

Syllabus for: (name of class) Political Controversies	
Semester & Year:	Spring 2015
Course ID and Section Number:	POLSC 1: E7057
Number of Credits/Units:	3
Day/Time:	TTH 10:05-11:30
Location:	HU 115
Instructor's Name:	Aronoff
Contact Information:	Office location and hours: TBA Phone: 707-826-3117 Email: guy-aronoff@redwoods.edu
Course Description (catalog description as described in course outline): An introduction to current controversies in US politics. Students will become familiar with contemporary issues, critique different viewpoints, and construct policy solutions while learning about constitutional principles and government institutions.	
Student Learning Outcomes (as described in course outline) : <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify and critique major contemporary political issues in American politics. 2. Describe the role of US political institutions in contemporary political problems. 3. Analyze how responses to political issues differ from the local, state, to national level. 4. Construct policy solutions to political problems. 	
Special accommodations: College of the Redwoods complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act in making reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. Please present your written accommodation request at least one week before the first test so that necessary arrangements can be made. No last-minute arrangements or post-test adjustments will be made. If you have a disability or believe you might benefit from disability related services and may need accommodations, please see me or contact Disabled Students Programs and Services. Students may make requests for alternative media by contacting DSPS.	
Academic Misconduct: Cheating, plagiarism, collusion, abuse of resource materials, computer misuse, fabrication or falsification, multiple submissions, complicity in academic misconduct, and/ or bearing false witness will not be tolerated. Violations will be dealt with according to the procedures and sanctions proscribed by the College of the Redwoods. Students caught plagiarizing or cheating on exams will receive an "F" in the course.	
The student code of conduct is available on the College of the Redwoods website at: http://redwoods.edu/District/Board/New/Chapter5/AP%205500%20Conduct%20Code%20final%2002-07-2012.pdf	
Additional information about the rights and responsibilities of students, Board policies, and administrative procedures is located in the college catalog and on the College of the Redwoods	

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College of the Redwoods

PSCI 1 E7057: Political Controversies

Spring 2015

HU 115 TTh 10:05 – 11:30am

Prof. Guy Aronoff

Humboldt State University

Founder's Hall 150

Phone: 826-3117 (HSU office) 826-4496 (fax)

Office Hours: by appointment

E-mail: gaa12@humboldt.edu

guy-aronoff@redwoods.edu

Course Overview: American philosopher and social reformer John Dewey argued, “a democratic public exist when individuals in society can collectively recognize and sensibly respond to the problems that arise from their interactions with one another.” This class attempts to exercise the skills needed to recognize and respond to political controversies. The primary goal of the course is to develop critical thinking skills that can contribute to understanding the topics of political discourse in today’s media. A second goal is to provide an opportunity for all students to develop, argue, or question their own political philosophies through thoughtful analysis of contemporary controversies. The promotion of a particular viewpoint is not the goal. Rather, the purpose is to examine and understand the reasoning behind opposing stances on political issues.

Please note that the issues covered in the course are, by their nature, controversial, and therefore can arouse deep feelings. In our quest to understand all sides of these hotly contested issues, we need to respect the rights of others to hold and express their beliefs.

Recommended Reading: Andrew Bacevich, *New American Militarism*
Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything*

Supplemental readings:

Additional handouts, readings and/or activities will be assigned and handed out in-class or posted on MyCR. It is the student's responsibly to know what readings/activities are assigned. The readings and handouts are intended to help broaden your understanding of classroom discussion.

Instructor Expectations:

Students should be aware that a considerable amount of reading, web research, and other work will be required to prepare for each class session. It is anticipated that, in order to receive a passing grade, a minimum of 2 to 4 hours will be required to prepare for each class session. Additional time will be needed to prepare for the mid-term and final, to complete homework assignments, to participate in group activities, and complete specific in-class assignments.

At a minimum, students are expected to:

1. Prepare carefully before coming to class. Preparation includes doing the assigned reading, completing any assignments, thinking about the material, and bringing questions and comments to class.
2. Expect that most of the work will be interesting and stimulating, and contribute to making it so.
3. **Keep abreast of current events.** This includes regularly reading the news section of at least one newspaper.
4. Show up on time. Do not make other appointments during class hours.
5. Turn in all assignments on time.

Class Participation:

1. Class participation & Homework is vital for success in this class. I do not accept excuses for missed participation in class; you either participate or you don't. It is obvious that you can't participate if you're not in class. Not only will your participation grade suffer if you don't attend regularly, but I think you'll find your test grades negatively affected. Participation in this course means taking an active role in class discussions, group work, in-class written assignments, and completing all assigned readings, and other assigned homework. Failing to participate in the beginning and end of all sessions will negatively impact your grade.

