

## **PSCI 109: CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL CHANGE**

Fall 2009  
Mon/Wed 5:40pm -6:55pm  
El Centro Campus  
Telephone: 312-848-0634

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**DESCRIPTION:** The First-Year Colloquium provides an opportunity for freshman to actively engage in NEIU's unique makeup as a diverse, urban campus and community. The core theme, "Diversity in Chicago," is explored through the lenses of different disciplines as they apply to the deeper understanding of Chicago as an environment for discovery and learning. The focus on students' preparation for general academic expectations accompanied by some type of discipline-specific field experience (e.g., research component, service learning) situates the course as a bridge to the university experience and higher education, as well as a matrix for future development and active participation in society.

This freshman colloquium explores citizenship, politics, diversity, civic engagement and social change. In addition to learning traditional aspects of American democracy, including Constitutionalism, federalism and the structure of government, students will spend time developing civic engagement strategies, project management, negotiation and teamwork skills.

**GOALS:** The goals of this course include:

- 1) to promote an understanding of the nature of social change through participatory democracy, which includes community service and the influence of social, cultural, political, economic, and religious factors in community life; and
- 2) to develop awareness and social responsibility regarding local, state, national and the global community; and
- 3) to explore the links between citizen education and civic engagement, including an examination of what "service" means, whom should serve, why people serve, and the relationship of service to the educational process; and
- 4) to strengthen students' analytical, written, oral and leadership skills.

\*A final goal to receive special attention will be the participation or representation of Latinos in the democratic process. As we work our way through this course, I hope that we will all come to be more knowledgeable (rather than overwhelmed), more intellectually critical (rather than cynical), and more empowered (rather than apathetic).

**REQUIREMENTS:** In addition to the readings and journal assignments listed below, PSCI 109 features two essay exams and a multiple stage research project. Due dates are listed on the course calendar. Any changes in the course schedule will be announced in advance. The penalty for lateness on any assignment is one letter grade per day of lateness and there are no makeup exams. In addition, perfect class attendance and on time arrival are required; two absences or more, or frequent tardiness will result in a significant reduction of the participation portion of your course grade. If you cannot make it to class for some unavoidable reason, you must inform

me by voice mail or e-mail BEFORE that class. Regarding academic behavior and standards, please familiarize yourself with the University Student Code of Conduct in the Student Survival Kit. Your participation in this class is valued very much. If you have trouble keeping up with course work, please come and talk with me! If you are willing to work hard, I am dedicated to helping you to succeed.

**TEXTBOOKS:** There are two books required for this class. Please purchase them immediately.

Walter E Volkmer, *American Government*, 12<sup>th</sup> ed. (2006).

Nist-Olejniak and Holschuh, *College Success Strategies*, 3rd ed., New York: Pearson.

**WRITTEN EXAMS:** Each of the two exams, consisting of multiple choice, short and long essay questions, will cover three chapters of the *American Government* textbook, (respectively chapters 1-3; and chapters 7, 8 and 10) as well as the assigned chapters from the *College Success Strategies* book.

**RESEARCH PAPER:** Your final research paper will focus on a social movement or political cause of your choosing (approved by your professor). The research process will proceed through several steps: the forming of a few possible topic questions; general research on one of these questions; the focusing of one specific topic question for your final research paper; intensive research and analysis on this final topic question; an annotated bibliography; a first and second draft of your paper; and your final paper (8-10 pages, typed, double-spaced, carefully cited, and very well proofread). Sources for your project should include articles, books, and websites with my approval.

**JOURNALS AND PARTICIPATION:** You are required to submit four journals to record your critical responses to course materials, including readings, lectures, class discussions and videos. I will distribute a question/comment to focus on for your journal, however, you may also choose to comment on local, regional, national or international news pertaining to the American Government (be sure to always attach to your journal the news articles on which you are commenting).

Your journal entries should NOT simply be summaries of such material -your score will be lowered if all you do is summarize. Rather, you should use your journal entries as a space for critical reflection and analysis. That is, you will need to make an argument, state a position, or raise an interesting point, and support such argument/position/point by referring to lectures, with class materials, or with other relevant materials as appropriate. Journal entries should be 1-2 pages long, typewritten, and double-spaced with 12-inch font. Journals will be when due at the beginning of class.

