

PSCI 216: AMERICAN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT
Learning Community Theme: *Becoming Students and Citizens*

Fall 2002
MWF 9:00-9:50am
Room: CLS 2005
Website: www.neiu.edu/~dleaman
E-mail: d-leaman@neiu.edu

Dr. Leaman's Office: CLS 2050
Office Hours: MWF 8:20-8:50am;
MW 2:30-3:00pm; T Noon-1:30 pm;
or by appointment with instructor.
Tel: 773-442-5657

DESCRIPTION: This course introduces you to the history and to the institutions, processes, actors, and social movements of American national government and politics. Following the lead of our main textbook authors, we will organize our exploration around the theme of democracy, especially the ongoing debate between elite democracy and popular democracy. What kind of "democracy" does the U.S. currently have? What kind of "democracy" would you like it to have? While we learn many important facts and concepts during this course, we will also have the opportunity to think about and form our own philosophy of government and politics.

Besides the main textbook, this course includes another important book. *AMAZING GRACE* is an account of the lives of poor children in the South Bronx and Harlem and a call to action to address the causes of poverty. This book shines light on a set of sorrowful social problems and gives us the opportunity to discuss their possible solutions. Author Jonathan Kozol, who will give special lectures at NEIU in October, also exemplifies one form of active citizenship. Regarding our learning community theme of citizenship, you will also have the chance during this election fall to follow one candidate who is running for office. Following candidates provides us another opportunity to discuss different types of democratic citizenship.

The goals of this course include, first, providing a broad foundation for understanding and participating in American politics and, second, strengthening your competencies in essay writing and data analysis. As we work our way through this course, I hope that we all will come to be more knowledgeable (rather than overwhelmed), more intellectually critical (rather than cynical), and more empowered (rather than apathetic). Good luck to all of us.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: In addition to the readings and Blackboard discussion assignments listed below, PSCI 216 features three written exams (the final exam will include some review questions) and two short essays. The second essay meets the requirements for all three classes in this learning community. Due dates are listed on the course calendar. You should always expect to spend at least ten hours per week working on this class (including class time). 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; more than three absences or frequent tardiness will result in a zero for 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. Your participation in this class is valued. If you have trouble keeping up with course work, please come and talk! If you are dedicated to working hard, I want to help you succeed.

TEXTBOOKS: There are two texts to buy for this class. Please purchase them immediately.

Bruce Miroff, Raymond Seidelman, and Todd Swanstrom, THE DEMOCRATIC DEBATE:
AN INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN POLITICS.

Jonathan Kozol, AMAZING GRACE: THE LIVES OF CHILDREN AND THE
CONSCIENCE OF A NATION

WRITTEN EXAMS: Each of the three exams -- consisting of short answer, multiple choice, and short essay questions -- will cover four chapters of the main textbook (chs. 1-4; 5-7 & 9; and 10-12 & 14), as well as a few questions from the Kozol book. Exam dates are listed on the calendar.

ESSAY #1: Your first essay in this class will focus on a political candidate and campaign in this fall's elections. This paper proceeds in a series of steps: choice of topic, outline, BlackBoard writing, and the paper itself. In this paper, you are expected to report on the political history of your candidate; your candidate's stances on at least two major issues; and your brief assessment of your candidate. The final draft must be 3-5 pages, carefully proofread, typed and double-spaced. This paper will include some collaborative work with at least one other student in class.

ESSAY #2: Your second essay, which will count for all three classes in our learning community, will be a "proposing a solution" paper. In this paper, you will first identify a particular problem and analyze its causes. Your topic should be something that has been covered in our classes (in the Kozol book, on the NEIU campus, or from some other source) and must be approved by your instructors. The second part of your paper will be your proposal of concrete steps to address the problem. The final draft of your second essay should be 4-6 pages, carefully proofread, typed, and double-spaced. You will also have the chance to present this paper during our final session.

BLACKBOARD DISCUSSIONS: One of the goals of this course is to give you lots of opportunities to write informally, to engage various course topics, and to respond to each other's writing. To make that possible, we will all be subscribed to a threaded discussion group on Blackboard. Your weekly or bi-weekly "journal" on Blackboard can be accessed through the NEIU Library home page (www.neiu.edu). We will all get subscribed in class on September 4.

GRADING: The various components of your grade have the "weights" listed below. Your final grade is calculated according to the standard percentages listed in the college catalogue (A = 90-100%; B = 80-89%; C = 70-79%; D = 60-69%; F = Below 60%).

Three exams	160 points (50/60 points each)	40%
Essay #1	80 points	20%
Essay #2*	80 points	20%
Blackboard writing*	40 points	10%

Attendance/participation	<u>40</u> points	<u>10%</u>
TOTAL	400 points	100%

*These grades, adding up to thirty percent of your final course grade, are common to all three classes in our learning community. This grade overlap increases the integration of our three classes and reduces your overall work load in this learning community.

