2014

391-01 American Politics Seminar

Mack Mariani

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POLI 391 - American Politics Seminar, Spring 2014  
Professor Mack Mariani, Xavier University  
MWF, 1:00 pm – 2:00 pm

Contact Information  
Instructor: Mack Mariani, Associate Professor  
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Office: 710 Schott Hall  
Cell: (513) 508-6849

Office Hours  
My office is located at Schott #710. I am available to meet between 10:00 am – 10:50 am on most Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. I am also available at other times by appointment (particularly easy to do 9:00 am – 10:00 am on MWF or 2:00 pm on Fridays). Please text or e-mail me in advance to schedule an appointment (if you text, please include your name in the text). If these times do not work in your schedule, I'll work with you to find a better time to meet.

Course Description  
This seminar is for students interested in pursuing research in the field of American politics, including (but not limited to) political parties, campaigns and elections, women and politics, and legislative behavior. The goal of this course is to acquaint students with methods of inquiry in social science and prepare them to engage in high-level scholarly research. Over the course of the semester, students will develop a research question on an important subject in American politics, review the relevant literature, and complete a research design and analysis that contributes to the existing body of scientific knowledge on the topic they have selected. Research proposals on subjects at all levels of American government (local, state and national) are encouraged. After taking this course, students will be able to:

- clearly explain major theories in American politics discussed in their own research as well as the research of their peers;
- critically evaluate competing explanations (theories) of political phenomenon;
- generate well-developed political arguments backed by evidence from books, journals, and secondary sources.
- interrogate assumptions underlying claims about political phenomena;
- understand key concepts, frameworks and methods used in the design of political science research.

Required Books  

Canvas Course Management System  
Course materials, including online readings, the syllabus, assignments and video lectures, will be accessible through the Canvas course management system.

Grade Distribution  
Your final score in the class will be based on your performance on the following assignments/requirements:

10% Assignments
10% Reading Quizzes
20% Proposal
30% Stage One Paper
30% Stage Two Paper
Grades will be based on the following scale:

- A: >94.0%
- A-: 90.0-93.9%
- B+: 87.0-89.9%
- B: 84.0-86.9%
- B-: 80.0-83.9%
- C+: 77.0-79.9%
- C: 74.0-76.9%
- C-: 70.0-73.9%
- D: 60.0-69.9%
- F: <60

**Grade Policies**

**Late Papers and Assignments** – Late papers (proposal/stage one/stage two) will receive a one-third letter grade penalty per class period (an A paper becomes an A-, an A- becomes a B+, etc...). Late or incomplete assignments receive a 25% late penalty per class period.

**Unfrozen Caveman Lawyer Rule** - If you don’t know the answer to an open-ended question, tell me what you do know and you will receive partial credit. For the origins of this rule, check out this video: http://videosift.com/video/SNL-Unfrozen-Caveman-Lawyer

**Participation** – Students are expected to attend class, stay current with course readings, and actively participate in class discussions. If you are frequently unprepared for class or have more than four unexcused absences, you may receive a participation penalty up to one full letter grade.

**Important Due Dates (Subject to Change)**

- Monday, September 22: Paper Proposal Due
- Wednesday, October 8: Rough Draft of Stage One Due
- Monday, October 27: Stage One Paper Due
- Monday, November 10: Rough Draft of Revisions of Stage One Due
- Monday, November 24: Rough Draft of Stage Two Due
- Monday, December 15: Stage Two Paper Due

**Overview of Papers and Assignments**

**Assignments**
Over the course of the semester, you will be asked to complete a number of assignments. The goal of the assignments is to keep you on track and ensure that you have a strong understanding of the literature and that you are applying the lessons you have learned to improve the clarity and organization of your paper. It is critically important that you complete the assignments on time so that you do not fall behind. Late or incomplete assignments receive a half-letter grade penalty for each class period. In total, the assignments make up 10% of your final grade in this course.

**Open-Book Reading Quizzes**
Every two-to-three weeks, I will post a short open-book quiz on the assigned readings. Your engagement of the readings is important and will contribute to a well-researched, well-analyzed and well-written project. The reading quizzes make up 10% of your final grade in this course.

**Proposal**
Each student is required to submit a 4-5 page research proposal that describes your topic and your proposed research plan. It should discuss theoretical concerns and describe the relationship you believe exists, offer hypotheses, describe how you plan to test those hypotheses. This statement must be accompanied by an
annotated bibliography covering a total of 30 journal articles or academic books directly related to your research topic. This assignment is worth 20% of your course grade.

**Stage 1: Introduction and Literature Review**
A 10-page paper that introduces your research question, articulates the importance of the research, and describes where this research fits within the broader range of scholarship on this subject. This first draft should include an introduction, a literature review, and a summary of the main research question. Your review of the literature should be based on at least 25-30 journal articles or scholarly books directly related to your subject. Important non-scholarly (newspaper, other) sources should be in addition to the 25-30 scholarly sources. This should not be a semi-finished product (bullets, unfinished sections, etc); rather, it should be able to stand on its own as an independent paper. Stage 1 must include a title page, abstract and works cited page. This assignment is worth 30% of your final grade.

**Stage 2: Research Design**
A 15- to 16-page paper that builds off your introduction by laying out your research design, which should include a description of your sample, a review of your key variables and measures, the articulation of clear and testable hypotheses, and some consideration of how your design builds upon or improves upon previous research. You do not need to show/analyze results here but you must discuss how you will test your research question and offer some hypotheses as to what you expect to find. This should not be a semi-finished product (bullets, unfinished sections, etc); rather, it should be able to stand on its own as an independent paper. Stage 2 must include a title page, abstract and works cited page. This assignment is worth 30% of your final grade.

**ACADEMIC SUPPORT**

**Students with Disabilities** – Students in need of accommodation based on the impact of a documented disability should notify the course instructor and contact Cassandra Jones in the Learning Assistance Center at 513-745-3280 or e-mail jonesc20@xavier.edu to coordinate reasonable accommodations.

**Learning Assistance Center** - The Learning Assistance Center (LAC) provides support services to facilitate learning. The LAC has two main purposes: tutoring and disability services. The tutoring services include subject specific tutoring, drop-in sessions, study skills assistance, and Supplemental Instruction (SI). For students with documented disabilities, services include accommodations such as extended time on exams, reduced distraction testing environment, note-taking assistance, and assistive technology. Services are provided in a positive and encouraging environment, which promotes appreciation for diversity and cura personalis. The LAC is located in the Conaton Learning Commons room 514. The web address is: [http://www.xavier.edu/lac/](http://www.xavier.edu/lac/).

**Writing Center** - The Writing Center offers free one-on-one tutoring on writing assignments for all Xavier students. The Writing Center is located in the Conaton Learning Commons room 400. [http://www.xavier.edu/writingcenter/](http://www.xavier.edu/writingcenter/)

**UNIVERSITY POLICIES**

**Academic Honesty Policy** - The pursuit of truth demands high standards of personal honesty. Academic and professional life requires a trust based upon integrity of the written and spoken word. Accordingly, violations of certain standards of ethical behavior will not be tolerated at Xavier University. These include theft, cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized assistance in assignments and tests, unauthorized copying of computer software, the falsification of results and material submitted in reports or admission and registration documents, and the falsification of any academic record including letters of recommendation. All work submitted for academic evaluation must be the student's own. Certainly, the activities of other scholars will influence all students. However, the direct and unattributed use of another's efforts is prohibited, as is the use of any work untruthfully submitted as one's own.
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