

SOCIOLOGY H367.01

Politics and American Society

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ABOUT THIS COURSE:

All societies socialize their members into the dominant value system – and this includes values and beliefs about the political system. This course will encourage critical examination of the dominant values and beliefs about the American political system, by exploring issues of power, the role of citizens, and the impact of media. We will also examine the extent to which our political system tolerates or encourages dissenting views. Pop culture, and music in particular, will also be explored to see how they reflect attitudes regarding the American political system – both attitudes of cynicism, as well as attitudes of empowerment.

REQUIRED BOOKS:

- Domhoff, G. W. (2001), *Who Rules America*, McGraw-Hill, 4th edition
- Crenson, Matthew & Benjamin Ginsberg (2004), *Downsizing Democracy: How America Sidelined Its Citizens and Privatized Its Public*, Johns Hopkins University Press
- McChesney, Robert W. (2000), *Rich Media, Poor Democracy: Communication Politics in Dubious Times*, New Press
- Lapham, Lewis (2004), *Gag Rule: On the Suppression of Dissent and the Stifling of Democracy*, Penguin Books

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Course grading will be based on the following requirements (separate handouts will be distributed detailing requirements for the papers and assignments) :

- 20% - **Paper on Crenson & Ginsberg.** Each student will write a 5-6 page paper on the book *Downsizing Democracy*.
- 15% - **Paper on McChesney.** Each student will write a 4-5 page paper on the book *Rich Media, Poor Democracy*.
- 10% - **Essay on Lapham.** Each student will write 3-4 page reaction essay on the book *Gag Rule*
- 30% - **Final exam.**
- 10% - **Domhoff project.** After reading Domhoff's book, students will complete a small group project exploring the local power structure of Columbus, Ohio.
- 5% - **Song assignment.** Each student will select and present a song that illustrates some aspect of politics in the US
- 10% - **Class participation.** Students are expected to attend class regularly and participate in class discussions.

A FEW CLASS RULES:

1. Requirements are just that – **requirements**. Failure to complete the assigned papers or exams will result in an E for the course. Failure to complete any of the other assignments will result in a “0” for that assignment, as well as a reduction of your final course grade by one letter grade.
2. Late assignments may not be accepted, or if accepted, may incur a late penalty.
3. **You are responsible for all announcements made in class.** It's a good idea to exchange phone numbers (or e-mail addresses) with 2 or 3 other students in the class so you can get lecture notes and any announcements made in class.
4. Attendance is strongly recommended; it will not be possible to get a decent participation grade if attendance is spotty.
5. There will be no extra credit assignments.
6. There will be no incompletes given for this course.
7. Cellular phones and/or pagers must be turned off or set to a silent setting.
8. **Academic misconduct will not be tolerated.** All cases of suspected academic misconduct will be referred to the University Committee on Academic Misconduct for investigation. Please refer to the University's Student Code of Conduct for further clarification of academic misconduct, and to the section below, specifically about plagiarism.

ABOUT PLAGIARISM:

Plagiarism is a form of academic misconduct that is sometimes not fully understood by students, and therefore it may be helpful to give separate attention to it.

From OSU's Code of Student Conduct:

“Plagiarism is the representation of another's work or ideas as one's own; it includes the unacknowledged word-for-word use and/or paraphrasing of another person's work, and/or the inappropriate unacknowledged use of another person's ideas”

In other words, plagiarism is the act of stealing the ideas and/or the expression of ideas of another and representing them as your own.

The most obvious form of plagiarism is copying someone else's work word-for-word, in whole or in part, without acknowledgment, whether that work is a magazine article, a portion of a book, a website on the internet, a newspaper piece, another student's essay, or any other composition not your own.

Changing a few words of another's composition, omitting a few sentences, or changing word order or sentence structure does not constitute original composition and, therefore, is plagiarism.

All aspects of plagiarism and academic misconduct apply equally to all computer usage.

The University regards plagiarism as a very serious matter and deals with it appropriately. The penalties for plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct are heavy and severe. All cases of plagiarism are turned over to the University Committee on Academic Misconduct to be investigated and, in cases where violation of the Code of Student Conduct is established, a penalty is imposed which may range from recommending an "E" in the course to dismissal from the University.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

All dates are **tentative**; we may move more quickly or more slowly depending on class circumstances, and these dates are subject to change. Any changes will be announced in class.

<u>Week of</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Reading</u>
TUES 3/28	Intro to Course / What is power?	Domhoff, intro/ch 1
TUES 4/5	Pluralist and conflict perspectives of the state: Is there a ruling class in the U.S.?	Domhoff, ch. 2-4
TUES 4/12	What is the role of elections?	Domhoff, ch. 5-8
TUES 4/19	The declining role of the citizen	Crenson & Ginsberg, ch. 1-4
TUES 4/26	The decline of group politics	Crenson & Ginsberg, ch. 5-8
TUES 5/3	The decline of democracy? ***Paper on Crenson & Ginsberg due TUES 5/3***	Crenson & Ginsberg, ch. 9-10
TUES 5/10	The role of media in a democracy	McChesney, intro & ch. 1-3
TUES 5/17	Media and Ideology ***Paper on McChesney due THURS 5/19***	McChesney, ch. 4-6 & conclusion
TUES 5/24	Who rules Columbus? Dissent in the U.S. – History & present	Lapham, ch. 1-2
TUES 5/31	The future of democracy & politics in America ***Essay on Lapham due TUES 5/31***	Lapham, ch. 3-4

FINAL EXAM: Thursday JUNE 9, 9:30-11:18

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. Please contact the Office for Disability Services at 614-292-3307 in room 150 Pomerene Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

This and other course material is available in alternative formats upon request. For information specific to this department, please contact Undergraduate Student Services at 292-1175.