

Intro to Politics – Eloquentia Perfecta I

Course Description

The aim of this course is twofold. First, to introduce students to the basics of critical reading, writing, thinking and presentation in relation to contemporary political issues. Secondly, to help students develop the ability to understand and analyze how different issues—power, identity, justice and the media, to name just a few—inform and shape our views of politics and the world.

Some of the questions we will explore include: What does it mean to study politics? What is the role of power in shaping how people think about politics? How has our understanding of what is “political” changed over time? What is the role of public opinion and public policy in shaping political discourse, and how much information does the public need in order to evaluate government decisions? What is the role of the state in an increasingly globalized world? What would an Obama or Romney victory mean for the future of America? What led to the 2008 Economic Crash, and will it happen again?

Course Goals

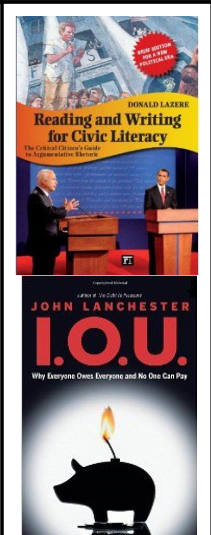
Throughout this course we will examine numerous issues, many of which don’t have simple explanations or clear solutions. Many of the topics we will be covering are extremely contentious issues--such as the future of America under Obama or Romney, critiques of big government, big business and big banks, the role of the state in our private lives, public opinion on the environment, energy, marriage, the war on terrorism, economic recession and Occupy Wall Street (OWS). We will engage these issues with a critical eye, doing our best to separate fact from fiction, truth from opinion. In the end, we seek to expand what we know on a wide range of political issues, and increase our ability to think about, write, speak and debate these issues from a critical and well informed position.

Course Texts

Reading and Writing for Civic Literacy: The Critical Citizen's Guide to Argumentative Rhetoric: Brief Edition for a New Political Era. Donald Lazere. Paradigm Publishers. 2009. (ISBN# 159451710X)

IOU: Why Everyone Owes Everyone and No One Can Pay. John Lanchester. Simon and Schuster. 2010. (ISBN# 1439169845)

Additional course materials, readings, and links will be posted in Blackboard.



Course Requirements

Class Participation

Students are expected to read and reflect on the assigned material before class, and to actively participate in the seminar in an informed and respectful way throughout the semester. You are expected to bring any assigned readings with you to class. As this is an EP course, students are expected to step up and take an active role in each class, and to be able to handle a slightly larger reading load.

Class Assignments

- **Writing Assignments:** You will be asked to write a short paper in relation to a class reading, film or discussions, or to respond to a specific question from the professor or class group.
- **Group Presentations:** Students will be broken into several groups as part of the class, and each group will be responsible for leading discussion on or two sections of the readings in class.
- **Final Project:** The final project will take the form of a political essay or analysis on a topic from class, and should be 15-20 pgs (12 pt font, double spaced, 1/2" margins).

Grading Breakdown

Class Participation – 20% Writing Assignments – 30%
Group Presentations – 25% Final Paper – 25%

Policies and Procedures

Attendance

Per Fordham policy, more than 4 unexcused absences can result in a grade reduction for the course. Coming to class significant late will count as one unexcused absence. The full attendance policy is available in Fordham's [Student Handbook](#).

The only exceptions are as follows:

- Personal illness or death in the immediate family (documentation required)
- Observance of a religious holiday
- Participation in university-sanctioned activity
- An act of nature or cosmic event making attendance impossible (flood, earthquake, apocalypse)

Electronic Distractions

All laptops, cell phones, and other electronic devices should be turned off and put away during class, unless the computer is being used for note taking. Violation of this policy may result in a reduced letter grade or possible failure of this course. Your friends can wait 2 hours for your text. Facebook and Gchat do not constitute active class participation, and can be grounds for a reduced final grade.

