

**Diablo Valley College**  
**Political Science 120 / Introduction to Politics**  
**Fall 2015 Mondays 6-8:50pm SRC W218**

Instructor: Kerri Ryer  
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**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** Introduction to concepts of politics and the state and relationship of the state and individual, as applied to the American political system. Comparison of the American and selected other political systems.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

1. Compare and contrast the nature, foundations and interrelations of American government at all levels.
2. Identify alternative systems for public policy formation.
3. Locate themselves with some discernment and judgment among the assertions and choices in public life.
4. Formulate a political outlook that does some justice to the complexity of the world and to the contributions to other thinkers.
5. Recognize the origin of political conflict in their own values and expectations.

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

1. Kenneth Minogue, *Politics: A Very Short Introduction*, 2000.
2. Jonathan Wolff, *An Introduction to Political Philosophy*, 2006.
3. The instructor will also provide other assigned readings and media online.

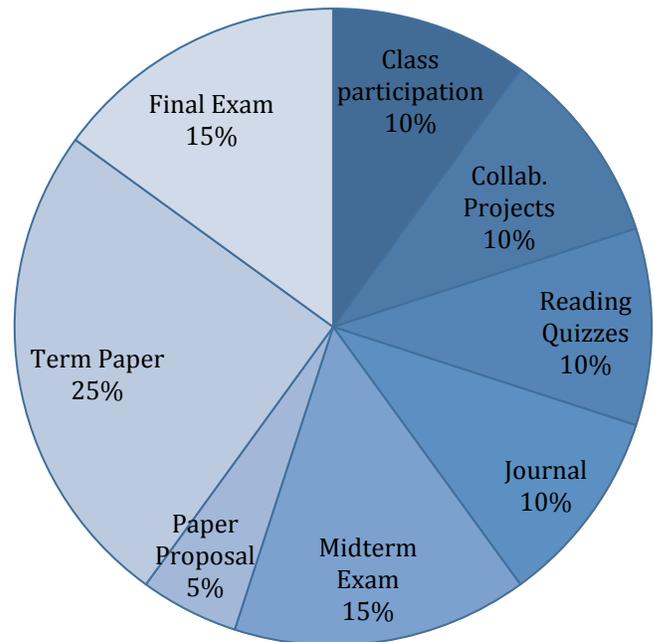
**TEACHING AND LEARNING COMMUNITY:** This course will be delivered in person Mondays nights and online at [desire2learn.4cd.edu](http://desire2learn.4cd.edu). It will incorporate a variety of learning activities and engagement opportunities. Participants are required to complete all readings prior to the date they are assigned and record academic notes. This aids our engagement in fruitful weekly discussion forums. Students are required to keep up with the course schedule and complete all assignments by their assigned due dates. Students will be required to actively engage in the teaching and learning process through group and peer teaching exercises. In our learning community, everyone's contributions are valued and respected. We are all in this together and I look forward to learning with you throughout the semester. Every student has the opportunity to participate in this course to the best of their ability. If at any time anyone feels like they need additional assistance outside of class, I encourage you to come to office hours or make an appointment to see me, so I may try my best to help you succeed. Laptops are welcome in the classroom, but please sit in the back row so that it is not distracting to your fellow classmates, and please do not surf the web. Please silence all electronics.

**EVALUATION:** Your performance will be evaluated by your participation in class discussion and collaborative projects, a midterm and final exam, weekly reading quizzes, journal and a final research paper. Unexcused absences and late work will significantly lower your grade. Instructor reserves the right to drop anyone with more than two unexcused absences.

Your final grade will be based upon the following rubric:

Class Participation	10%
Collaborative Projects	10%
Reading Quizzes	10%
Journal	10%
Midterm Exam	15%
Paper Proposal	5%
Term Paper	25%
<u>Final Exam</u>	<u>15%</u>
Total	100%

\*You may improve your final grade up to 5% with the extra credit assignment.



**TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS:**

You will be required to access your email and the D2L classroom frequently. Proficiency in a word processing software is also required. Computers are available to use at the Dougherty library.

**CODE OF CONDUCT:** All students are required to adhere to the college code of conduct and academic honesty policies. They can be found here:

<http://www3.dvc.edu/org/info/policies/code--of--conduct.htm>

<http://www3.dvc.edu/org/info/policies/academic---dishonesty---links.htm>

<http://www.dvc.edu/org/info/policies/pdfs/ADRF.pdf>

**DISABILITY:**

Students who require alternative formats for course materials or adaptive equipment because of a specific disability can request them through the Disability Support Services office. The High Tech Center in LC-107 (Pleasant Hill) is an adaptive technology computer lab available to students with disabilities and is open Monday-Thursday from 9am-5pm, and Fridays from 9am-1pm. Their phone number is 925-685-1230 ext. 2553 for more information.

