

POLS 207
Contemporary Political Ideologies
Fall 2009
Tuesday and Thursday 11: 05-12:22
Macmillan 126

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Course Description

The purpose of this course is to provide you with an introduction to major ideological camps involved in contemporary politics. We will adopt an analytic approach for understanding the similarities and differences across ideologies and the implications of their tenets for contemporary debate. The course incorporates a textbook approach with an examination of contemporary liberalism and conservatism in the United States and explanations for their disjunction. Throughout the course, we will be examining the way that current events are shaped by and, in turn, shape political ideology.

Course Objectives

While substantively this course focuses on contemporary political ideology, an underlying theme is the systematic analysis of political phenomena. Learning goals for this course include:

- Recognition and mastery of basic tenets of contemporary ideologies
- Ability to compare and contrast contemporary ideologies using established analytic criteria
- Ability to craft and apply original analytic structures to the analysis of contemporary ideological debate
- Development of critical reasoning skills
- Development of reading skills
- Development of writing skills including citation methods in political science and avoidance of plagiarism
- Development of public speaking skills
- Enhancement of confidence in class debates

Course Materials

The books below have been ordered through the campus bookstore for your convenience but you should feel free to purchase them wherever you wish.

Why We're Liberals: A Political Handbook for Post-Bush America

Author: Alterman

Publisher: Viking

Date: 2008

ISBN-13: 978-0-670-01860-4

Liberty and Tyranny: A Conservative Manifesto

Author: Levin

Publisher: Threshold Editions

Date: 2009

ISBN-10: 1-4165-6285-0

ISBN-13: 978-4165-6285-6

A Conflict of Visions (Revised Edition)

Author: Sowell

Publisher: Basic Books

Date: 2007

ISBN 10: 0-465-00205-6

ISBN 13: 978-0-465-00205-4

Political Ideologies and the Democratic Ideal, 7/E

Authors: Ball and Dagger

Publisher: Longman

Date: 2006

ISBN-10: 0-205-60737-3

ISBN-13: 978-0-205-60737-2

In addition to these books, we will be using media sources as information for our course. You should get in the habit of attending to a major daily news source on a regular basis (print, radio, television, online). One note of caution: you should do your best to restrict the sources you use for this course to legitimate news outlets. There is a lot of pseudo-news out there: entertainment, opinion, blogs by some guy in the cellar in his underwear; you get the point. If you are unsure (it isn't always easy to tell), don't hesitate to ask and we'll try to sort this out together.

Methods of Evaluation

Your grade in this course is based upon the following components (detailed below):

- Paper 1: Ideologues and Healthcare 15%
- Paper 2: Explaining Ideologues 15%
- Analytic Paper: Sowell Explains Alterman and Levin 25%
- Contemporary Ideologues Paper: Alterman and Levin on Healthcare 25%
- Textbook Chapter Quizzes 20%

Paper 1 : Ideologues and Healthcare 10% This paper is a general review of the ideological arguments being put forth by contemporary commentators regarding the issue of healthcare. We will focus on conservatives Bill Kristol, and Jonah Goldberg and liberals Paul Krugman and E.J. Dionne. You will research their public statements and write a 3-4 page paper summarizing the major issues and points of conflict and consensus. ***Paper due by email before class on September 8.***

Paper 2: Explaining Ideologues 10% This paper is an explanation of the ideological arguments regarding the healthcare debate. Focus on one ideologue you have reviewed for

Paper 1 and offer an analysis of his arguments using an analytic scheme. This is a 3-4 page paper offering an explanation of why this ideologue is saying what they are saying. **This paper is due by email before class on September 15.**

Analytic Paper: Sowell Explains Alterman and Levin 25% This paper is a comparison of Alterman and Levin utilizing Sowell's analytic framework. In addition, you will be commenting upon the nature of the framework itself. Where do Alterman and Levin agree and disagree? What is the source of that disagreement? Is Sowell's analytic framework useful? Does it help us to understand the disjunctions and agreements between Alterman and Levin? If not, what might be better? This paper should be 5-7 pages in length. It should NOT be an extended summary of the arguments; instead, it should offer an assessment of the authors and the structure of the arguments between them. In other words, you will be using Sowell's structure to assess and compare Alterman and Levin. What conclusions does it draw? Is it a useful/accurate comparison? We will have two class meetings devoted to working on this paper. **Paper due by email before class on November 24.**

Contemporary Ideologues Paper: Alterman and Levin on Healthcare 25% In this paper you will offer a review of and explanation for Eric Alterman and Mark Levin's views on the healthcare debate. Your paper should incorporate the arguments made in the books by both authors, the analysis offered by Sowell and a general understanding of liberalism and conservatism in addition to your own analysis. This paper should be 5-7 pages in length. **Paper due by email before class on December 8.**

Textbook Chapter Quizzes 20% Reading quizzes (multiple choice) will be administered during the section of the course where we are discussing the textbook. Quizzes will be given at the beginning of class. Once the first quiz is completed, no more will be issued so do not be late.

Participation Regular attendance and thoughtful class participation are expected. To participate fully in class you will need to have completed the assigned reading before the class meeting and you will also need to keep up with the news. The class participation component of your grade is not a "gift"; you will lose points from your overall grade if your level of participation falls below expectations. Please note the following general guidelines for participation grades:

- Full Credit: regularly attends class (no more than 3 absences) and participates thoughtfully on a regular basis.
- Minus ¼ grade point: regularly attends class (no more than 3 absences) but participates rarely
- Minus ½ grade point: multiple absences (+3) regardless of participation level

It is your responsibility to keep track of your absences. If you are concerned about your participation grade do not wait until the end of the semester to see me.

