**The Indiana Academy**

**SOC 302**

**Exploring American Government: Search for Democracy (Fall 2024)**

Instructor: Dr. Mark Myers Office Location: B009D Elliot

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Office Hours: MF 2-5, TR 9-10, 4-5, and by appointment

*Course Description:*

An exploration of United States government, with particular reference to the history and experience of creating and sustaining a democratic system and way of life for all. What is a democracy, and what does it mean to live in a democratic country? Topics may include diversity, equality, equity, political power, and similar pressing questions of past and present. Critical thinking and productive civil discourse will be consistently emphasized. (Only one credit can be earned from the Exploring American Government course series.)

*Required Texts:*

All readings will be posted to Canvas.

*Goals for and Obligations of Students:*

1. The first goal of the class is for students to gain an interpretive awareness of the major connections between democracy and inequality. All students are obligated to complete all assigned readings before class. This is imperative because this course relies heavily on class discussion. Class sessions will only succeed if you put in the time to read the assignments.
2. The second goal of the class is for students to become comfortable participating in class. Students are obligated to participate in all class sessions.
3. The third, and most important, goal of the class is to improve students’ critical thinking skills.

*Course Requirements:*

1. Essays: You are required to write three essays based on class materials. More information will be forthcoming. Each essay is worth 150 points, for a total of 450 points.
2. Daily Assignments/Participation: The first type of daily assignment will be journals based on the daily readings. The journals will be posted to Canvas. These journals are designed to give you an opportunity to prepare for the discussion and should be two full paragraphs long. The only requirement is that you provide enough detail from the reading to show that you read the assignment. Half of your daily grade will be based on the reading journal. Most of our class sessions will consist of seminar discussions. These seminars may either be open conversations or led by a student discussion leader. I hope to convey to you the importance of collegial discussion. I consider a seminar to be a “team activity,” therefore there will be a class “baseline grade” for the seminar. However, if you do not participate, your score will be adjusted accordingly. I will be providing documents on Canvas to help you prepare for the seminars. Excused absences will not harm your seminar grade, but unexcused absences will earn no participation credit. Each daily grade is 10 points (5 for the journal & 5 for participation activities). The 4 lowest daily grades will be dropped.

*Grade Distribution:*

Essays: 64% (450 points)

Daily Grades: 36% (250 points)

Total: 100%(700 points)

Percentage of total points earned:

A: 90-100%

B: 80-89%

C: 70-79%

D: Below 70%

(Note: plus/minus may be used at my discretion)

*Format of the Course:*

Most days will include a seminar discussion of a major piece of the literature on the issues of inequality and democracy. Throughout the semester, we will also discuss major aspects of American government. Class days may have two distinct topics.

*Late Policy:*

All essays are due by 11:59 p.m. on the due date. Reading Journals are due by class time on the due date. Late essays will be accepted with a penalty of 10%. Reading journals cannot be accepted late except in extraordinary circumstances (certain excused absences such as illness). If you know that you will be absent prior to the day of class, the reading journal must be submitted early. No extension will be granted because a student is extremely busy. I will accept late assignments until noon on Wednesday, December 18.

*Attendance:*

It is the policy of the Indiana Academy that any absence from class is unexcused, except for illness, death in the family, college or school-related activities, and extenuating circumstances. When a student is absent from a class, the instructor reports the student absence to the Faculty Attendance Coordinator in the Office of Academic Affairs. Unless the absence is excused by a school official, it is considered unexcused. The decision as to whether an absence is excused is not determined by the instructor. Four or more unexcused absences in any particular class a student takes will lead to academic and residential consequences to be determined by the Office of Academic Affairs and the Office of Residential Life that may include detention, residential groundings, parent/principal conference, among others.

*Academic Dishonesty:*

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and will be subject to the Academy’s policies on academic dishonesty. For a full discussion of this process and possible sanctions, please refer to the student handbook.

*Behavior:*

This class is expected to be a positive learning experience based on open communication and respect. You are expected to be collegial and to respect the rights of the other seminar participants. On that note, I expect you to be engaged with the class conversation. Failure to do so will lead to a significant reduction of your seminar grade, as well as a potential unexcused absence.

*IA Wireless Device Policy:*

Pursuant to Indiana Code 20-26-5-40.7, The Indiana Academy for Science, Mathematics and Humanities prohibits student use of wireless communication devices for non-instructional purposes in the classroom. As such, any and all portable wireless devices, that have the capability to provide voice, messaging, or other data communication between two or more parties, must only be used for academic purposes directly tied to the classroom activity or related educational task. Exceptions to this wireless device policy are eligible through academic accommodations, individualized education programs, or with instructor approval permitting the use of a wireless device for justification related to health, safety, and/or well-being. The improper use of a wireless device in an active classroom setting is subject to disciplinary action including but not limited to; a verbal warning, temporary seizure of said device by a school official, an unexcused absence for the class in question, written communication to parent/guardian, among other elevated consequences for repeated improper use.

*Canvas:*

Reading assignments and handouts will be posted on the class Canvas site. It is imperative that you check this regularly. You will also submit all written work via Canvas.

*Inclusive Excellence Statement:*

Ball State University aspires to be a university that attracts and retains a diverse faculty, staff and student body. We are committed to ensuring that all members of the community are welcome through valuing the various experiences and worldviews represented at Ball State and among those we serve. We promote a culture of respect and civil discourse as expressed in our Beneficence Pledge. As a reflection of Ball State’s commitment to respect, civil discourse, and the Beneficence Pledge, Inclusive Excellence at the Indiana Academy emerges as one of the priorities of our living and learning community. We strive to exist together respectfully and compassionately, creating an environment where every member can thrive. Unfortunately, there might be occasions when something occurs that disrupts our progress toward meeting these objectives. In this case, we encourage any member of the Academy community to file a Campus Climate Report (CCR) <https://bsu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6mbRbL5acAntUTI>.  All reports will be taken seriously, and appropriate responses will be carried out by Academy administration.

*Disclaimer:*

I reserve the right to make changes to the course calendar at my discretion. I will give notice to the class as soon as possible after making any change.

*Course Calendar:*

Part I: The Nationalization of Politics (8/13-9/26)

**Essay #1 Due by 11:59 P.M. on September 26, 2024.**

Part II: The Institutions of Government (10/1-10/31)

**Essay #2 Due by 11:59 P.M. on October 31, 2024.**

Part III: The Public’s Influence on National Policy (11/5-12/16)

**Essay #3 Due by 11:59 P.M. on December 16, 2024.**