

Capstone: The Politics of College

PSC 390: Winter 2019

Professor: Dr. Molly W. Andolina

• Contact Info:

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• Office Hours:

Thursdays: 2:30-4:00 & by appt
990 W. Fullerton, 2101

• Class Meets: A&L, 405; TTh 1:00-2:30

Course

Description: As you approach the end of your undergraduate career, you have a unique opportunity to reflect on your college experience. This capstone course is designed to give you the time, space and guidance to do just that. In particular, this course will ask you to think about your major coursework in political science in light of your more general coursework for your liberal studies requirements. So, although it is a political science course, the assigned readings draw from a variety of disciplines – and you will be asked to consider the breadth of your academic experiences, not just your political science classes, as we work through the material. It is also designed to help you reflect on your time here, to think about your values (and how they have developed or changed), to evaluate your education, and, in the process, refine your critical and creative skills.

Importantly, the focus of this class is not the acquisition of new information. You are not adding to your understanding of the American political system, or the peace process in the Middle East, or dictatorships in Latin America. (Although most of us – myself included – will be learning a lot of new things throughout the 10 weeks.) Instead, we will be using the readings to think critically about both *what* you have learned in college and *how* you have learned it. This class should also provide a bridge to your future as an intellectually engaged, critically thinking citizen, who will seek out knowledge for knowledge's sake, not because it is a course requirement.

The specific theme for this class focuses on the various ways in which issues related to academia are political – from the process of getting in (admissions) to the books that form the “core” curriculum. We’ll look at issues of free speech, sexual assault, faculty politics, and the financing of higher education in the US. These weekly topics will serve as starting points for analysis about and reflection on your own academic experiences, always couched in critical discussions of the text.

Grades &

Assignments: Grades will be based on the following:

Participation: 25%

Two book reviews of the readings: 25%

Personal curriculum assessment: 25%

Take Home Final: 25%

You are required to read **seven books**, all of which are available for purchase at the bookstore or from many online outlets. I recommend purchasing them all second hand or borrowing them from the library system. Completing the reading is absolutely necessary to succeed in this class. You will not be able to complete the written reviews, participate in class discussions or benefit from our collective assessment of the topic unless you are prepared to discuss the material. **You are expected to bring the books to class so that you can reference specific passages.**

It is a requirement of the Political Science Department that you receive at least a C- in order to get credit for this course. Please keep this in mind as you work on your assignments.

Participation: Because this is a seminar course, you will be expected to be able to substantively discuss the assignments. Your participation grade is based not just on showing up in class, but on contributing to our discussion in positive, informed, reflective, and critical ways. *I will be noting the quality and quantity (in that order) of your participation during each class session.* It is especially important to participate on days when you have not written a book review as it indicates that you are still highly involved in the readings even when you are not responsible for leading the discussion. Active participation includes active listening, which means that you should engage with your classmates and not direct your questions or comments to me.

In order to encourage a wide-ranging discussion, **everyone who is not signed up for the weekly book review is required to post questions or comments on the day's D2L discussion forum by noon on the day the class meets.** These questions or comments, which will be used to prompt discussion among your classmates, will factor into your participation grade. Remember that the best discussion questions do not ask for facts, but rather open up ideas and opinions for reactions and elaborations. *You should cite the particular page or chapter that you are referencing.*

If you want a relatively simple mechanism for demonstrating how closely you read the material, think about citing specific evidence (including quotes) from the text, or making reference to the key themes. It is my hope that you find the readings so intellectually stimulating that you will find it easy to be actively engaged in our conversation.

If you miss more than three classes, your overall course grade will be reduced by a letter grade. No exceptions.

Book Reviews & Discussion:

You are required to write two 4-5 page reviews of two different books throughout the quarter. **These book reviews are due on the Thursday of the week that you are responsible for the reading.** On the first day of class, you will sign up for your two dates. These papers are not just a summary of the readings, but a reaction to them. As with any book review, you should evaluate the thesis, discuss the methodology, and analyze the relationship between the argument and the evidence. When you summarize the key arguments, be careful to include an assessment about the evidence that is harnessed to support the key theses. Finally, when you evaluate the overall strength of the book, include a

discussion about how the book relates to key themes that you have learned as a political science major. Where does this book fit into the lessons of political science?