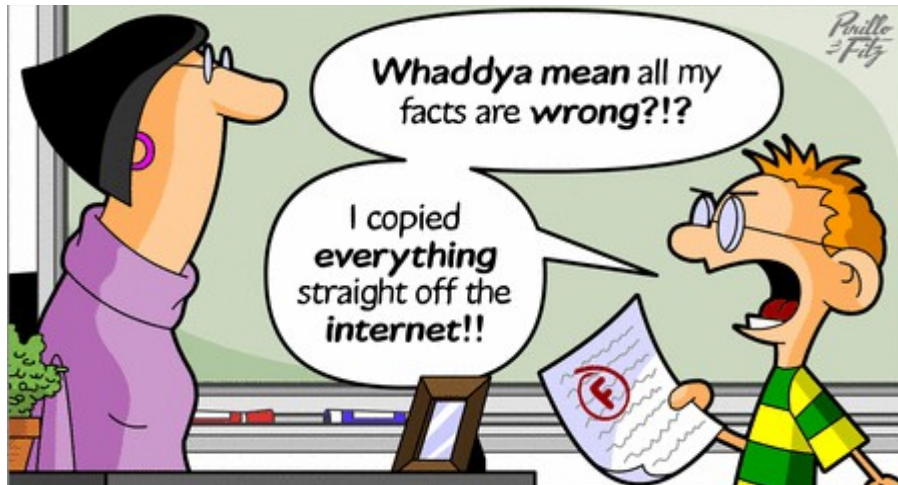
Due Dates

Any late assignments will have points deducted from the total. This is a firm policy, except in the extenuating circumstances noted above (documentation is required). There are no makeup assignments or extra credit papers. No credit will be given for any assignment more than a week late (7 days).

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a sign of poor academic skills and laziness, and will not be tolerated. Any student found guilty of plagiarism will receive an automatic F for the class, no exceptions. Fordham's statement on plagiarism can be found in the Student Handbook under [University Regulations, Undergraduate Policy on Academic Integrity](#):

"Plagiarism occurs when individuals attempt to present as their own what has come from another source. Plagiarism takes place whether such theft is accidental or deliberate. It is no defense to claim that one has "forgotten" to document ideas or material taken from another source."



Writing Help

Students needing additional writing help should contact the Writing Center, which is located on the 5th floor of Dealy Hall. More information is available at: www.fordham.edu/writingcenter

Disabilities

Any students who requires differently-abled assistance is encouraged to contact Disability Services. http://www.fordham.edu/campus_resources/student_services/disability_services/

Part I: Politics and Critical Inquiry

Week 1 (8/30): Welcome

Read: *Fox in Socks* and *The Butter Battle* by Dr. Seuss

Class will not meet the first Monday (8/27) of the semester. Thursday (8/30) will be our first class. Hand out and review course syllabus and class format. Discuss basic approach to the course. What do we mean when we talk about “politics”? What’s the difference between “Big P” formal politics and “Little p” informal politics? When is something political, and when is not? How can we tell opinions from facts? What makes for an informed citizenry, and why should your care? What can Dr. Seuss teach us about politics, critical thinking and rhetoric?

!! Note: No class on Monday (9/3) – Labor Day !!

Week 2 (9/3 and 9/6): Critical Thinking and Politics

Read: Part I: “Introduction” in *Reading and Writing for Civic Literacy* (pgs 1-96)

An Appeal to Students

What is an Argument? What is a Good Argument?

Definitions and Criteria of Critical Thinking

Semantics in Rhetoric and Critical Thinking

Assignment #1: Watch “2016 Obama's America” now in theatres and write a critical response. To find a theatre where this is showing, visit www.2016themovie.com and check local listings for NYC or NJ.



Week 3 (9/10 and 9/13): Unlearning our Bias, Relearning to Think Critically

Read: Part II: “Attaining An Open Mind” in *Reading and Writing for Civic Literacy* (pgs 125-190)

From Cocksure Ignorance to Thoughtful Uncertainty: Viewpoint, Bias, and Fairness
Overgeneralizations, Stereotyping, and Prejudice
Authoritarianism and Conformity, Rationalization and Compartmentalization

***Writing Assignment #1** due in class Thursday (9/13).

Week 4 (9/17 and 9/20): What Makes a Good Argument and Why?

Read: Part III: "Elements of Argumentative Rhetoric" in *Reading and Writing for Civic Literacy* (pgs 191-266)
Some Key Terms in Logic and Argumentation
Logical and Rhetorical Fallacies
Causal Analysis
Uses and Misuses of Emotional Appeal

Assignment #2: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly in contemporary news media. More details in class.

Week 5 (9/24 and 9/27): Preparing for the Election Onslaught

Read: Part IV: "Thinking Critically About the Rhetoric of Politics and Mass Media" in *Reading and Writing for Civic Literacy* (pgs 267-360)

Thinking Critically About Political Rhetoric
Thinking Critically About Mass Media
Deception Detection: Varieties of Special Interests and Propaganda

***Writing assignment #2** due in class Monday (9/24).

Group presentation #1: Critical analysis of party platforms and issues. More details in class.