The grading scale for the journals will be as follows:

**4 - This is the equivalent of an "A."** Journal was well thought out, argument clearly made or interesting points made, and supported by critical analysis.

**3 -** Good use of argument and/or opinions, but more critical analysis needed. Also, paper too

brief or too long for the topic written.

2 - Too much opinion or personal experience and not enough argument and/or critical opinion. Also, grammar, spelling and general use of English is flawed.

1 - The assignment was handed in, but no arguments made, no analysis given, or assignment was rushed for completion and, thus, incoherent.

0 - Failing grade. Journal assignment not turned in.

These grades will be aggregated at the end of the semester to arrive at a total point score for the Journal portion of your Final course grade.

**GRADING:** The various components of your grade for this class have the “weights” listed below.

Two essay exams	200 points (100 points each)	40%
Research paper	100 points	30%
Journals/participation	100 points (25 points each)	30%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>400 points</b>	<b>100%</b>

The following general guidelines will be used:

GRADE	PERCENTAGE/POINTS
A (“excellent”)	90-100
B (“good”)	80-89
C (“average”)	70-79
D (“below average”)	60-69
F (“failing”)	Below 60

**ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY.** You must be present to engage in the learning process. You should always arrive in class and be prepared to start promptly. Continual late arrivals and multiple absences will negatively affect your grade; furthermore, in accordance with university policy, less than 75% attendance will automatically result in a failure for the semester, regardless of your grade for assignments.

**PARTICIPATION IS ESSENTIAL TO LEARNING.** Being physically present in class is not enough. Learning is not a passive process; it is an active one. You must take part in class discussions and always do your share in partner or group work. Don’t be afraid to make mistakes; they are a part of learning and they also help your instructors to understand what you need. Don’t wait to be called; that’s not participation. Ask questions when you don’t understand and offer your opinions when it is appropriate. It is only asked that you remember to be as much an active listener as an active participant; that is, give others a chance to participate, too.

**ASSIGNMENTS ARE ALWAYS DUE AS ASSIGNED ON THE SYLLABUS.** The syllabus indicates all assignments with their page numbers. Unless otherwise indicated, homework must always be done as indicated, presumably for the next class meeting. Even if you aren’t

completely sure of the answers, try to finish the homework. Incomplete and late work will be reduced in grade.

**PLAGIARISM IN ANY FORM WILL NOT BE TOLERATED.** All assignments—including exercises in the book—are expected to be your own work. Quotations and citations must be properly referenced. Any work that has been copied from any other source (e.g., a book, a magazine, the Internet, or even a classmate)—will receive an immediate failing grade without question. If necessary, additional steps will be taken; please be aware that the university's policy on academic integrity states that a student may be expelled for plagiarism.

**This course is part of the GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM at NEIU. This sheet provides information about the Gen Ed Program, and function of this particular course in the Program. The distribution area (FA, HU, SB, NS, MA) of this course is noted above.**

In the General Education Program, the University identifies five areas in which students gain some general knowledge to enrich their lives and enhance their academic experience. Every undergraduate student must take courses from a list of designated courses in each of these areas. The knowledge gained in these courses will provide an academic foundation that will help prepare students for the major and minor course areas and will encourage students to become life-long learners in many different and divergent fields of study. Students are required to take a minimum of 39 credit hours of General Education courses and are encouraged to complete these courses during their first 75 hours of course work. Transfer students may fulfill General Education requirements with courses taken at other colleges or universities.

Distribution:

**Fine Arts FA** 2 courses, 6 credit hours from two of the following areas of study: Art, Mass Media & Theatre (in the CMT dept.), Music & Dance (in the Music dept.)

**Humanities HU** 3 courses, 9 credit hours from at least two of the following areas of study: Communication (in the CMT dept.), English, Foreign Languages and Literatures, Linguistics, Philosophy, Women's Studies

**Behavioral/Social Sciences SB** 4 courses, 12 credit hours from at least two of the following areas of study: African & African American Studies, Anthropology, Computer Science, Economics, Geography & Environmental Studies, History, Justice Studies, Latino & Latin American Studies, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology

**Natural Sciences NS** 3 courses, 9 credit hours from at least two of the following areas of study; one course must have a laboratory component: Biology, Chemistry, Earth Science, Physics