When you write your review, you should assume that your audience has not read the book. In fact, most people read a book review to decide whether they should read a book. You may want to have someone who hasn't read the book read your review as part of your editing process to ensure that the ideas are clear and the language is jargon-free.

Importantly, a key component of this requirement is for you facilitate the in-class discussion, so you will want to be thinking about ways to spark conversation *about the readings* among your classmates. Although the class will not have read the full book on the first day of our discussion, you will need to in order to consider the full evidence and concluding arguments. **If you are not the only person signed up, I strongly urge you to coordinate with your fellow classmates about how to lead the class discussion.** You can do this via email, text or in person. With a relatively small amount of preparation, you can greatly improve your ability to lead the discussion, and thus your grade. Feel free to enhance the discussion with short video clips, which we can show during class.

Curriculum

Assessment: This assignment, which is adapted from one used by Political Science Professor Christina Rivers, asks you to reflect, in a systematic manner, on the various courses you've taken while at DePaul. It is due **Friday, February 15th at 12:00 p.m. in my office or box in the PSC Dept.**

There are several steps involved.

1. Compile an inventory of 10 things that you've encountered while a student at DePaul (and elsewhere if you transferred in) that have most influenced your thinking as a student and/or as a person. Sources can include classes, readings, professors, staff, films, documentaries, study abroad, public service, artistic events or objects, guest lectures, panels, teach-ins, protests, or religious events.
2. Identify which general liberal studies learning domain each entry falls under (arts and literature, scientific inquiry, experiential learning, etc.) and try to vary the entries so that you reflect on a variety of experiences. For a review of the domains, go to:
<http://liberalstudies.depaul.edu/About/LearningDomains/index.asp>
3. Arrange the entries in chronological order. Under each entry, write a paragraph that explains how and why, out of all that you've experienced during your studies, this particular entry is so important to you. Try to link that entry with experiences in your life as a student specifically, and as a person more generally.
4. When possible, **attach an image** or item that illustrates your entries. This can be something you create, a photo, a newspaper/magazine clipping, a poem, an image from the internet, a receipt, ticket, or post-card. (Note: this is almost always possible, if you put in minimal effort. Do not simply write ten entries without addressing this requirement.)

5. Draw some generalizations across the ten entries. How would you describe and characterize these experiences as a whole? Do you see any theme or themes that emerge? Spend some time here. In political science, we draw generalizations from data. You have ten pieces of data. What can you say? If there are no clear themes, is there a good explanation for the incongruity?
6. Conclude the assignment with at least three or four paragraphs explaining:
 - What you believe to be **the purpose of a liberal arts education**—this includes the courses in your major;
 - How the above inventory accomplished that purpose (or did not accomplish it);
 - How a liberal arts education has shaped you and your world view;
 - How such an education has prepared you (or not) for your life ahead, at least as you currently envision that life.

Do not forget this final step (#6). It is significant task in which you need to pull together the various threads and critically reflect and analyze your liberal arts education. This discussion must be reflective and analytical and must demonstrate your ability to sincerely and critically evaluate the meaning and experience of a liberal arts education for you.

In the past, some students have created scrapbooks; some have chosen to present the material in a power point presentation (with an accompanying essay); others have filmed short videos. One student used software to create a magazine. Others have simply written a long paper, with some illustrations. Feel free to use the medium that best suits you but the final product cannot just be text.

Final

Exam:

The final exam is due **Thursday, March 21st at 12:00 p.m.** (noon) in my office or in my box in the PSC Department.

Details on the final assignment will be provided at the end of the quarter. It will ask you to reflect on the evolution of your political science education at DePaul and to think about its impact on your future.