Please note: All paper assignments are to be handed in via email attachment in Microsoft Word prior to class on the day they are due. Filenames should follow the following format: lastname POLS 207 Paper1.doc. Papers handed in after the scheduled due date and time are considered late and will be penalized by one letter grade (i.e. cannot receive higher than

a B). Papers handed in more than 24 hours late will not be accepted and will receive a failing grade. Paper extensions are granted rarely and only in the case of unavoidable and extreme circumstances. Extension requests must be made before the paper is due and may require consultation with the Dean's office.

Make-up quizzes will not be offered.

A Note to Students with Disabilities: If you have a disability that could limit your ability to complete the requirements for this class, you are encouraged to contact the Coordinator of Learning Support Services, Chris Richardson (telephone ext. 3432, email crichardson@wells.edu) to discuss accommodations that will help you succeed. Your conversations with him are confidential.

Classroom Guidelines:

I disagree with what you have to say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.
-Voltaire

Politics is a subject that often involves disagreement. In this class you are free to disagree with me and with one another; but if we are to have productive discussions about politics in class, we must limit ourselves to respectful disagreement. At no time is it acceptable to engage in mean-spirited or personal attacks. Each member of the class must be treated with respect at all times no matter how strongly you may disagree with their political perspective.

Course Schedule*

*Course schedule subject to change at instructor's discretion.

August 27 Week 1

Thursday

Course overview and discussion of the question: What is ideology?

September 1&3 Week 2

Tuesday

- Read: Beyond Red vs. Blue: The 2005 Political Typology <http://typology.people-press.org/>
- Read: Winds of Political Change Haven't Shifted Public's Ideology Balance by Juliana Horowitz, Research Associate, Pew Research Center for the People & the Press November 25, 2008 <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1042/winds-of-political-change-havent-shifted-publics-ideology-balance>
- Take: Pew Beyond Red vs. Blue Typology Test <http://typology.people-press.org/typology/>

Thursday:

- Read: Clemmitt, Marcia. 2009. "Health-Care Reform". *CQ Researcher*. 19 (28) <http://library.cqpress.com/cqresearcher/index.php?PHPSESSID=hakjsh5gjqlfliu3t84chom15>

September 8&10 Week 3

Tuesday

Contemporary Ideologues on Healthcare

- Research what contemporary ideologues and commentators Bill Kristol, Jonah Goldberg, E.J. Dionne and Paul Krugman are saying about the current healthcare debate.
- Paper 1: Ideologues and Healthcare due by email before class.

Thursday

Today we will discuss the process of analysis and work on developing analytic schemes for understanding politics and ideology using the information you have gathered for paper 1.

September 15&17 Week 4

Tuesday

Understanding Ideologues on Healthcare

- Paper 2: Explaining Ideologues due by email before class
- In-class discussion of your findings and analytic approach.

Thursday

We will explore another way of thinking about how to analyze ideological arguments by listening to and discussing the ideas of linguist, Geoffrey Nunberg.

- In class: Geoffrey Nunberg: Talking Dangerously “Fresh Air” Interview
<http://www.npr.org/templates/player/mediaPlayer.html?action=1&t=1&islist=false&id=104869163&m=104869161>

September 22&24 Week 5

Tuesday

Ball and Dagger Textbook

Our textbook uses yet another way of analyzing ideology and ideological arguments. We will spend the next few weeks working through their approach.

- Read: Ball and Dagger, Chapter 1
- Quiz

Thursday

- Read: Ball and Dagger, Chapter 2
- Quiz

September 29 & October 1 Week 6

Tuesday

Liberalism

- Read: Ball and Dagger, Chapter 3
- Quiz

Thursday

Conservatism

- Read: Ball and Dagger, Chapter 4
- Quiz

October 6&8

Week 7

Tuesday

Socialism and Communism

- Read Ball and Dagger, Chapter 5
- Quiz

Thursday

Socialism and Communism

- Read Ball and Dagger, Chapter 6
- Quiz

FALL BREAK

October 15

Week 8

Fascism

- Read: Ball and Dagger, Chapter 7
- Research Jonah Goldberg on *Liberal Fascism* to get a feel for his arguments.
- Quiz

October 20&22

Week 9

Tuesday

Liberation Ideology and Green Politics

- Read: Ball and Dagger, Chapters 8&9
- Quiz

Thursday

Radical Islamism and The Future of Ideology

- Read: Ball and Dagger, Chapters 10&11
- Quiz

October 27&29

Week10

Tuesday

Contemporary Liberals

- Read: Alterman. Part 1

Thursday

Contemporary Liberals

- Read: Alterman. Part 2

November 3&5 **Week 11**

Tuesday

Contemporary Conservatives

- Read Levin, Chapters 1-5

Thursday

Contemporary Conservatives

- Read Levin, Chapters 6-Epilogue

November 10&12 **Week 12**

Tuesday

Thinking About Liberals and Conservatives

- Read: Sowell, Part 1

Thursday

Thinking About Liberals and Conservatives

- Read: Sowell, Part 2

November 17&19 **Week 13**

Applying Sowell to Alterman and Levin

- In class paper workshops – you should have a general sketch of your paper ready to discuss.

November 24 **Week 14**

Film: *Sicko*

Analytic Paper: Sowell Explains Alterman and Levin due before class

THANKSGIVING BREAK

December 1&3 **Week 15**

Back to the healthcare debate...

Tuesday

Alterman on Healthcare

- Readings: TBD

Thursday

Levin on Healthcare

- Readings: TBD

December 8 **Week 16**

Final Day of Class

- Contemporary Ideologues Paper: Alterman and Levin on Healthcare due before class.
- Concluding discussion