SPECIAL CAMPUS EVENTS: All of you are strongly encouraged to attend campus events planned by the Politics Club and other student organization. Such activities often take place Tuesday or Thursday during the Activity Hour, 1:40-2:40 PM. You are also strongly encouraged to attend Hispanic Heritage Month activities, Presidential Lecture speakers, and other special campus events scheduled during the fall semester. Extra credit will be offered for short typed responses (four points per report) to events that relate in some way to this class.

ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUES: Throughout the term, I will periodically assess what you are learning through ungraded classroom assessment techniques (CATs) such as “muddiest point” paragraphs and “one minute papers.” These CATs will help us enhance our learning in the class.

COURSE CALENDAR

Week 1 Understanding and Evaluating American Politics: The Democratic Debate
August 26, 28, and 30

READ: Miroff, et al., Preface, Introductory Essay, and chapter 1
Kozol, xiii-24

OTHER: Please activate your @neiu.edu or another email account.

Week 2 The Declaration of Independence, The Articles of Confederation, and the
Labor Day; Sept 4 and 6 U.S. Constitution: Origins of the Democratic Debate

READ: Miroff, et al., chapter 2
Kozol, 27-54

OTHER: Computer Day in CLS 2054 on Wednesday, September 4: “Learning Blackboard”.

First Blackboard entries and responses are due on Monday, September 9.

Week 3 Public Opinion, Political Culture, and How We Learn About Politics

Sept 9, 11, and 13

READ: Miroff, et al., chapter 3 (and text essay, xxii-xxix)
Kozol, 57-82

Week 4 American Political Economy: Corporate Capitalism versus Democracy
Sept 16, 18, and 20

READ: Miroff, et al., chapter 4
Kozol, 82-107

OTHER: Learning Community field trip to Peace Museum exhibit, “Cartoonists Against
Terrorism,” on Saturday, September 21, 1:00-2:30 pm.

Prepare for Exam #1 on September 27.

Week 5 EXAM WEEK
Sept 23, 25, and 27

READ: Kozol, 107-147

OTHER: Visit to NEIU library, September 21, 10:00-11:00 am.

Week 6 Voting, Non-Voting, and Elections: Why Do So Many Americans Not Vote?
Sept 30; Oct 2 and 4

READ: Miroff, et al., chapter 5
Kozol, 147-175

OTHER: Choose your political candidate and prepare outline of Essay #1 by October 7.

Prepare for discussion of critical reading, text assessment, research tools, and the
proper and effective use of Internet sources.

Week 7 The Politics of Corporate Mass Media -- and Popular Democratic Alternatives
Oct 7, 9, and 11

READ: Miroff, et al., chapter 6
Kozol, 175-200

Week 8 Political Parties and Party Systems: Why Do We Have a Two-Party System?

Oct 14, 16, and 18

READ: Miroff, et al., chapter 7
Kozol, 200-225

OTHER: Consider how commas are necessary to political analysis because they help us to list characteristics, to separate essential and non-essential points, and to compare.

Week 9 Interest Groups and the Interest Group System

October 21, 23, and 25

READ: Miroff, et al., chapter 9
Kozol, 225-249

OTHER: Attend Presidential Lecture by Jonathan Kozol, Thursday, October 24, 7 pm.

Complete Essay #1 on political candidate and hand in on October 30.

Prepare for Exam #2 on November 4.

Week 10 EXAM WEEK

October 28 and 30; Nov 1

READ: Finish up any missed reading.

OTHER: Complete Essay #1 on October 30 and Prepare for Exam #2 on November 4.

Week 11 Popular Social Movements in American History

Nov 4, 6, and 8

READ: Miroff, et al., chapter 10

OTHER: Guest Lecture by Erica Meiners on Friday, November 8.

Choose topic for Essay #2 (the final paper for all three classes) by November 11.

Week 12 The U.S. Congress and Types of Representation
Nov 11, 13, and 15

READ: Miroff, et al., chapter 11

OTHER: Work on “Proposing a Solution” Essay #2.

Week 13 The Presidency and Elite Democracy
Nov 18, 20, and 22

READ: Miroff, et al., chapter 12

OTHER: Complete and hand in Essay #2 first draft by November 27.

Week 14 The Supreme Court and the Judicial System
Nov 25 and 27; Thanksgiving

READ: Miroff, et al., chapter 14

OTHER: Revise and hand in Essay #2 final draft on December 6.

Week 15+ EXAM WEEK
Dec 2, 4, 6, and 9

READ: Finish up any missed readings and review for final exam.

OTHER: Presentations of final papers on December 12, 11:30 am–4 pm.

(Final) Exam #3: Wednesday, December 11, 10:00-11:20 am