If you fail to attend class it is your responsibility to find out what you missed from one of your colleagues.

Assignments:

1. Reading Responses:

You will write at least a one typed page response to one of the assigned readings for each week. Please do not attempt to summarize the entire chapter or article. Instead, you are to pick a direct quote, theme, or idea from one of the assigned readings for that week and write 1-2 paragraphs summarizing the author's intended meaning; and another 1-2 paragraphs describing your reactions to the quote or theme, and discuss its significance. I do not simply want to know what the authors said; I want to know what YOU think about what they said. These writings are designed to get you thinking about the readings we do throughout the semester, they reinforce classroom discussion and sharpen your analytical skills. Your paper is due at the start of class! No late or e-mailed response pieces will be accepted!

2. News Responses & Presentations:

Twice during the semester you will complete a short oral presentations on a hot issue in the news. Your **in-class** presentation should be a well prepared two to five minute summation (that includes the title, publication, author and main points of the article) delivered in front of the class. You should come to class well prepared having read the article over several times; do not expect to simply read part of the article, or your written response, to the class. We will do these at the start of class. No more than 4 students can go on any given day. You decide which day you want to present. Your written response will be submitted after your presentation.

3. Group Presentations:

In groups of no more than 4 students you will select two different topics; your group will provide the class an overview of the readings and lead an in-class discussion, activity and/or debate. You will stay in the same group for both presentations. Your first topic must be from one of the readings provided to you on MyCR. Your second presentation will be on any political controversy selected by your group. Your group will select the readings on the topic to assign to the class. Groups will be finalized around the 4th week of class. A more detailed explanation of these presentations will be provided.

4. Debate Groups:

There will be at least three organized debates scheduled during the semester. The debate topics focus on: American Exceptionalism, Climate Change, and NSA controversy. Each debate has a specific question, with a different group taking the pro and con positions. These will not be the same groups of individuals you will be working with for your group presentations. More detailed instructions will be handed out later in the semester.

5. Class Project:

Singular class assignment drawing on class discussions and readings to address current issue affecting Humboldt County. TBD

6. Examinations:

There will be a midterm and a final examination (project) during the semester. They will consist of multiple choice, identification, as well as short answer, and essay questions. Make-up exams are not allowed except under the most exceptional of extenuating circumstances, and are allowed at the discretion of the instructor.

MyCR:

Each of you should be certain you know how to use MyCR, and that you can check your MyCR e-mail address. I will be communicating to the class by e-mail and through MyCR with some frequency, and I will assume you check your MyCR e-mail at least every other day. MyCR will be used to send out announcements, post assignments, lecture notes, and to make changes to the course outline. If you are not able to use MyCR or are not receiving messages from me do not wait to fix this problem, fix it immediately.

Grading: I use a traditional grading scale:

97 – 100%	A+	87 – 89%	B+	77 – 79%	C+	67 – 69%	D+
94 – 96%	A	84 – 86%	B	74 – 79%	C	60 - 66%	D
90 – 93%	A-	80 - 83%	B-	70 – 73%	C-	below 60%	F

To pass the course you must complete all of the assignments and attend class regularly. For purposes of grading, assignments will be **weighted approximately** as follows:

Debate	100 points
Group Presentations (2)	50 points each
News Presentation (2)	25 points each
Reading Responses (8)	25 points each
Midterm	50 points
Final Exam (project)	100 points
Total Possible	600 points

An “incomplete” grade will not be given except under extraordinary circumstances.

Late Assignments will be penalized at a rate of one letter grade per week. After two weeks the grade for any late submission will automatically be ‘F’. All assignments are due in class on the due date listed in the syllabus. Make up exams will not be scheduled without a valid medical excuse. If you have scheduling problems with any due dates, please contact me well before the assignment or exam is due.

Appeals: I am happy to speak with you about marks earned on a particular assignment. Before coming to discuss a grade, however, I request that you: (1) take 24 hours to read my comments before approaching me to discuss the mark; (2) write a detailed explanation of your question, including the specific reason(s) why you think your mark

should be changed; and (3) submit your written response to me, and make an appointment with me to discuss the grade. Under no circumstances will I discuss grades over e-mail or telephone.

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Support: CR offers excellent resources to help you succeed in your academic endeavors.

These include the Library, Computer Labs, Computer Help Desk, Academic Support Center, Learning Center, and Writing Center. I strongly encourage you to take advantage of them!

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<http://www.redwoods.edu/District/dsps/index.asp>

Classroom Etiquette: Everyone should come to class prepared to be actively involved (i.e. listening, taking notes, asking questions, providing comments, discussing readings, etc.). No side-conversations, eating meals, or sleeping. In consideration of your fellow students, please turn off mobile phones before entering the classroom. If you absolutely must arrive late or leave early, please enter or leave quietly and sit near the door to minimize the disruption to your colleagues.