**STUDENT SERVICES:**

You have access to councilors at SRC who can help you. To make an appointment to see a councilor:

<http://www.dvc.edu/enrollment/counseling/online-srvc.html>

### WITHDRAWAL POLICY:

I will drop anyone who does not show up to the first week of the course. After that, it is the student's responsibility to drop the course if they wish to withdraw. Do not expect that I will initiate the withdrawal procedures for you after the first week of classes, I will not. Please see the important dates below.

### IMPORTANT DATES:

August 28	Last day to add, drop and request a refund
September 4	Last day to drop in person without "W"
September 5-7	College closed
September 7	Last day to drop online without "W"
September 11	Last day to request P/NP option
November 20	Last day to drop with "W"

### WEEKLY SCHEDULE:

\*Schedule is tentative and subject to change.

#### August 17: Welcome to our Learning Community

This week we will begin our investigation into the world of politics in theory and practice. We will discuss some major questions confronted in the study of politics, key political theorists, schools of thought, methods of inquiry, and political systems.

*By the end of this unit, students will be able to:*

- *Create a community policy that respects and values diversity.*
- *List three major questions confronted in the political science discipline.*
- *Summarize Aristotle's six major political systems.*
- *Distinguish two types of inquiry and give an example of both.*
- *List ten or more theorists we will discuss in this course.*
- *Explain Zinn & Hooks' exchange on democracy in the US.*

#### August 24: What is politics?

This week students will acquire fundamental skills for understanding diversity in politics, and political analysis. Students will confront the question: Is politics everywhere? & What does it mean to be political? We will begin our discussion on the development of the public/private divide and compare several competing definitions of "the political".

*By the end of this unit, students will be able to:*

- *Define and identify the origin of the public / private divide.*
- *Critically analyze definitional issues within the study of politics.*
- *Construct a working definition of the concept of the "political".*
- *Write an argumentative essay in support of one definition of politics.*
- *Create a diagram of 3 or more definitions of the "political" and discuss the implications on public policy.*

Readings: Minogue Chapter 11

August 31: The State of Nature / Human Condition

This week students will discuss the concept of the “state of nature” from various viewpoints. We will analyze the social context of anarchy in the absence of the state and look to current anthropological, sociological and psychological findings.

*By the end of this unit, students will be able to:*

- *Define the state of nature and identify three major theorists who utilize it as a foundation for their political theories.*
- *Evaluate the relationship between the individual and the state.*
- *Create a dialogue between four or more theorists on the state of nature.*
- *Critically analyze the state of nature in a modern context.*

Readings: Wolff Chapter 1

September 7: NO CLASS

September 14: The Just State & Legitimate Violence / Coercion & Consent

In this class students will acquire fundamental skills for assessing the legitimacy of state institution. We will continue analyzing the relationship between the state and the individual, and the state and various groups. With a focus on minority groups, students will critically analyze the construction of citizenship.

*By the end of this unit, students will be able to:*

- *Assess the legitimacy of state institution with a focus on minority group politics.*
- *Discuss social contract theory and its implications on modern U.S. politics.*
- *Compare three or more theories of the “just state”.*
- *Critically analyze the city-state, and the rise of the nation-state.*
- *Write an argumentative essay, in which, you argue for or against the institution of the state.*

Readings: Wolff Chapter 2 & Minogue Chapter 1

\*Journal 1 DUE

September 21: Who Should Rule?

This week we will assess the legitimacy of various state structures from multiple theoretical perspectives. We will compare multiple state processes and begin our analysis of the foundations and interrelations of American Government at all levels.

*By the end of this unit, students will be able to:*

- *Identify the foundations of American Government at all levels.*
- *Compare and contrast alternative political systems.*
- *Discuss the value of diversity in political thought.*
- *Write an argumentative essay in which you identify the best form of government and support your argument with historical and modern examples.*

Readings: Wolff Chapter 3 & Minogue Chapter 2

September 28: The Power of a Pluralistic Society

In this unit students will acquire necessary skills to assess the foundations of modern minority politics. Emphasis will be placed on the value of diversity in political participation and analysis.

*By the end of this unit, students will be able to:*

- *Discuss majority rule and minority politics.*
- *Compare alternative systems for public policy formation.*
- *Write a critical essay in which you discuss Madison's analysis of political factions and analyze their existence in modern American politics.*

Readings: Minogue Chapter 3 & 7

\*Journal 2 Due

October 5: MIDTERM

October 12: The Place of Liberty

This week students will outline the evolution of Western liberalism. Students will engage in discussion on the place of liberty in a democratic society. Students will engage with the question: Is absolute liberty possible? If not what places legitimate constraints upon individual liberties?

