First Year Seminar (UCCP 1101.285)
US Government & Politics, Triad F, Fall 2012
Plotting Politics

Course Syllabus

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Office hours: MW 11:00-12:00 & 1:00-2:00 or by appointment  
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Courses:
FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR I – 70785 – UCCP 1101.285 – OCNR 258 – 9:00-9:50  
FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR I – 70782 – UCCP 1101.284 – OCNR 258 – 10:00-10:50  
FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR I – 70759 – UCCP 1101.282 – OCNR 255 – 2:00-2:50  

Course Description:
First Year Seminar I is the discovery of the skills necessary for your success as a university student taking Political Science. Seminar is an integral part of your Political Science learning community. Succeeding in seminar will help you to do well in large lecture, as a significant portion of your large lecture final grade is shared with seminar. Acquisition of these skills is integrated into an exploration of the concepts encountered in your large lecture course, POLS 2305. Seminar is a one credit hour discussion course where you learn to communicate verbally and work collaboratively on complex and often heated political topics and relate them to your role as a developing professional. The focus of this semester is your professional development and how politics relate to your future personal and career success.

To achieve professionally you will need 4 basic things:
- Expert knowledge and critical thinking ability. (Critical Thinking)
- Superb communication skills. (Communication)
- The ability to get along with others and work as a team. (Collaboration)
- An open mind to grapple with different forms of information technology. (Information Technology)

As a first semester university student, you are expected to work on mastering the basic skills needed to be successful at a university level. In this semester you will be challenged to work as a university scholar. You will be challenged to build your professional resume, become a greater part of the university community, further develop your communication skills, and explore how American politics impacts your life. Our overarching theme of the semester is “Plotting Politics.” The seminar class will complement the Political Science lecture and Composition course with an opportunity for students to plot their futures based on the material covered in the triad classes, as well as learning basic skills required for future classes, in a smaller group setting.

A list of class plans will be available on Blackboard. This is a hybrid course. You must complete activities in class and on Blackboard. This is a dynamic course. Check Blackboard frequently and always come to class to be successful.

You are expected to have regular access to a computer with Microsoft Office and fully understand how to use Blackboard, including how to upload MS Word documents to Blackboard. Computers are available in CCH, CI, and the Library. Please visit me in my office if you have trouble with technology.

Seminar Course Objectives:

The primary objectives of First Year Seminar are for students to:
- Explore the interconnections among the Triad/Tetrad courses;
- Develop critical thinking skills and significant learning;
- Clarify personal values, goals, and strengths
- Develop the ability to learn through study, discussion, writing, cooperation, and collaboration
Seminar Learning Outcomes:
- Students will apply interdisciplinary knowledge to address and analyze real-world issues.
- Students will interpret and evaluate various research materials and/or perspectives.

Seminar Specific Learning Outcomes:
- Take personal responsibility and become a self-directed college learner.
- Understand divergent political viewpoints.
- Effectively read and comprehend articles, reports, and books.
- Evaluate the accuracy of claims made in literature relating to politics.
- Collaborate effectively as both an effective leader and follower.
- Communicate on controversial topics related to politics.
- Relate politics to other ways of knowing.
- Understand the nature of political process.
- Apply politics to your own life.
- Understand the role and purpose of different forms of literature.
- Effectively use library research tools to research on political topics.
- Communicate about political topics verbally, in writing, and via video presentation.
- Get along with others.
- Develop awareness of one's present and future role in the American politics.
- Understand the role of politics in greater sociopolitical world context.
- Be able to use logical and empirical means to support a political viewpoint.
- Develop interpersonal communication skills.
- Use online learning technology effectively.
- Be successful in POLS 2305 and in life.

Course Materials:
Seminar is a discussion course focused on the readings and information gained in your large lecture course. You will work with the books from your US Government and Politics, and Composition courses. Additional readings will also be supplied to you as handouts, online postings, or from your textbooks for discussion in seminar. As in your lecture classes it is vitally important that you keep up with readings that are assigned at all times. If you do not keep up with readings it will affect your ability to participate in seminar discussions and will lower your participation grade.

You will also need the following for seminar and other learning community courses:
- Regular computer access with Microsoft Office (available on campus).
- Islander email and ability to check it regularly.
- Ability to save your computer generated work and transfer it between school and home and among university computers (Laptop, USB Flash Drive, internet drive).
- Positive attitude and desire to make your life extraordinary is highly recommended!

Course Evaluation:

Attendance & Participation: (30%) - Attendance is absolutely vital to this class. To learn politics and begin your journey as an active member of a democracy (as most of us are) you must be present and prepared for class. Your knowledge and opinion is valued and appreciated at every class meeting. Attendance is taken randomly many times per semester at the beginning, middle, or end of class, or via Blackboard.