POLSC 1: Political Controversies

Course Outline & Reading Schedule

(Subject to change)

Week One (20/22 January)

Topic: Introduction

Readings: Course Syllabus (Handout)

Sample Reading Response (MyCR)

Becoming a Responsible Citizen Powerpoint

“Michael Parenti. Partisan Politics

Jefferson’s Draft of the Declaration of Independence

Federalist Papers #51

State of the Union Address Assignment

Ancillary:

Discussion: Citizenship

Special Topics: State of the Union Address (1/20)

Week Two (27/29 January)

Topic: American Founding

Readings: Atlantic Monthly. 7 Myths on the Constitution

Michael Parenti. A Constitution for the Few

The Bill of Rights: Original Meaning & Current Understanding

Articles by Justices Stephen Breyer and Antonio Scalia

Ancillary: Breyer Video

Discussion: Overview of U.S. Constitution & The Bill of Rights

Week Three (3/5 February)

Debate Sign-Ups

Topic: Federalism

News Presentations

Readings: Jonathan Adler. This is your federalism on drugs
Todd Garvey. Medical Marijuana
Rob Natelson. Lessons for Federalism from Colorado
Debate Guidelines (MyCR)

Ancillary: John Stewart "Burn Notice"

Class Discussion: Federalism

Week Four (10/12 February)

Topic: Civil Rights/Liberties

News Presentations

Readings: Power-point
Shelby v. Holder (Emenaker Brief) (Voting Rights)
Two Points on Shelby v. Holder
Voting Rights Playbook Report
Q & A on Fisher v. Texas, 2013 (Affirmative Action)

Ancillary: Daily Show Video on Voting Rights Decision

Discussion: Voting Rights – Affirmative Action

Week Five (17/19 February) Group Presentation Sign-ups

Topic: Civil Rights/Liberties

News Presentations

Readings: Hollingsworth v. Perry, 2013 (Prop. 8)
Theodore Olson. The Conservative Case for Gay Marriage
Sam Shulman. Gay Marriage and Marriage

Peter Sprigg. Understanding Windsor

US v. Windsor, 2012 (DOMA)

Ancillary:

Discussion: Same-Sex Marriage

Week Six (24/26 February)

Topic: Debate #1 American Exceptionalism

News Presentations

Readings: Andrew Bacevich. Even if we defeat the Islamic State

We're Just Not That Special

Wilfred McClay. The Founding of Nations

Howard Zinn. The Power and the Glory

Ancillary: Bacevich Interview (MyCR)

Discussion: US Foreign Policy

Week Seven (3/5 March)

Topic: Debate #2 Balancing the Constitution: NSA & Terrorism

News Presentations

Readings: Richard Brust. Insider Threats

Kate Martin The Threat from Within

Edward Snowden A Nation Interview

Ancillary: Snowden Interview (MyCR)

Fred Korematsu Case (MyCR)

Discussion: Terrorism & 4th Amendment

Week Eight (10/12 March)

Topic: Debate #3 Climate Change & Neoliberalism

News Presentations

Readings: Gar Alperovitz. Beyond Corporate Capitalism

William Cohan. Big Oil Wants to Burn it All

Naomi Klein. Climate Change is a People's Shock

Fred Magdoff. An Ecologically Sound and Socially Just Economy

Paul Mason. What Shakespeare taught me about Marxism

Samuel Thernstrom The Next Shale Revolution

Ancillary: Gasland 2010

Naomi Klein on Shock Therapy Video

Discussion: The Future and Global Warming

Week Nine (Week of 16 March) Spring Break

Week Ten (24/26 March)

Discussion: Mid-Term Review

Midterm

Week Eleven (31 March/2 April)

Discussion: Groups #1 & #2 Presentations

Readings: TBD by Group Presentations

Week Twelve (7/9 April)

Discussion: Groups #3 & #4 Presentations

Readings: TBD by Group Presentations

Week Thirteen (14/16 April)

Discussion: Groups #5 & #6 Presentations

Readings: TBD by Group Presentations

Week Fourteen (21/23 April)

Discussion: Groups #1 & 2 Presentations (Second Series)

Readings: TBD by Group Presentations

Week Fifteen (28/30 April)

Discussion: Groups #3 & 4 Presentations (Second Series)

Readings: TBD by Group Presentations

Week Sixteen (5/7 May)

Discussion: Groups #5 & #6 Presentations (Second Series)

Readings: TBD by Group Presentations

Class Project Debriefing

Final Review

Week Seventeen

Final Exam

May 14 @ 10:45 am Final