**POL 1100 A: Politics in the US – Fall 2019**

**Abbot Lawrence Academy**

**Meeting Time: Mon/Wed 8:00 am – 9:15 am**

**Classroom: Crowe 213**

**Instructor: Dr. Kirstie Lynn Dobbs**

**Office: Cushing Hall 17b**

**Office Hours: Merrimack Campus (Tues/Thurs 9:30 – 12:00); Lawrence High School (Tues. 2:45 – 4:00 pm)**

**Email : dobbsk@merrimack.edu**

**Course Description**

This survey course focuses on political processes and procedures found in democratic political systems. It centers on the major institutions found in the United States such as the three branches of government, public opinion, the media, political parties, and interest groups. A specific emphasis on debating issues in political science while considering alternative viewpoints also serves as a cornerstone of this course to encourage analytical thinking about politics. Topics covered include the impact of public opinion and the media on U.S. politics, the role of interest groups on public policy, and elections and electoral participation.

The pedagogical method applied to this class is a mixture of a lecture-based and active model of teaching. Students are expected to take notes during lectures and are also expected to be actively engaged in classroom activities and discussions. Attendance will be taken at the start of each class. If student is more than 15 min late without notice, they will be counted as tardy. Be on time!

**Readings**

Kollman, Ken. 2019 *The American Political System*, Third Edition. New York, London: W.W. Norton & Company.

In addition to this book there will be supplemental readings that will be available on the course's blackboard page. Readings should be completed *before* coming to class to enhance and

facilitate lectures and class discussion. You should anticipate approximately 60 - 100 pages

of reading per week.

**Access to Blackboard**

All course materials will be uploaded to Blackboard. This includes class lectures, rubrics, and assignment sheets. Grades will also be posted on this site. Each student will also be required to submit a minimum of one question regarding current events throughout the semester to our discussion board on Blackboard. As questions come in, we will discuss the current event in class to enhance our learning of US politics. The objective is to relate classroom concepts to real-world events, while reflecting on politics as events happen in real-time.

**Learning Outcomes**

After completing the course each student should:

* Have a solid understanding of democracy and different forms of government
* Be familiar with different democratic institutions and how they impact politics
* Articulate different theories and concepts associated with political science and apply them to U.S. politics
* Understand the evidence surrounding the arguments related to whether public demands are effectively represented by policy makers
* Think critically about one’s personal political leanings and be able to engage in a healthy debate surrounding issues in American politics
* Make an argument about democratic responsiveness in the United States
* Be better prepared to think critically about the health of contemporary American democracy

**Grading**

Final Exam 25%

Mid Term Exam 25%

Policy Essay (round 1) 20%

Policy Essay (round 2) 20%

In-class Activities 10%

*Grading Scale*

A 93-100 C 73-76

A- 90-92 C- 70-72

B+ 87-89 D+ 67-69

B 83-86 D 63-66

B- 80-82 D- 60-62

C+ 77-79 F 59 and below

**Assignments**

**Exams (50%)**

There are two exams in this class: a midterm (Wednesday October 16, in-class) and a final exam (Tuesday December 17 8:00 am – 11:00 am). Each exam is worth 25% of the total grade and will be multiple choice with 3-6 short answer.

**Policy Essay (40%)**

You will write a 6 – 8-page essay regarding an issue in American politics. You may select any topic that you wish as long as it directly applies to American politics. In this essay, you describe an issue, discuss alternative and/or competing viewpoints, and dictate your own opinion regarding this issue. This paper should be an evidence-based argument – drawing on course materials as well as outside resources. You are expected to have no fewer than 8 legitimate sources. A rubric will be provided for both drafts of this essay.

The Policy Essay will consist of two drafts. The first draft is due in **hard copy** format in class on November 4th. You will receive a grade for this first draft. During class on November 20th, I will be available during class to discuss the papers with students if they would like. This space will allow us to have a brief conversation on what could be improved upon for the second draft. The final draft of the essay is due as a **hard copy** in class on December 9th.

**In-class Activities (10%)**

Take a Stance!

Build your own political campaign

Fake News Simulation

Current News Questions

**Suggested News Outlets**

* *The Washington Post*
* *The New York Times*
* *The Economist*
* CNN
* NPR Politics Podcast; NPR’s Up First
* New York Times’ The Daily
* BBC Global News Podcast

**Due Dates and Late Policy:**

All assignments must be turned in on their due date through Sakai. Students must be present for exams and the group presentations. Only unforeseen emergencies with valid documentation will permit students to remake exams and their group presentation. Any assignments that are turned in late will receive a 5 percent deduction for each day (24 hours) that the assignment is tardy.

Assignments that are five days late will no longer be accepted, and you will receive a zero on the assignment.

Please anticipate all possible contingencies (computer failure, printer issues, etc.) and please

contact me before or as soon as possible if an issue arises. If a student contacts me about an issue after the assignment is a due, I can no longer make accommodations for that assignment.

Missed classes/Late Assignments: The only excusable reasons for missing a class or exam or handing in an assignment late are serious illnesses and family emergencies. In either case you must both 1) notify me of your situation in a timely manner and 2) provide appropriate documentation. Assignments handed in late without documentation will be penalized by 10% for each date they are late.

**Academic Accommodations from the Accessibility Services Office**

Merrimack College provides reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Students who have, or think they may have, a disability are invited to contact the Accessibility Services Office via the online request form found on the Accessibility Services [**website**](https://www.merrimack.edu/academics/academic-success-center/accessibility-services/)**,** email [accessibilityservices@merrimack.edu](mailto:accessibilityservices@merrimack.edu) or by visiting us on the third floor of McQuade Library.