This course is designed to be effective when students actively engage and contribute to the success of the class, therefore a participation score of 0 to 100 will be given based on your contribution to the class. To be able to add to the discussions in seminar, you must always stay caught up in the reading for large lecture. An A is not difficult to attain if you come to class, bring in any requested material, are prepared for discussion, and actively engage in a positive way. However, simply showing up will not earn you full points. Your participation in discussions, group work, etc. will determine your participation grade. Obviously if you have an attendance problem, you can expect this score to be correspondingly low, but factors such as excessive off topic talking, sleeping, inappropriate internet use (Facebook, email, games, chat) and other inappropriate behaviors will lower your participation grade. Being a good citizen of the university and learning community is required!

Learning Community Assignments
Aplia Problem Sets: (5%) - The political science textbook that will be used for POLS 2305 comes with an online lab. You will be responsible for completing problem sets that are related to material covered in lecture and reading assignments weekly. Occasionally, we will discuss the problem sets as a class. Your final grade for the Aplia Problem Sets will be calculated at the end of the semester.

PEW Typology Presentation: (10%) - You will develop a presentation in a group of peers that have a similar political typology. Together, you will create a visual presentation that will highlight a current political issue as it relates to your respective typologies. Presentations will take place in Seminar on Sept. 10.

Political Science Paper: (15%) - You will write a paper in which you use the knowledge and skills you have obtained in each of your Triad F course. In this 6-8-page essay, you will apply your own knowledge, research, and ideas to propose a solution to an issue based on your own political ideology. This paper will count in each of your Triad F course. Due Dec. 3.

First-Year Celebration: (10%) - Each fall semester, the First-Year Learning Communities Program hosts a special event designed to give freshmen students the opportunity to present their ideas, research, and writing to the university community. First Year Celebration (FYC) is a public display of writing, composing, creation, argument, and research by first-year students at the end of their first term. FYC requires all first-year students to create a product, based on written work, that uses media, technology, and/or creative presentation to display their argumentative essays and/or research projects for a mixed, general, academic audience. Due Nov. 28.

Midterm Portfolio: (15%) - Due Oct. 5, this portfolio, the Plotting Communities Collection, asks you to reflect on three communities you have been a part of and create a page for each. The Midterm Portfolio is a shared assignment between Composition and Seminar.

Final Reflection: (15%) - Due Nov. 30, this Final Reflection asks you to individually reflect and discuss ways you have (or have not) adapted to the academic discourse at TAMUCC. The Final Reflection is a shared assignment between Composition and Seminar.

I require few outside assignments, so note that if you fail to turn in any assignment your final grade will drop one to two full letter grades. Failing to turn in assignments is likely to result in failing the class and doing poorly in other learning community courses.

No late work will be accepted.

Expectations:
In this class we are learning how to be successful both in college and in life as university educated professionals. For this reason my philosophy is to treat you as the professional that you are aspiring to be. Let this thought guide you any time that you are not sure how you should conduct yourself in seminar:

"How would I be expected to conduct myself if I were already working as a professional and if my paycheck depended on professional behavior?"

To further guide you here are a few suggestions:
- Your participation is appreciated and expected, but make sure that you have the floor before speaking!
- Only one person should speak at any given time.
- Silence all electronic devices during a meeting.
- Use laptops and handheld devices only when appropriate and do not allow them to prevent your class participation. If you are unable to multitask then please do not use a computer in my class.
- Limit the use of electronic devices to class work and emergencies only.
- Absolutely do not check e-mail, text messages, MySpace, play games, surf the web, or receive non-emergency communications of any kind via any electronic device.
- You must use Blackboard email or Islander email to communicate with me. If you are emailing me about the course, then please use Blackboard email.
- The preferred method of contacting me is via Blackboard email. If you ask me something in class, be prepared to follow up the discussion with a reminder email.
- Your writing in e-mail should be very concise and to the point, but should also be professional.
E-mail is not the same as instant messaging or text messaging and should have appropriate grammar, punctuation, and capitalization throughout.

**Rights Responsibilities and Civil Discourse:**
In this course we will engage in active learning including frequent group activities and interactions. To meet these many significant learning objectives it will be necessary to establish some ground rules for class discussions so that no one individual dominates the discussion and so that the diverse opinions of others can be respected. You and your classmates will make suggestions that will ultimately be compiled into a set of rules responsibilities and guidelines for civil discourse in this class. Students are expected to read and follow the University Code of Conduct in the Student Handbook, given to them in class at the beginning of the 1st semester.

**Students with Disabilities and Veterans:**
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Driftwood 101.

If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.

**Grade Appeal Process:**
As stated in University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, and University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. These documents are accessible through the University Rules Web site at [http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html](http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html). For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Office of Student Affairs.

I am thrilled that you chose Texas A&M University- Corpus Christi and look forward to the semester we will have together. Go Islanders!