

Seminar: Study of Politics (PLS 495-02) Fall 2013

Class Location: Mackinac Hall D1135

Class Time: 11:30am - 12:45pm, Tuesday and Thursday

Professor: Whitt Kilburn, Ph.D.

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Office Hours: In person by appointment. Online — anytime — when you see me logged in to GVSU Gmail (mail.gvsu.edu) chat. And regular in-person hours Tuesday and Thursday, 9-10am, 1-2pm; other in person hours announced throughout the semester.

Course Website: Blackboard, <http://mybb.gvsu.edu>

Course Overview

We will read a series of widely regarded recent books revolving around the theme of (in)equality and uses (or abuses) of state power to confront it. The first we will read is Hacker and Pierson's *Winner-take-all Politics*. Hacker and Pierson argue that representation has basically failed in Congress, Democrats and Republicans chase after big money, policy making has not kept up with major changes in the American economy, and the big loser is the American middle class. Frank's *The Darwin Economy* argues that most people – including almost every member of Congress – misunderstand how markets usually work. Moreover, from Frank's perspective, Charles Darwin's evolutionary theory provides better insight into markets than Adam Smith, who is usually mis-read anyway. Next, we will turn to Dahl's work, *On Political Equality*, to explore what if anything we should demand of the state to promote equality. Fukuyama reflects on this theme, and many others in *The Origins of Political Order*. We will read a series of essays on anarchist perspectives on the state, in Scott's *Two Cheers for Anarchism*. Lastly, we will return to the study of Congress with Poole and Rosenthal's *Polarized America: The Dance of Ideology and Unequal Riches*.

Finally, the course is designated SWS (Supplemental Writing Skills): "...Completion of WRT 150 with a grade of C or better (not C-) is a prerequisite. SWS credit will not be given to a student who completes this course before completing the prerequisite. SWS courses adhere to certain guidelines. Students turn in a total of at least 3000 words of writing. Part of that total may be essay exams, but a substantial amount of it is made up of essays, reports, or research papers. The instructor works with the students on revising drafts of papers, rather than simply grading the finished piece of writing. At least four hours of class time will be devoted to writing instruction. At least one third of the final grade in the course is based on the writing assignments." You will be expected to share your writing with at least one of your peers.

Required Course Texts

Dahl, R. 2006. *On Political Equality*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Frank, R. H. 2011. *The Darwin Economy: Liberty, Competition, and the Common Good*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Fukuyama, F. 2012. *The Origins of Political Order*. New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux.

Hacker, J. S. and P. Pierson. 2010. *Winner-take-all Politics*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

McCarty, N. and K. T. Poole. 2008. *Polarized America: The Dance of Ideology and Unequal Riches*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.

Scott, J. 2013. *Two Cheers for Anarchism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Schedule and Course Requirements

Tuesdays and Thursdays and Seminar Leadership The class will be conducted seminar-style, meaning the class will consist of discussion over the assigned books for the course. I will not lecture, and you will be expected to take a leadership role within the class, facilitating class discussions on two separate days — as many as one week of class. The discussion facilitator will be assigned the responsibility of providing an overview of the readings at the beginning of the class and suggesting how we approach our discussion, including which questions we should discuss. Of course, I will be there next to you to help.

Seminar 'bridge' work On one to two class days in which you are not seminar leader, you will be responsible for bringing one 'extra' resource to class that addresses the theme of the reading from a similar or different perspective. This 'extra' could be a short video clip, a news media article, or a short piece of creative writing. Or it could be a research article you find especially interesting. It should be something that can be shared with the class. It can not, however, be a lazy attempt at finding relevant material. Anything you find by simply Googling an author's name would be lazy. So audio or video of the book authors are not credit worthy.

Discussion Questions and Summaries Regardless of leadership, for each class day's reading assignment, at a minimum, you should be prepared to share with the class one or two discussion questions you would like to raise and be prepared to turn in a short (approximately three paragraph) reaction piece in which you discuss the major, most interesting points from the reading assignments. (These 'reaction pieces' must be typed.) The discussion questions will be written on a sheet passed around the class, hopefully prior to the class actually beginning. Discussion questions are due every class day. Reading summaries are not.

You have to turn in 10 reading summaries throughout the semester. You get to choose which ones to complete. They can not be submitted late. So don't wait until the end of the semester to start working on each one. Each is due in type-written form at the beginning of each class.

Throughout the semester, I will collect these questions and reaction pieces for course credit, graded on a High Pass (100%) to Fail (50%) basis. If you do not turn one in, you receive a 0%. You must write these pieces in complete sentences; 'bullet points' are not acceptable.

Essay or Research Paper The major assignment for the course will be a 15 page (double-spaced) essay or empirical research paper (minus tables or graphs) on any of the themes examined within the course. The paper will be turned in to me at multiple points throughout the semester, and you will share your writing with at least one other student in the class. Part of your grade will be determined by improvement in each subsequent draft, and the overall quality of the paper. We will devise an evaluation rubric in class. I will expect you to visit my office hours to plan out the thesis of your paper.

Presentation During the final exam period for the course, you will be expected to explain your essay or research paper to the class in a brief (perhaps 15 minute) presentation.

Participation You will receive a participation grade for seminar leadership and general participation, so please show up and do your part.