Class

policies:

All written assignments must be turned in on **hard copy** to me in class. No electronic submissions will be accepted. Anything received late receives a **one letter grade deduction for every calendar day that it is late.**

Learning

Outcomes:

The Liberal Studies Program has established a set of common Learning Outcomes for all capstones, regardless of major. They state that “Students completing a Capstone course should be able to” do the following:

1. “Apply one or more theories or concepts from courses within their major to an analysis of a particular issue relevant to their major.” You will do this in your final exam.
2. “Identify an idea, method, or concept from a discipline outside their major field of study and be able to apply it within the context of their major field of study.” You will do this in the book reviews, in which you read books outside the discipline and evaluate them.
3. “Examine how their previous coursework, including Liberal Studies courses, has contributed to their intellectual development and/or their post-graduation plans.” You will do this in the Curriculum Review.

Tips for Success:

This class requires you to work hard, but it also rewards you for hard, thoughtful work. Because of the reading load, a key to success in this class is to **do all the reading**. When it is your turn to write a book review and lead a discussion, you need to read closely and carefully. When it is your turn to participate in the discussion and post on D2L, then you don't have to read as carefully, *but you still have to read*. You need to know the central argument of the book as well as the evidence the authors provide in order to engage in a critical assessment of the work. In general, you should spend two or three hours outside of class for every hour in class. That means that you should be spending six to nine hours a week on this class. Invest the time and you will see the results.

A second tip for success is to **engage thoughtfully in class discussions**. The quality of your contributions is as important as the quantity. Reference the text; **listen attentively** to your classmates; be willing to respectfully challenge each other and me about our assumptions, our interpretations and our conclusions. We will all gain more if we can push our discussion beyond the surface. Read the handout on discussions carefully.

A third suggestion is to **prepare for your turn to lead the discussion**. Do not simply show up and hope your classmates will jump in. I have provided guidance on how to lead discussions. Use this resource.

Finally, remember to **communicate with me**. If, at any time, you find that you are unable to complete the assignments, or it is becoming difficult for you to attend class, please contact me. Do not let this become a class you pay for but don't experience.

Academic Integrity:

This course requires you to critically evaluate and reflect upon your education in light of several key issues and the assigned readings. There is no reason to rely on the research or scholarship of others unless you are interested in expanding our discussion.

Please note that if you are turning to outside research, a key element of this policy is the requirement that that you **cite your sources** of information, which means including a bibliography. You must give attribution to any information, idea, assessment, or evaluation that you found either on the web or in another source, *even if you paraphrase the words*. Do not, under any circumstances, directly copy the writing of another individual unless you bracket the words with quotation marks. If you have any questions about what should be cited or how to do so, I'd be happy to talk to you.

If you do not uphold these standards, you will receive a failing grade on your assignment, and I will file an Academic Integrity Violation. If the violation is particularly egregious, you will also fail the course.

If you have any questions about academic integrity at DePaul, you can access the policy here: (<http://condor.depaul.edu/~handbook/code17.html>)

University Resources:

The Dean of Students Office (DOS) helps students in navigating the university, particularly during difficult situations, such as personal, financial, medical, and/or family crises. Absence Notifications to faculty, Late Withdrawals, and Community Resource Referrals support students both in and outside of the classroom. Additionally we have resources and programs to support health and wellness, violence prevention, substance abuse and drug prevention, and LGBTQ student services. We are committed to your success as a DePaul student. Please feel free to contact us at <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/dos/>.

Students with

Disabilities: Students who feel they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss their specific needs. All discussions will remain confidential. To ensure that you receive the most appropriate reasonable accommodation based on your needs, contact me as early as possible in the quarter (preferably within the first week of class), and make sure that you have contacted the:

- PLuS Program (for LD, AD/HD) at 773-325-1677, Student Center #370, and/or
- The Office for Students with Disabilities (for all other disabilities) at 773-325-1677, Student Center #370

Course Schedule:

Week 1: Introduction: Higher Education in the 21st Century

Tuesday, January 8th: Introductions and Overview

Thursday, March 10th: Higher Education in the Popular Press

Listen to Malcolm Gladwell's Revisionist History podcast. Season 1, Episodes 4-6. Available at: <http://revisionisthistory.com/seasons> or wherever you subscribe to podcasts.