Part II: The Next President of the United States

Week 6 (10/1 and 10/4): Examining Obama I

Read: Obama-Biden campaign platform. <http://www.barackobama.com/record/>

- [Education](#)
- [Energy and the Environment](#)
- [Equal Rights](#)
- [Health Care](#)
- [National Security](#)
- [Taxes](#)
- [Women's Health](#)

!! Note: No class on Monday (10/8) – Columbus Day !!

Week 7 (10/8 and 10/11): Examining Obama II

Read: Obama-Biden campaign platform. <http://www.barackobama.com/record/>

- [Jobs and the Economy](#)

Group presentation #2: Critical analysis of Obama-Biden economic plan. More details in class.

Week 8 (10/15 and 10/18): Examining Romney I

Read: Romney-Ryan campaign platform. <http://www.mittromney.com>

- [Foreign Policy: An American Century](#)
- [Smaller, Smarter, Simpler Government](#)
- [More Issues](#)

Group presentation #3: Critical analysis of party platforms and issues. More details in class.

Week 9 (10/22 and 10/25): Examining Romney II

Read: Romney-Ryan campaign platform. <http://www.mittromney.com>

- <http://www.mittromney.com/jobs>

Group presentation #4: Critical analysis of Romney-Ryan economic plan. More details in class.

Week 10 (10/29 and 11/1): Examining Independents, Libertarians, Greens and Others

Read: All 2012 Presidential candidates. <http://2012.presidential-candidates.org> and www.gp.org/2012

- [Stewart Alexander](#) (Ind)
- [Stephen Rollins](#) (Ind)
- [Danny Woodring](#) (Ind)
- [Gary Johnson](#) (Lib)
- [Danny Woodring](#) (Ind)
- [Jill Stein](#) (Green)

Group presentation #5: Critical analysis of 3rd party platforms and issues. More details in class.

!! Note: Tuesday Nov 6th is Election Day !!

Week 11 (11/5 and 11/8): Pre and Post Election Coverage

Read and Watch: Post election news coverage. Review 2012 Presidential Campaign Ads – <http://www.p2012.org/ads/adsprimary.html>. Open discussion on the campaign, candidates and issues.

*****1-2 page proposal for final paper due in class Thursday.*****



Part III: The Future Economy

Week 12 (11/12 and 11/15): Living in the Shadow of the 2008 Financial Crash

Read: *IOU: Why Everyone Owes Everyone and No One Can Pay* (pgs 1-110)

- Introduction
- The ATM Moment
- Rocket Science
- Boom and Bust

Watch: [The Warning](#). 2009 PBS *Frontline* documentary about derivatives and Wall Street regulation.

Group presentation #6: Will there still be a working economy in 2050?

!! Note: No class on Thursday (11/22) – Thanksgiving !!

Week 13 (11/19 and 11/22): Privatizing Profit, Socializing Debt

Read: *IOU: Why Everyone Owes Everyone and No One Can Pay* (pgs 111-212)

Enter the Geniuses

The Mistake

Funny Smells

Watch: **Power, Money and Wall Street** (Part 1, 2). 2012 PBS *Frontline* documentary on the 2008 crash.

Group presentation #7: What went wrong on Wall Street, Main Street and in Washington?

Week 14 (11/26 and 11/29): The Dangers of Debt and Lessons Learned

Read: *IOU: Why Everyone Owes Everyone and No One Can Pay* (pgs 213-232)

Read: *Wall Street and the Financial Crisis: Anatomy of a Financial Collapse*. US Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations Report on the 2007-8 Crash. 2011. (pg 1-47)

Executive Summary

Background

Watch: **Power, Money and Wall Street** (Part 3). 2012 PBS *Frontline* documentary on the 2008 crash.

Group presentation #7: Did America or Europe learn anything from the crash?

!! Note: Last Week of Classes !!

Week 15 (12/3 and 12/6): Icing the Cake

Read: Part V: "Putting it All Together" in *Reading and Writing for Civic Literacy* (pgs 361-392)

A Case Study: Rhetoric and the Wealth Gap

Collecting and Evaluating Opposing Sources: Writing the Research Paper

Documentation and Research Resources

!! Final Paper Due !!

Week 16 (12/10 and 12/13): Final Exam

No class on Monday 12/10. Final papers due in class Thursday **December 13. !!No exceptions!!**

Cheers. Sayonara. Mahalo.

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