POLI 1041: Fundamental Concepts of Politics

Summer 2015, Session 1 3 Credits

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Office Hours: T and TH, 4:30-5:45 PM, or by appt.  
Schedule: T and TH, 6:00-9:15 PM

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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.

Course Description:

This is an introduction to the study of politics through a consideration of some of the basic elements associated with governing: the political association, justice, constitutions, equality, liberty, conflict among citizens and between citizens and governments, and conflict among governments. The main objective of the course is to get students to begin thinking about and grappling with the core questions that lie at the heart of political life. We will do this by reading, discussing, and writing about a mixture of classic works of political philosophy and a pair of contemporary books that deal with key course themes.
Course Objectives:

1. The student will learn to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view, as demonstrated by an ability to actively engage the assigned texts both inside and outside of class. The student will be called upon to continuously subject the arguments and claims of the various authors to scrutiny in class discussions and papers.

2. The student 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. The student 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. The student 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. The student 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. The student will exchange views with other students during class discussions and will be asked to weigh the merits of different perspectives in written work.

Grading:

Your course grade will be calculated in the following manner:

20% - Paper #1 (May 26)
25% - Paper #2 (June 9)
35% - Final exam (June 18)
20% - Participation

Now, a few words about each component of your course grade…

Papers: Short papers are to be no more than five (5) pages in length, and they are due at the beginning of class on May 26 and June 9. Paper topics will ask students to explore core themes contained in the readings and lectures, and they will not require any outside research. I will distribute the paper topics in advance and say more about my expectations in class.

Final Exam: The final exam will test students on all of the material covered over the course of the entire semester. 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 18. I will say more about the exam in class.
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.

NOTE: If you are uncomfortable speaking up in class, please talk to me about it at the beginning of the semester. 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.

WCAS Grading System
The undergraduate grading system consists of twelve categories: A (4.00), A- (3.67), excellent; B+ (3.33), B (3.00), B- (2.67), good; C+ (2.33), C (2.00), C- (1.67), satisfactory; D+ (1.33), D (1.00), D- (.67), passing but unsatisfactory; F (.00), failure; I (.00), incomplete; F (.00), course dropped without notifying office; W (.00), official withdrawal from course. The graduate grading system is A (4.00), A- (3.67), Excellent; B+ (3.33), B (3.00), good; B- (2.67), C (2.00), passing but not for degree credit; F (.00), failure.

Grade Reports: All students are required to log into the web through Agora to access their semester grades. Students must utilize their BC username and password to log on. If your username or password is not known the HELP Desk located in the Campus Technology Resource Center (CTRC) in O’Neill Library will issue a new one. The CTRC requires a valid picture ID (a BC ID, driver’s license or passport) to obtain your password.

Required Texts:
The following texts are available for purchase in the BC Bookstore. Because we will make frequent references to specific passages in class, I strongly recommend using these particular translations/editions of Aristotle and Locke.

Recommended Reading:

Students are strongly urged to read a major newspaper on a regular basis, since one of our goals this semester is to link course themes and concepts to current events.

Important Policies:

[http://www.bc.edu/schools/advstudies/guide/academicinteg.html]

Written Work
Graduate and undergraduate students are expected to prepare professional, polished written work. Written materials must be typed in the format required by your instructor. Strive for a thorough, yet concise style. Cite literature appropriately, using APA, MLA, CLA format per instructors decision. Develop your thoughts fully, clearly, logically and specifically. Proofread all materials to ensure the use of proper grammar, punctuation, and spelling. You are encouraged to make use of campus resources for refining writing skills as needed [http://www.bc.edu/libraries/help/tutoring.html].

Scholarship and Academic Integrity
It is expected that students will produce original work and cite references appropriately. Failure to reference properly is plagiarism. Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not necessarily limited to, plagiarism, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, cheating on examinations or assignments, and submitting the same paper or substantially similar papers to meet the requirements of more than one course without seeking permission of all instructors concerned. Scholastic misconduct may also involve, but is not necessarily limited to, acts that violate the rights of other students, such as depriving another student of course materials or interfering with another student’s work.

