflective, and critical ways. I will be noting the quality and quantity (in that order) of your participation during each class session. It is especially important to participate on days when you have not written a book review as it indicates that you are still highly involved in the readings even when you are not responsible for the direction of the discussion. Active participation includes active listening, which means that you should engage your classmates in the discussion and not direct your questions or comments to me.

In order to encourage a wide ranging discussion, **everyone who is *not* signed up for the weekly book review is required to post questions or comments on the blog by 9:00 a.m. of every class session.** These questions or comments, which will be used to prompt discussion among your classmates, will factor into your participation grade. Remember that the best discussion questions do not ask for facts, but rather open up ideas and opinions for reactions and elaborations. You should cite the particular page or chapter that the question is referencing.

If you want a relatively simple mechanism for demonstrating how closely you read the material, think about citing specific evidence (including quotes) from the text, or making reference to the key themes. It is my hope that you find the readings so intellectually stimulating that you will find it easy to be actively engaged in our conversation.

If you miss more than three classes, your overall course grade will be automatically reduced by a letter grade. No exceptions.

Reviews of the Readings and Discussion Facilitation (25%)

You are required to write two 4-5 page reviews of your chosen books throughout the quarter. **These book reviews are due on the Tuesday of the week that you are responsible for the reading.** On the first day of class, you will sign up for your two dates. These papers are not just a summary of the readings, but a reaction to them. (I will provide you with materials that detail how to write a book review to help guide you with this assignment.) As with any book review, you should evaluate the thesis, discuss the methodology, and analyze the relationship between the argument and the evidence. Given the goals of this course, however, strong reviews will also discuss the readings in light of the college experience more broadly, especially in terms of the issues that we discuss each week.

When you write your review, you should assume that your audience has not read the book. In fact, most people read a book review to decide whether they should read a book. So, you will need to summarize the key arguments, provide information about the evidence that is harnessed to support the key theses, and evaluate the overall strength of the book.

Importantly, a key component of this requirement is for you facilitate the in-class discussion, so you will want to be thinking about ways to spark conversation *about the readings* among your classmates. **I strongly**

urge you to coordinate with your fellow classmates about how to lead the class discussion. You can do this via email, text or actually meeting in person. With a relatively small amount of preparation, you can greatly enhance your ability to lead the discussion, and thus your grade. Feel free to enhance the discussion with video clips, which we can show during class.

Curriculum Assessment (25%) Due: Friday, October 23rd at noon (in my office/box)

This assignment, which is adapted from one used by Political Science Professor Christina Rivers, asks you to reflect, in a somewhat systematic manner, on the various courses you've taken while at DePaul. There are several steps involved.

1. Compile an inventory of 10 things that you've encountered while a student at DePaul (and elsewhere if you transferred in) that have most influenced your thinking as a student and/or as a person. Sources can include classes, readings, professors, staff, films, documentaries, study abroad, public service, artistic events or objects, guest lectures, panels, teach-ins, protests, or religious events.
2. Identify which general liberal studies learning domain each entry falls under (arts and literature, scientific inquiry, experiential learning, etc.) and try to vary the entries so that you reflect on a variety of experiences. For a review of the domains, go to: <http://liberalstudies.depaul.edu/About/LearningDomains/index.asp>
3. Arrange the entries in chronological order. Under each entry, write a paragraph that explains how and why, out of all that you've experienced during your studies, this particular entry is so important to you. Try to link that entry with experiences in your life as a student specifically, and as a person more generally.
4. When possible, attach an image or item that illustrates your entries. This can be a photo, something you create, prayer, newspaper/magazine clipping, poem, image from the internet, receipt, ticket, post-card, etc. (Note: this is almost always possible, if you put in minimal effort. Do not simply write ten entries without addressing this requirement.)
5. Draw some generalizations across the ten entries. How would you describe and characterize these experiences as a whole? Do you see any theme or themes that emerge? Spend some time here. In Political Science, we draw generalizations from data. You have ten pieces of data. What can you say? If there are no clear themes, is there a good explanation for the incongruity?

Conclude the assignment with at least three or four paragraphs explaining:

- What you believe to be **the purpose of a liberal arts education**—this includes the courses in your major;
- How the above inventory accomplished that purpose (or did not accomplish it);
- How a liberal arts education has shaped you and your world view;
- How such an education has prepared you (or not) for your life ahead, at least as you currently envision that life.

Do not forget this final step. It is significant task in which you need to pull together the various threads and critically reflect and analyze your liberal arts education. This discussion must be

reflective and analytical, and must demonstrate your ability to sincerely and critically evaluate the meaning and experience of a liberal arts education for you.

In the past, some students have created scrapbooks; some have chosen to present the material in a power point presentation (with an accompanying essay); others have filmed short videos. One student used software to create a magazine. Others have simply written a long paper, with some illustrations. Feel free to use the medium that best suits you.

Take Home Final (25%) due, November 24th at 2:00 p.m. (in my office/box)

The final assignment will be provided at the end of the quarter. It will ask you to reflect on the evolution of your political education at DePaul and to think about its impact on your future.

If, at any time, you find that you are unable to complete the assignments, or it is becoming difficult for you to attend class, please contact me. Do not let this become a class you pay for but don't experience.