**Math/Quantitative Reasoning MA** 1 course, a minimum of 3 credit hours, that has Intermediate Algebra as prerequisite OR is on the General Education List of Approved Courses. Any college level math course, with the exception of Intermediate Algebra, meets this requirement

The goal of the General Education Program is to assist students in developing the following abilities & skills. This course provides a background in the indicated areas

(faculty member, please check all that apply):

- 9 the ability to communicate both in writing and orally;
- 9 the skills required to gather, analyze, document, and integrate information;
- 9 an understanding of historical processes and cultural differences; aesthetic and literary sensitivity;
- 9 an understanding of the modes of thought, concerns, and methodologies of the fine arts, the humanities, the social and behavioral sciences, and the natural sciences; and,
- 9 the ability to use quantitative methods in the natural, social and behavioral sciences.

## **COURSE CALENDAR**

### **Week 1**      **The Nature of Politics**

August 31st

READ:            No readings due for the first day.

September 2nd

READ:            *College Success Strategies*, Ch. 1

FILM:            “Hurricane Katrina”

### **Week 2**      **Politics, Democracy and the Ideology**

September 7th – **NO CLASS FOR LABOR DAY**

September 9th

READ:            *Volkmer*, Chapter 1

WRITE:          **Journal 1** is due.

### **Week 3**      **From Colonialism to Constitutionalism**

September 14th

READ:            *Volkmer*, Chapter 2

September 16<sup>th</sup>

READ:            *College Success Strategies*, Ch. 2

### **Week 4**      **The Federal System**

September 21st

READ:            *Volkmer*, Chapter 3

September 23rd

READ:            *College Success Strategies*, Ch. 3

WRITE:          **Journal 2** is due.

### **Week 5**      **Reflections on Early Concepts of Civic Engagement**

September 28th

WRITE:          EXAM 1

September 30th

FILM:            “Sicko”

**Week 6**      **Congress**  
October 5<sup>th</sup>      *Volkomer*, Chapter 7

October 7<sup>th</sup>  
READ:      *College Success Strategies*, Ch. 5

**Week 7**      **The Chief Executive**  
October 12<sup>th</sup>  
Read:      *Volkomer*, Chapter 8

October 14<sup>th</sup>  
READ:      *College Success Strategies*, Ch. 6  
WRITE:      **Journal 3** is due.

**Week 8**      **The Judiciary**  
October 19<sup>th</sup>  
READ:      *Volkomer*, Chapter 10

October 21<sup>st</sup>  
READ:      *College Success Strategies*, Ch. 7.

**Week 9**      **Reflections on Government and their processes**  
October 26<sup>th</sup>  
WRITE:      EXAM 2

October 28<sup>th</sup>  
FILM:      To be determined

**Week 10**      **No Classes**  
NO CLASS DUE TO PROFESSOR'S BUSINESS OUT OF TOWN

**Week 11**      **Political Parties and Interest Groups**  
November 9<sup>th</sup>  
READ:      *Volkomer*, Chapter 5

November 11<sup>th</sup>  
READ:      *College Success Strategies*, Ch. 8.  
WRITE:      **JOURNAL 4 (Research Paper Step 1)**: Choose topic and beginning research strategies.

**Week 12**      **Nominations and Elections**

November 16th

READ:      *Volkomer*, Chapter 6.

November 18th

READ:      *College Success Strategies*, Ch. 10.

WRITE:      **Research Paper Step 2**: Hand in first draft of your research paper (including citations and bibliography) on April 7.

**Week 13**      **Civil Liberties**

November 23rd

READ:      *Volkomer*, Chapter 11

November 25th

READ:

*College Success Strategies*, Ch. 11.

WRITE:      **Research Paper Step 3**: Go over comments from first draft to be incorporated in Final Draft.

**Week 14**      **Foreign Policy**

November 30th

READ:      *Volkomer*, Chapter 14

December 2th

READ:      *College Success Strategies*, Ch. 13.

WRITE:      **Research Paper Step 4**: Comments on Drafts continue

**Week 15**      **Civil Rights**

December 7th

READ:      *College Success Strategies*, Ch. 16.

December 9th

GUEST SPEAKER: Civil Rights Attorney

**Week 16**      **DECEMBER 14th- FINAL RESEARCH PAPER DUE BY 5PM BY EMAIL AT [linares76@hotmail.com](mailto:linares76@hotmail.com).**