Students are encouraged to contact the office as soon as possible to ensure adequate time to meet and create a plan. Accommodations cannot be made retroactively.

**Statement of Community Standards**

The following statement is taken from Merrimack College’s Student Handbook under Community Standards.

Before all else, the students, faculty, staff, and administration of Merrimack College form an Augustinian community that supports and challenges its members in the pursuit of truth. We declare and celebrate our common purpose, and commit ourselves:

* to serious study, generous service and courageous leadership
* to academic integrity and personal growth
* to civilized discourse in the exchange of ideas
* to friendship, diversity, and mutual respect
* to primacy of conscience and the spiritual life
* to responsibility for the common good, and
* to pride in our school and ourselves

Students have the right to express their views so long as there is nether use nor threat of force, nor interference with the rights of others to express their views (Faculty Handbook 2016, 50).

**Academic Integrity Code**

The following excerpt is taken from Merrimack’s Faculty Handbook and addresses issues surrounding plagiarism. “Plagiarism is intellectual theft. At Merrimack, the failure to acknowledge the intellectual contributions of others is considered plagiarism. It is important to avoid even unintentional plagiarism by being familiar with accepted ways to acknowledge sources and by developing good note-taking and research habits.” Violations of academic integrity also include cheating on exams, fabrication, complicity, appropriation, multiple submissions, and unsanctioned collaboration. Please refer to the following link for a detailed review of the academic integrity code and penalty procedures. <https://www.merrimack.edu/live/files/365-faculty-handbook>.

The academic course penalty will be determined by your instructor. A student who violates the academic integrity code in a course may receive an F for the course, or, at the discretion of the instructor, a less severe penalty. If you withdraw from any course in which you have been accused of an academic integrity violation for which the penalty is F for the course, the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs will record the grade of WF on your transcript (Faculty Handbook 2016). Further action will be taken at the college level.

COURSE SCHEDULE

**9/4** Introduction to course

\*\*Discussion on Civility and Contemporary American Issues

**9/9** American Politics and Political Science

* Ch. 1 Introduction (KK)
* Fault Lines: Ch. 1. What does it mean to be American?

**9/11** American Politics and Politics Science

* Ch. 1 Introduction (KK)

**9/16** The Constitution

* Ch. 2 The Constitution (KK)
* History.com. (2018) “Constitution.” Accessed at: [https://www.history.com/topics/united- states-constitution/constitution](https://www.history.com/topics/united-%20%20states-constitution/constitution).
* Excerpts from Federalist 10, 51, 55, 57, and the Anti-Federalist Papers

**9/18** The Constitution

* Ch. 2 The Constitution (KK)
* Fault Lines: Ch. 4

**9/23** Federalism

* Ch. 3 Federalism (KK)

**9/25** Civil Rights and Liberties

* Ch. 4 Civil Rights and Liberties (KK)

**9/30** Civil Rights and Liberties

* Faults Lines: Debating Issues in American Politics (selected readings)
* In-Class Activity: Take a Stance! Please bring your laptop to class.

**10/2** Congress

* Ch. 5 Congress (KK)
* Fault Lines: Ch. 5

**10/7** Guest Speaker; Representative Michael Moran

**\*\*Have two questions prepared to ask Rep. Moran during class.**

**10/9** The Presidency

* Ch. 6 The Presidency (KK)
* Fault Lines. Ch. 6. Should the Electoral College Be Replaced?

**10/14** NO CLASS FOR COLUMBUS DAY!

**10/15** \*\*Classes meet on a Monday schedule (Mid-Term Review)

**10/16** Mid-Term Exam

**10/21** The Judiciary

* Ch. 8 The Judiciary (KK)

**10/23** Public Opinion

* Ch. 9 Public Opinion (KK)
* Fault Lines: Ch. 9 Public Opinion and the Media

**10/28** Political Participation

* Ch. 10 Political Participation (KK)
* Martinez, Michael. “Why is American Turnout so low, and why should we care?”

**10/30** Political Participation

* Ch. 10 Political Participation (KK)

**11/4** Interest Groups and Social Movements

* Ch. 11 Interest Groups and Social Movements (KK)
* Fault Lines: Ch. 12 Groups and Interests: Donor Disclosure
* POLICY ESSAY DUE (Round 1)

**11/6** Interest Groups and Social Movements

* Ch. 11 Interest Groups and Social Movements (KK)
* Gilens, Martin, and Benjamin page. “Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest groups, and average citizens.” Perspectives on Politics.

**11/11** NO CLASS FOR VETERANS DAY!

**11/13** Political Parties

* Ch. 12 Political Parties (KK)
* Fault Lines: Ch. 11Political Parties: Should the United States Encourage Multi-Party Politics?
* <https://www.diffen.com/difference/Democrat_vs_Republican>
* <http://www.gp.org/>
* <https://www.lp.org/>

**11/18** Elections and Campaigns

* Ch. 13 Elections and Campaigns (KK)
* Fault Lines: Ch. 10. Elections and Voting: Voter ID Laws

**11/20** In-class activity: Build your own party campaign! Mini policy paper meetings.

**11/25** The Impact of the Media

* Ch. 14 Mass Media and the Press (KK)

**11/27** NO CLASS FOR THANKSGIVING RECESS

**12/2** The Impact of the Media

* In-class activity: What is Fake News?
* Ch. 14 Mass Media and the Press (KK)

**12/4** Review Session

**12/9** Review Session

* POLICY ESSAY DUE (Round 2)

**12/17 FINAL EXAM (8:00 am – 11:00 am)**