Course Schedule:

If you are writing on the week's reading, you must complete the reading by Tuesday.

If it is not your turn to write a review, you may read the entire week's assignment for Tuesday's class, or you may break the book into parts, as indicated on the schedule.

The password for anything on Library Reserves is PSC390.

Introduction: Higher Education in the 21st Century

Thursday, September 10th – Introductions and Overview

Current Issues in Higher Education

Tuesday, September 15th: Free Speech

Lukianoff, Greg and Jonathan Haidt. "The Coddling of the American Mind," *The Atlantic Monthly* September 2015: 42-52. Print. Also available online at:

<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/09/the-coddling-of-the-american-mind/399356/>

Flanagan, Caitlin. "That's Not Funny." *The Atlantic Monthly* September 2015: 54-58. Print. Also available online at: <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/09/thats-not-funny/399335/>

Kelefa Sanneh. "The Hell You Say." *The New Yorker*. August 10th & 17th, 2015: 30-34. Print. Also available online at: <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/08/10/the-hell-you-say>

Thursday, September 17th.

Please bring in an article to share with the class (and turn into to me) about *any* issue in higher education. (Your comments on the blog should be about your article.)

Getting into College: The Politics of Admission

Stevens, Mitchell. 2009. Creating a Class: College Admissions and the Education of the Elite. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Tuesday, September 22nd: Chapters 1-5

Thursday, September 24th: Chapters 6-8

Contemporary Critiques: The Politics of the University -- Priorities, Tenure, Research and the Common Core

Hacker, Andrew and Claudia Dreifus. 2010. Higher Education? How Colleges are Wasting our Money and Failing our Kids. NY: Holt, Henry.

Tuesday, September 29th; Chapters 1-7

Thursday, October 1st: Chapters 8-13

The Politics of the Curriculum

Arum, Richard and Josipa Roksa. 2010. Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Tuesday, October 6th: Chapters 1-3

Thursday, October 8th: Chapters 4-5

The Politics of the Mission

Deresiewicz, William. 2014. Excellent Sheep: The Miseducation of American Elite and the Way to a Meaningful Life. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Tuesday, October 13th: Introduction, Part I & Part II

Thursday, October 15th: Part III & Part IV

The Politics of Sexual Assault on Campus

Krakauer, Jon. Missona: 2015. Rape and the Justice System in a College Town. New York: Random House.

Tuesday, October 20th: Parts One – Four

Thursday, October 22nd: Parts Five & Six

The Politics of Politics

Gross, Neil. 2013. *Why are Professors Liberal and Why do Conservatives Care?* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Tuesday, October 27th: Introduction, Chapters 1-4

Thursday, October 29th: Chapters 5-7 & Conclusion

The Politics of Politics, redux

Wiener, John. 2004. *Historians in Trouble: Plagiarism, Fraud, and Politics in the Ivory Tower.* New York: The New Press.

Tuesday, November 3rd: Introduction, Parts I-III

Thursday, November 5th: Part IV, Conclusion & Update

The Politics of Religion

Riley, Naomi Shaefer. 2006. *God on the Quad: How Religious Colleges and the Missionary Generation are Changing America.* Chicago: Ivan R. Dee (originally published by St. Martin's Press).

Tuesday, November 10th: Introduction, Chapters 1-7

Thursday, November 12th: Chapters 8-12, Conclusion

November 17th: The Politics of College: Conclusions, Reflections, and Ruminations

Three graduation speeches. You may read these or watch them. Links are on the blog.

** A Note about Academic Integrity**

This course requires you to critically evaluate and reflect upon your education in light of several key issues and the assigned readings. There is no reason to rely on the research or scholarship of others, unless you are interested in expanding our discussion.

Please note that if you are turning to outside research, a key element of this policy is the requirement that that you **cite your sources** of information, which means including a bibliography. You must give attribution to any information, idea, assessment, or evaluation that you found either on the web or in another source, *even if you paraphrase the words*. Do not, under any circumstances, directly copy the writing of another individual unless you bracket the words with quotation marks. If you have any questions about what should be cited or how to do so, I'd be happy to talk to you.

If you do not uphold these standards, you will receive a failing grade on your assignment, and I will notify both Academic Affairs and the Dean of this transgression. If the violation is particularly egregious, you will also fail the course.

DePaul's Academic Integrity Policy (<http://condor.depaul.edu/~handbook/code17.html>)

Please Take Advantage of these Important Resources for all Students:

The Dean of Students Office (DOS) helps students in navigating the university, particularly during difficult situations, such as personal, financial, medical, and/or family crises. Absence Notifications to faculty, Late Withdrawals, and Community Resource Referrals, support students both in and outside of the classroom. Additionally we have resources and programs to support health and wellness, violence prevention, substance abuse and drug prevention, and LGBTQ student services. We are committed to your success as a DePaul student. Please feel free to contact us at <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/dos/>.

Students with Disabilities:

Students who feel they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss their specific needs. All discussions will remain confidential. To ensure that you receive the most appropriate reasonable accommodation based on your needs, contact me as early as possible in the quarter (preferably within the first week of class), and make sure that you have contacted the:

- PLuS Program (for LD, AD/HD) at 773-325-1677, Student Center #370, and/or
- The Office for Students with Disabilities (for all other disabilities) at 773-325-1677, Student Center #370