Issues in Contemporary American Politics
POL200
Mr. Phil Mayer

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OFFICE HOURS (faculty office #C208)
Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday: 10:30 to 11am and 12:30-1:30pm. If I am not in the office on a Wednesday during the noon hour, it is because I am in a meeting.
Tuesday and Thursday tutoring (in room C117) 1:30-2:30. Please make an appointment in C117.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course will explore all sides of the various issues that are currently being discussed by politicians and the electorate in America. These issues may include immigration policies, anti-poverty programs, gay and lesbian rights, legalization of marijuana, campaign finance reform, America's health care system, the USA Patriot Act, stem cell research, global warming, US military intervention abroad, abortion, gun control, crime. Since this is a seminar class, students will be expected to prepare multimedia presentations and participate in political debates to encourage independent thinking, critical analysis, and scholarly discussions.

REQUIRED TEXTS: A textbook that I have custom published, entitled "Issues in Contemporary American Politics." I AM NOT EARNING A DIME OFF THESE BOOKS!

GRADES

Midterm essays 3 x 15% each :	45%	100-94 = A	79-77 = C+
Book report	20%	93-90 = A-	76-73 = C
Research paper	25%	89-87 = B+	72-70 = C-
Seminar presentations:	10%	86-83 = B	69-67 =D+
		82-80 = B-	63-66 = D
			62-60 = D-

ATTENDENCE: It is important that you attend class; you cannot learn if you're not there. Numerous unexcused absences (more than 5 unexcused absences and/or disruptions) will affect your grade. It is your responsibility to get all notes, materials, and assignments for any classes that you miss. If you regularly miss class, or are consistently late and/or consistently leave early, that will be a clear signal to me that you do not care about grade.

INCOMPLETES AND EXTRA CREDIT: NOT available

I expect all of my students to have the integrity and character to be honest at all times. Students caught cheating will get a "0" on that test, and it will not be dropped. In addition, you may get an "F" in the class regardless of your average.

We will at times discuss issues which people have different opinions about. Please remember to respect each other and act civilly at all times.

Ten points **per day** will be deducted from any assignment that is late. In the real world, those who can't meet deadlines are fired.

Snow: In the event of wintery weather, please listen to 106.5, Q105, I-98, 1350AM, or WSUB for cancellations. If you do not hear that Three Rivers Community College is closed, that means we are open. You can also look at the website www.trcc.commnet.edu or call the switchboard at 886-0177 for weather info. If you do not hear we are closed, TRCC is open and class will be held. However, if you believe that it is too dangerous to come to class, that's understandable; you are still responsible for finding out what you missed (see tentative course outline on third page) and learning that material.

*** The best way to study for my tests is to study my lecture notes and the homework I assign. It is important that students learn ALL of the definitions we discuss in class; toward that end, students will find making "flashcards" with the word on one side and the definition on the other useful. These flashcards can be used to learn about the various graphs we discuss as well.

COURSE OUTLINE
Midterms: due Monday 03/06, Monday 04/10, and Wednesday 05/13
Research project due Monday, March 27
Book review Due Monday, 04/26

Education policy (No child left behind); cost of tuition (financial aid = more loans, fewer grants), budget deficit

M 01/23 intro
W 01/25 Pamela Williams, reference librarian will talk about research; ideologies
M 02/06 Dakota access pipeline (Standing Rock reservation)
W 02/08: climate change / is nuclear power the answer?
M 02/13 Fracking
W 02/15 Obamacare: repeal, replace? Should we have universal health care?
M 02/20 No class
W 02/22 President Trump's economic proposals: lower corporate tax rate, income tax rate, and impose a tariff on imports to bring manufacturing jobs back to US
M 02/27 War in Syria/ ISIS: Did Obama go a good or poor job with the war in Syria and the rise of ISIS
W 03/01 President Obama and trump's Israel policy
M 03/06 Gay Marriage **(first midterm due)**
W 03/08 race relations and the police in America: Michael Brown, Eric Garner
Week of 03/13: NO class

M 03/20 student debt/ rising cost of a college education/ should college be free?
W03/22 torture, use of drones;

M 03/27 Bailouts: did we reward bad behavior or save the economy? (**Research project due)**
W03/29 aging infrastructure: should US spend $1 trillion as President Trump and many other politicians, Republican and Democrat, have proposed?
M 04/03 prisoner reentry: are prisoners rehabilitated and properly trained to enter the workforce?
W04/05 gun control, mental health accessibility (Sandy Hook Elementary shooting)
M 04/10 ? Should marijuana be legalized for recreational purposes in CT and in the US? **(second midterm due)**
W 04/12 voter ID – should a photo ID be required to vote?
M 04/17 abortion
W 04/19 Do we now have a 'nanny state'? (motorcycle helmet laws; should football be banned/ no texting or using cell phone while driving/ can't drink until you're 21?
M 04/26 genetically modified food **(book review due**)
W 04/28 Can we save Social Security and Medicare? Should we?
M 05/01 stem cell research
W 05/03 the budget deficit and the national debt
Third midterm : Due Wednesday, May 10

Your grade on the presentation will be based on how much research you've done, and whether you present both sides of the issue, and your use of handouts, powerpoint and/or other multimedia. You will NOT BE graded based on your public speaking skills, only how well you are prepared.