Request for Accommodations
If you have a disability and will be requesting accommodations for this course, please register with either Dr. Kathy Duggan (dugganka@bc.edu), Associate Director, Connors Family Learning Center (learning disabilities or AHD) or Dean Paulette Durrett, (paulette.durrett@bc.edu), Assistant Dean for students with disabilities, (all other disabilities). Advance notice and appropriate documentation are required for accommodations. For further information, you can locate the disability resources on the web at [http://www.bc.edu/content/bc/libraries/help/tutoring/specialservices.html].

Attendance
Class attendance is an important component of learning. Students are expected to attend all classes and to arrive by the beginning of and remain for the entire class period. When an occasion occurs that prevents a student from attending class, it is the student’s obligation to inform the instructor of the conflict before the class meets. The student is still expected to meet all assignment deadlines. If a student knows that he or she will be absent on a particular day, the
student is responsible for seeing the instructor beforehand to obtain the assignments for that day. If a student misses a class, he or she is responsible for making up the work by obtaining a classmate's notes and handouts and turning in any assignments due. Furthermore, many instructors give points for participation in class. If you miss class, you cannot make up participation points associated with that class. Types of absences that are not typically excused include weddings, showers, vacations, birthday parties, graduations, etc. Additional assignments, penalties and correctives are at the discretion of the instructor. If circumstances necessitate excessive absence from class, the student should consider withdrawing from the class. In all cases, students are expected to accept the decision of the instructor regarding attendance policies specific to the class.

Consistent with our commitment of creating an academic community that is respectful of and welcoming to persons of differing backgrounds, we believe that every reasonable effort should be made to allow members of the university community to observe their religious holidays without jeopardizing the fulfillment of their academic obligations. It is the responsibility of students to review course syllabi as soon as they are distributed and to consult the faculty member promptly regarding any possible conflicts with observed religious holidays. If asked, the student should provide accurate information about the obligations entailed in the observance of that particular holiday. However, it is the responsibility of the student to complete any and all class requirements for days that are missed due to conflicts due to religious holidays.

There may be circumstances that necessitate a departure from this policy. Feel free to contact the WCAS at 617-552-3900 for consultation.

Deadlines
Assignments are due at the beginning of the class period on the specified dates.

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Course Assignments/Reading Schedule:

Readings must be completed by the date listed below. For example, students should come to class on Tuesday, May 12, having read Aristotle, *Politics*, Book I, and students should come to class on Thursday, May 14, having read Aristotle, *Politics*, Book III. And so on. Doing the reading does NOT mean skimming it or reading summaries of it online. It means carefully and actively reading the entirety of the assignment and coming to class ready to discuss it. Do not fall behind. Your ability to understand lectures, participate in class discussions, succeed on papers, and do well on the final exam hinges on you having done the reading promptly and thoroughly.

Please be sure to bring the book we are reading to class each day, because we will often refer directly to the text during lectures and discussions.
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<tr>
<th><strong>Date</strong></th>
<th><strong>Assignment</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Tues, May 12</td>
<td>Aristotle, <em>Politics</em>, Book I</td>
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<td>Thurs, May 14</td>
<td>Aristotle, <em>Politics</em>, Book III</td>
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<td>Tues, May 19</td>
<td>Aristotle, <em>Politics</em>, Books IV and VII</td>
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<td>Tues, May 26</td>
<td>Locke, <em>Second Treatise</em>, Chs. 10-19 <em>(PAPER #1 DUE)</em></td>
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<td>Thurs, May 28</td>
<td>Zakaria, Introduction and Chs. 1-2</td>
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<td>Tues, June 2</td>
<td>Zakaria, Chs. 3-5</td>
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<td>Thurs, June 4</td>
<td>Zakaria, Ch. 6, Conclusion, Afterword, and Robert Kagan’s review</td>
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<td>Tues, June 9</td>
<td>Wittes and Blum, Introduction and Part I <em>(PAPER #2 DUE)</em></td>
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<td>Thurs, June 11</td>
<td>Wittes and Blum, Part II</td>
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<td>Tues, June 16</td>
<td>Wittes and Blum, Part III</td>
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<td>Thurs, June 18:</td>
<td><em>FINAL EXAM</em></td>
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