Read:

Harris, A. (2018). "The Liberal Arts may not survive the 21st Century," *The Atlantic Monthly*, December 3. Available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2018/12/the-liberal-arts-may-not-survive-the-21st-century/577876/>

Hanson, V. D. (2018). "The Liberal Arts Weren't Murdered — They Committed Suicide," *National Review*, December 18. Available at: <https://www.nationalreview.com/2018/12/liberal-arts-education-politicized-humanities/>

Week 2: Hot-Button Issues in Higher Education: Free Speech on Campus

Lukianoff, G. & Haidt, J. (2018). *The Coddling of the American Mind: How Good Intentions and Bad Ideas Are Setting Up a Generation for Failure*. New York: Penguin Press.

Tuesday, January 15th: Parts I-III

Thursday, January 17th: Part IV

Optional documentary: “Berkeley in the 60s” (Part 1)

Week 3: Getting into College: The Politics of Admission

Stevens, M. (2009). *Creating a Class: College Admissions and the Education of the Elite*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Tuesday, January 22nd: Chapters 1-5

Thursday, January 24th: Chapters 6-8

Optional documentary: “First Generation”

Week 4: The Politics of Higher Education and Inequality

Mettler, S. (2014). *Degrees of Inequality: How the Politics of Higher Education Sabotaged the American Dream*. New York: Basic Books.

Tuesday, January 29th: Chapters 1-5

Thursday, January 31st: Chapters 6-7

Optional documentary: “College, Inc.” and/or “Educating Sergeant Pantzke”

Week 5: Contemporary Critiques: The Politics of the University -- Priorities, Tenure, Research, and Teaching (and public funding)

Tuesday, February 5th: Excerpts from Hacker, A. & Dreifus, C. (2010). *Higher Education? How Colleges are Wasting our Money and Failing our Kids*. NY: Holt, Henry. Available via D2L.

Thursday, February 7th: Watch either or both of the following documentaries:

“Schooled: The Price of College Sports”

“Starving the Beast”

Week 6: The Politics of Race and Ethnicity

Minkel-Lacocque, J. (2015). *Getting College Ready: Latin@ Student Experiences of Race, Access and Belonging at Predominantly White Universities*. New York: Peter Lang.

Tuesday, February 12th: Intro & Chapters 1-5.

Thursday, February 14th: Chapters 6-8.

Optional documentary: “Tell Them We Are Rising: The Story of Historically Black Colleges and Universities”

Week 7: The Politics of the Curriculum

Arum, Richard and Josipa Roksa. (2010). *Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Tuesday, February 19th: Chapters 1-3

Thursday, February 21st: Chapters 4-5

Optional documentary: “Ivy Tower”

Week 8: The Politics of the Mission

Deresiewicz, William. (2014). *Excellent Sheep: The Miseducation of American Elite and the Way to a Meaningful Life*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Tuesday, February 26th: Introduction, Part I & Part II

Thursday, February 28th: Part III & Part IV

Optional documentary: “Race to Nowhere”

Week 9: The Politics of Sexual Assault on Campus

Grigoriadis, Vanessa. (2017). *Blurred Lines: Rethinking Sex, Power, & Consent on Campus*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.

Tuesday, March 5th: Introduction & Chapters 1-8

Thursday, March 7th: Chapter 9 - Conclusion

Optional documentary: “The Hunting Ground”

Week 10: The Politics of College: Conclusions, Reflections, and Ruminations

March 12th: Menand, Louis. (2010). “Why Do All Professors Think Alike?” in *The Marketplace of Ideas: Reform and Resistance in the American University*. New York: WW Norton.

March 14th: Assorted articles and graduation speeches. Links are on D2L.