Other issues;, tax reform (corporate and personal), stem cell research, vaccines: should they be mandatory or not? Mars 1 project (in 2024, 24 people will move to Mars and will not be coming back); veterans affairs, education (common core, standardized tests), transgender equality, use of DNA testing and modification to create 'designer babies'

Final due Wednesday, May 13 h (**NO CLASS;** drop it off in my office)

Grade: 20% BOOK REVIEW, 15% class participation which includes attendance, 25% research project, 20% midterm, and 20% final.

Grammar will be 25% of the grade on all written assignments. Properly Citing your sources will be 15% of the grade, and 10 points will be deducted per day for all assignments handed in late.

RESEARCH PROJECT**: DUE MONDAY, March 27** - DO NOT EMAIL ME THE PAPER! (You may email me homework and the take-home final) Grammar is 25% of the grade. Please see the staff of the Writing Center for assistance – they are wonderful and nice and will help you with the paper. You can even email them a paper, and they will reply back with comments.

I want to select a political issue that interests you and write a 8 to 10 page report on the issue. Begin by describing the issue in detail using relevant statistics (what is the problem, what caused the problem, who does it affect, why should we be concerned), then present both sides of the issue. The library has an extensive collection of magazines that will help you, including but not limited to Newsweek, Time, U.S. News, and the Economist. It also has Nexus-Lexus, a computerized database of thousands of Newspapers across the country. The paper must cite at least 10 sources (at least 3 of which must be books) so that students are exposed to a variety of perspectives on their issue. **Grammar is 25% of the grade.**

All facts and quotes must be properly cited. All works must be properly cited.

Book review: Read a book on a political issue and critique it. State what you liked about the book, disliked, was the book biased or objective. Please make sure I approve your book before you critique it. 4-5 pages, doublespaced

DIGICATION: As a student, you are required to maintain an online learning portfolio using a college-designed template in Digication. Through this electronic tool you will have the opportunity to monitor your own growth in college-wide learning. It may even help you determine a major that is best suited to you. You will be able to keep and maintain your learning portfolio after graduation. A Three Rivers General Education Assessment Team will select and review random works to improve the college experience for all. If your work is selected and reviewed for assessment purposes, it will remain anonymous and private. Digication provides a "place" where you will connect your learning from the classroom, college, and life in general. Sometimes when you review all of the work you have done and think about it, you end up learning something different and perhaps unexpected. Please review your course outlines to determine what assignments to upload into the TRCC Digication template and please post your own choices, as well. Have fun in learning!

College Withdrawal Policy: A student who finds it necessary to discontinue a course MUST complete a withdrawal form obtained from the Registrar's Office. Students may withdraw from class anytime during the first ten weeks of the semester without being in good standing or obtaining prior permission of the instructor. After that period, a student wishing to withdraw must obtain written authorization of the instructor to receive a "W" grade for the course. Students who fail to properly withdraw and discontinue coming to class will receive an "F" grade. Eligibility for refund of tuition is based upon date of withdrawal when received by the registrar. Verbal withdrawals will not be accepted.

Learning Disabilities Statement:

If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to contact Disabilities Counseling Services at 383-5240. To avoid any delay in the receipt of accommodations, you should contact the counselor as soon as possible. Please note that I cannot provide accommodations based on disability until I have received an accommodation letter from the Disabilities Counselor.

TRCC Disabilities Service Providers Counseling & Advising Office Room A-119	
Matt Liscum (860) 215-9265	• Physical Disabilities • Sensory Disabilities • Medical Disabilities • Mental Health Disabilities
Chris Scarborough csracborough@trcc.commnet.edu	• Learning Disabilities • ADD/ADHD • Autism Spectrum

CELL PHONE POLICY:
Students are notified that cellular phones and beepers are allowed in class or in the Learning Resource Center only if they are turned off or turned to a silent mode. Under no circumstances are phones to be answered in class. When there are extenuating circumstances that require that a student be available by phone or beeper, the student should speak to the instructor prior to class, so that together they can arrive at an agreement.