Post graduation preparation You will be expected to show me evidence that you have taken advantage of the opportunities for a discussion (outside of class time) with someone on your post-GVSU plans, such as on careers or graduate school, through either a one-on-one conversation or participation in a workshop or scheduled event.

General Policies and Procedures

I will hold you accountable to high standards. Beyond that, there are a few key things you should know about my expectations of you:

1. Most important of all, while I do not take attendance, I do keep track of tardiness and participation. I expect you to arrive to class on time and actively participate throughout the entire class. So please do not use your laptop to “take notes”, that is, distract us all with Internet cat videos.
2. The in-class assignments can not be made up, unless we arrange to do so prior to an expected absence, after meeting during office hours. Research paper components are docked 5 points when turned in after the deadline, then 10 points for each day they are late. Essays must be submitted to Blackboard as directed. The reading summaries via hard copy. I can not accept assignments via email. That’s just the way it is.
3. You should *always* bring a copy of the assigned reading with you to class. Just like for any other upper-division course in the PLS department, you should always have the reading with you.
4. If you believe you will have trouble with the course, I encourage you to call an academic counselor at the Advising Resources and Special Programs Unit, 331-3588.

Grades

In-class and Homework and Short Writing Assignments 40%

Seminar Leadership and Participation 10%

Essay or Research Paper (average of drafts) 40%

Presentation 10%

Unless standardized scores are necessary, the course grading scale will be:

A 93-100	A- 90-92
B+ 87-89	B 84-86
B- 80-83	C+ 76-79
C 72-75	C- 69-72
D+ 65-68	D 60-64
F <60	

HOW TO SUCCEED IN THIS COURSE

1. Studiously avoid last-minute preparation and complete all assignments.
 2. Attend every class session.
 3. Participate regularly in class discussions, demonstrating your mastery of the day's reading assignments.
 4. Talk to me during office hours about any concerns or to clarify expectations.
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Tentative Schedule

Readings are to be completed by the date next to or immediately above the assigned reading. The schedule really is tentative and will be altered to accommodate guest speakers and events. – When we can coordinate it with the Career Services office, we will plan two dates for workshops on job search strategies and resume writing. **Be prepared to be flexible! — The dates scheduled for reading assignments will almost certainly change!**

1 Introduction to the course and themes in American politics

Tuesday, 8/27 : Course orientation and planning, discussion of Part 1, Hacker and Pierson.

Thursday, 8/29 : Career Exploration and job search strategies, Lisa Knapp, Career Services.

2 themes continued...inequality, polarization, party change, policy drift, and interest group mobilization...

Tuesday, 9/3 : Labor Day holiday, no classes scheduled.

Thursday, 9/5 : Hacker and Pierson, Part 2

3 Darwin vs. Smith, state and market

Tuesday, 9/10 : Hacker and Pierson, part 3

Thursday, 9/12 : Frank, part 1 (chapters assigned in class)

4 Darwin vs. Smith, state and equality...

Tuesday, 9/17 : Frank, part 2 (chapters assigned in class)

Thursday, 9/19 : Frank, part 3 (chapters assigned in class)

5 On political Equality

Tuesday, 9/24 :Dahl, part 1 (chapters assigned in class)

Thursday, 9/26 : Dahl, part 2 (chapters assigned in class)

6 Writing and Resume Preparation

Tuesday, 10/1 : Research paper and writing discussion, no reading assigned.

Assignment due: Cover letter due in hard copy, at beginning of class.

Thursday, 10/3 : Resume writing workshop, visit from Lisa Knapp, career services.

7 Political Order 1

Tuesday, 10/8 — Thursday, 10/10 : Sections of Fukuyama assigned in class.

8 Political Order 2

Tuesday, 10/15 — Thursday, 10/17 : Sections of Fukuyama assigned in class.

9 Anarchism 1

Tuesday, 10/22 — Thursday, 10/24 : Sections of Scott assigned in class.

10 Anarchism 2

Tuesday 10/29 — Thursday 10/31 : Sections of Scott assigned in class.

11 Intro to study of Congress and Polarization, writing workshop

Thursday, 11/5 : Writing workshop. No reading assignment.

First draft of research paper due in class, 11/5. Bring a hard copy to class. You will exchange it with someone.

Thursday, 11/7 : McCarty and Poole 1

12 Polarization and Inequality

Tuesday, 11/12 : McCarty and Poole, 2

Thursday, 11/14 : McCarty and Poole, 3

13 Polarization and Inequality, continued...

Tuesday, 11/19 : McCarty and Poole, 4

Second draft of research paper due to Blackboard Course Documents, by Wednesday 11/20, 11:59 p.m.

Thursday, 11/21 : — Writing workshop. Peer review of paper drafts.

14 American Politics — Congress, Polarization, and the Inequality link

Tuesday, 11/26 : McCarty and Poole, 5-6

Thursday, 11/28 : Thursday is Thanksgiving recess. No class scheduled.

15 Course wrap-up

Tuesday, 12/3 : McCarty and Poole 7

Thursday, 12/5 : Various in-class assessments scheduled today. No reading assignment.

Final Exam: research paper presentation

When *Final revised version of your research paper is due to Blackboard by the beginning of the final examination time slot. You will present your paper to the class during the final exam period. Presentations will be organized into thematic panels, to the extent possible.*

Please check the registrar's calendar to verify the time and date of the scheduled final exam period.