I. Boston College Mission Statement

Strengthened by more than a century and a half of dedication to academic excellence, Boston College commits itself to the highest standards of teaching and research in undergraduate, graduate and professional programs and to the pursuit of a just society through its own accomplishments, the work of its faculty and staff, and the achievements of its graduates. It seeks both to advance its place among the nation's finest universities and to bring to the company of its distinguished peers and to contemporary society the richness of the Catholic intellectual ideal of a mutually illuminating relationship between religious faith and free intellectual inquiry.

Boston College draws inspiration for its academic societal mission from its distinctive religious tradition. As a Catholic and Jesuit university, it is rooted in a world view that encounters God in all creation and through all human activity, especially in the search for truth in every discipline, in the desire to learn, and in the call to live justly together. In this spirit, the University regards the contribution of different religious traditions and value systems as essential to the fullness of its intellectual life and to the continuous development of its distinctive intellectual heritage.

II. Course Description

This course paints in broad strokes to introduce the study of politics. Through readings of classic works of political theory we will compare the ways a sampling of thinkers have confronted the fundamental question of political life: What is political association and what is it for? We will then address what understanding of politics informs American government by considering the foundations of the Constitution and introducing the governing institutions it establishes. Finally we will consider the importance of factors outside formal institutions by examining the cultural supports of liberal democracy at home and abroad.

III. Required Texts & Readings


All other course readings will be available through Canvas. Since we will refer to them often, please print and bring copies of these readings with you to class. I appreciate that printing is not free, but the expense of the printing required for this course is far less than the cost of additional textbooks!
IV. Course Objectives

(1) Students will learn to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view, as demonstrated by an ability to actively engage the assigned texts. Students will be called upon to continuously subject the arguments and claims of the various authors to scrutiny in class discussions and written responses.

(2) Students will develop skills in both oral and written expression, as demonstrated by an ability to play an active role in class discussions and write cogent, concise papers. Students will be asked to begin formulating his or her own views on core political questions and will be expected to defend those views orally and in writing over the course of the semester.

(3) Students will demonstrate knowledge across cultural settings and will learn the impact of culture, gender, and age in politics, as demonstrated by a willingness to explore, talk about, and write about the ways in which culture, gender, age, and other factors shape our beliefs about fundamental concepts like justice, equality, liberty, and government.

(4) Students will demonstrate ethical knowledge pertaining to politics, as demonstrated by an ability to understand and evaluate competing conceptions of justice, equality, liberty, and other core course themes. Students will exchange views with other students during class discussions and will be asked to weigh the merits of different perspectives in written work.

V. Grading

Your grade will be calculated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation and Attendance</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Responses</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The undergraduate grading system for Summer Session is as follows:

- A (4.00), A- (3.67)
- B+ (3.33), B (3.00), B- (2.67)
- C+ (2.33), C (2.00), C- (1.67)
- D+ (1.33), D (1.00), D- (.67)
- F (.00)

VI. Assignments & Evaluation

A few words about each component of your course grade:

**Participation**

Class participation is a major part of your grade in this course, so it is important for you to understand what it means. For starters, **students are expected to attend every meeting.** But in order to receive a good participation grade, students must also come to class prepared to answer questions about the readings and actively engage in class discussions, which will occur on a regular
basis. To facilitate conversation, this will be a computer free class: no student may use any computer, smartphone, or tablet during class.

Please Note: If you are uncomfortable speaking up in class, please talk to me about it at the beginning of the term. As someone who used to be a relatively quiet student and worked hard to overcome it, I can relate! And I am happy to discuss strategies for helping you become a more active participant so that your grade does not suffer. Class participation is a shared responsibility, and I can promise that you, your classmates, and your instructor will all find this course more rewarding if you do your part.

Weekly Responses

To promote a fruitful class discussion, you are required by 7 PM EACH MONDAY to e-mail me a 2-3 page double-spaced response to a question or set of questions on the week’s readings that I will distribute each Thursday. (The most reliable method is to write the notes as a Word document, so you can save them, and then e-mail them to me as an attachment.)

While a response should be a serious effort to grapple with the substance of the readings, the style can be informal. These are chances for you to start thinking about the most important questions raised by the readings, not formal academic papers. Use the first person and casual language if it aids understanding. Quote the reading but not at length. Find your own words, but make sure you proofread the text. Errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, and mechanics will be marked down. Improvement from one response to the next will be counted favorably.

Responses must be submitted on time. Late work will be penalized a half-letter grade every twelve hours. That is, if an “A” response due at 7PM Monday is submitted before 7AM Tuesday, it will be graded “A minus.” If it arrives later than 7AM Tuesday but before 7PM, it will be graded “B plus.”

Final Exam

The final exam will test students on all of the material covered during the course. This means that in order to do well, students will need to be well-versed in both the readings and the lectures. The exam will involve a combination of short answer and essay questions. It will be administered on the final day of class, June 22. I will say more about the exam in class.

VII. Academic Integrity

While I encourage you to discuss the course material with other members of the class, ALL work you turn in to me must be your own. Cheating, plagiarism, and collusion in another’s dishonesty are serious academic offenses. To be sure you know the rules, read the University Statement on Academic Integrity at www.bc.edu/integrity, and take the Department’s “plagiarism quiz” at www.bc.edu/schools/cas/polisci/integrity/quiz. If you have any questions or concerns, talk to me.

All suspected violations will be reported to the Dean in accordance with University policy. A final grade of “F” for the course will be given in the event of a violation of academic integrity.
VIII. Schedule of Readings

Week 1: Classical Political Philosophy

May 16: Aristotle  *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 10, Chapter 9
          *Politics* Book 1

May 18: Aristotle  *Politics* Books 3-4

Week 2: Liberalism

May 23: John Locke  *Second Treatise* Preface-Chapter 5

May 25: John Locke  *Second Treatise* Chapters 7, 9, 11-13, 15, 19

Week 3: Foundations of American Government

May 30: The Constitutional Founding  The Declaration of Independence

United States Constitution and Bill of Rights

Landy and Milkis, “Contesting the Constitution”

*Federalist* Nos. 1; 9 and 23; 10 and 51

June 1: Federalism  *Federalist* Nos. 39, 62, 68

Robert Dahl, “E electing the President”


Danielle Allen, “Don’t Blame the Electoral College”

Martha Derthick, “How Many Communities?”

Week 4: American Institutions

June 6: Congress and the Executive  *Federalist* No. 57

Lawrence Dodd, “The Rise of the Technocratic Congress: Congressional Reform in the 1970s”

*Federalist* No. 70
Samuel Kernell, “Going Public”

Jack Goldsmith, “The Accountable Presidency”

**June 8:** The Judiciary  
*Federalist* Nos. 78, 84

*Marbury v. Madison* (1803)

Fourteenth Amendment

Daniel Rodgers, “Rights Consciousness in American History”

Edwin Meese, 1985 Address to the American Bar Association

William Brennan, 1985 Address at Georgetown University

**Week 5: Liberal Democracy at Home: American Political Culture**

**June 13:** Civil Religion  
*Tocqueville, Democracy in America* (selections)

Robert Bellah, “Civil Religion in America”


**June 15:** “Social Capital”  
*Tocqueville, Democracy in America* (selections)

Robert Putnam, “Bowling Alone”

**Week 6: Liberal Democracy Abroad?: Can Democracy Be Exported?**

**June 20:** Fareed Zakaria, “Illiberal Democracy”


**June 22:** Final Exam