*By the end of this unit, students will be able to:*

- *Define liberalism and discuss the evolution of Western liberalism.*
- *Analyze the natural conflicts that occur in a society that highly values liberty, and in the balance between liberty and order.*
- *Create a visual diagram that embodies modern liberties, and write a description of the visual art that explains the balance of power between the individual and the state.*

Readings: Wolff Chapter 4 & Minogue Chapter 4

\*Paper topic discussion

\*Librarian

October 19: The Distribution of Property

This week students will engage in discussions on the distribution of property, including how property *should* be distributed, and how property *is* distributed in the US political system.

*By the end of this unit, students will be able to:*

- *Identify different rationales for the distribution and redistribution of wealth.*
- *Compare three alternative redistribution policies that are in effect today.*
- *Critically evaluate the distribution of wealth in the U.S.*
- *Create a utopian redistribution system and analyze modern barriers that prevent implementation.*

Readings: Wolff Chapter 5 & Minogue Chapter 5

October 26: Individualism, Justice and Feminism

In this unit students will acquire multiple critical theoretical lens and engage in a gendered analysis of modern political issues. Students

will begin to assess public policies in the context of justice and injustices toward minority populations.

*By the end of this unit, students will be able to:*

- *Define feminism and describe it as a social movement. Place feminism within the context of other social movements.*
- *Critically evaluate the Constitution using a gendered and or racial and or class-based lens.*
- *Evaluate the impact of current public policy on minorities.*
- *Write a declaration of individual and group rights that sheds light on the history of gendered, sex, race, and class based subordinations.*

Readings: Wolff Chapter 6 & Minogue Chapter 6

\*TERM paper proposal is due

#### November 2: Public Policy Formation, Civil Liberties & Civil Rights

This week students will outline the foundations of the rule of law in the American political system. We will then compare and contrast multiple systems for public policy formation. The role of policy formation across all levels of government will then be analyzed through various civil liberties and civil rights issues.

*By the end of this unit, students will be able to:*

- *Define the rule of law and discuss its implications for minority politics.*
- *Critically analyze the nature of conflict and compromise in recent policy decisions.*
- *Evaluate recent Supreme Court decisions on civil rights.*
- *Draft a new piece of legislation or Constitutional Amendment in which, you argue for or against the expansion of a civil liberty or civil right.*

Readings: Minogue Chapter 10

\*Journal 3 DUE

November 9: NO CLASS

November 16: PAPER Peer Review Workshop and Individual Conferences

#### November 23: Education as the Practice of Freedom

In this unit students will engage with multiple theories of education. Student will engage critically with the student/teacher relationship, educational places/spaces, and the relationship between teaching and learning. We will then discuss different educational contexts, and the relationship between education and power and agency.

*By the end of this unit, students will be able to:*

- *Identify traditional theories of education and compare them with critical pedagogy.*
- *Discuss the manner in which education can become a practice of freedom.*
- *Critically analyze the education system in the U.S. and its affects on political culture and politics.*

- *Identify a personal educational goal and create an educational agenda for your future.*

Readings: Minogue Chapter 8

November 30: The Dissolution of the State and Justified Disobedience

In this unit students will acquire skills necessary to analyze the dissolution of states throughout history. We will place an emphasis on justified disobedience and nonviolent protest. We will then watch a video of Martin Luther King's Letters from Birmingham Prison and discuss it in the context of modern politics.

*By the end of this unit, students will be able to:*

- *Identify three theorists that justify the dissolution of the state and describe what is necessary for justification.*
- *Explain recent acts of disobedience and evaluate their justifications.*
- *Write an essay in which you assess justifications for disobedience in the American political system and argue for or against the dissolution of the state.*

Readings: Minogue Chapter 12

December 7: Recurring Cycles of the State

This week we will discuss a variety of systems theories and their historical contexts. Students will apply reoccurring systems theories to the U.S. political system and the international sphere. We will discuss the concept of temporality and analyze the potential shortcomings of linear time.

*By the end of this unit, students will be able to:*

- *Identify and describe three systems theories.*
- *Apply reoccurring systems theory to the American political system.*
- *Describe the theories findings in a global historical context.*
- *Adopt a theory of time that best supports your conception of a utopian political system.*

Readings: Minogue Chapter 13

\*Final Term paper DUE

December 14 FINAL

\*Final Journal 4 DUE.