**PS 1200 Current Political Issues Dr. Love**

**Anne Belk Hall 110**

**TR 12:30-1:45**

**Office Hours: W12-3PM; F 9AM-12PM; by appointment; e-hours as needed**

**352F Anne Belk Hall**

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**Course Description:** This course explores current political issues and problems, in such areas as labor, education, the economy, agriculture, equal rights, foreign relations and national security. In this section of PS 1200, we will focus on the key concepts and major frameworks used to understand and address these issues and problems. For example, what ideas about community and responsibility inform discussions of environmental policy? What ideas about equality and freedom shape debates over civil rights and, more specifically, voting rights? What ideas of justice and law and order have created the prison industrial complex? How did capitalism and democracy combine to create the Great Recession of 2008? What is the meaning of citizenship in a global era of declining national sovereignty? These issues and problems are the focus of considerable debate that extends well beyond the American right/left political spectrum. We examine those debates, drawing on diverse perspectives, prioritizing marginalized voices, and selecting examples from multiple sources.

**Learning Outcomes:** Students who successfully complete this course should be able to:

**\***Discuss political issues with respect for different political opinions and policy positions

\*Define contested concepts and frameworks that inform political debates

\*Use those concepts and frameworks to analyze selected political issues and public policies

\*Think critically about how current events are presented in mainstream and alternate media

\*Engage in informed debate about political issues and policy options

\*Construct and support effective arguments on political issues and policy options

**Course Materials:**

Mark Mattern, *Putting Ideas to Work: A Practical Introduction to Political Thought* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006).

A newspaper of record, such as *The New York Times; The Wall Street Journal; The Washington Post* AND an alternative media source, such as *The Huffington Post; TruthOut; Alternet; The National Review; The Weekly Standard; The American Spectator.*

Additional readings will be posted on ASULearn or available from Belk Library.

**Course Assignments:**

You are expected to complete the assigned reading for each class before we meet. If two dates are listed for a topic, read the selections in the order listed. You also need to read regularly a newspaper of record and an alternate media source (see the list above). Plan on spending at least two hours reading before each class. Come to class prepared to discuss the material and to ask questions about anything you do not understand.

Stay on schedule and attend class! I take attendance regularly, because I know it improves performance. If you have more than three unexcused absences (see policies below), it could lower your grade one step, for example an A- could become a B+.

Written assignments will consist of **two midterm exams** (15% each), **a final exam** (25%), and **a book review or a panel discussion** on the case study (see below) of your choice (20%). Book reviews are due at the next class session AFTER we finish the relevant case study. Detailed book review guidelines will be provided in class. You are also required to keep **an intellectual journal** with responses to the assigned readings, class discussions, and course-related news stories (20%). You should write in your journal at least once a week. Although I occasionally provide prompts for journal entries, you will decide what to write about most weeks. Your complete journal with 15 entries is due at the final exam. You will designate 3 of those entries for me to grade. The remaining (5%) of your grade will be determined by attendance and participation in class discussions.

I use the following grading scale: A = 95-100; A- = 90-94; B+= 87-89; B = 84-86; B- = 81-83; C+= 77-80; C = 74-76; C- = 70-73; D+ = 67-69; D = 64-66; D- = 60-63; F = 60 or below.

**Please note**: It is your responsibility to attend class and to complete assignments on schedule. I expect all assignments on time unless you have a documented family or medical emergency, a conflict with a university sponsored event or an excused absence for a religious holiday. If any of these circumstances arise, please inform me in advance by phone at 262-6168 or email at [lovens@appstate.edu](mailto:lovens@appstate.edu), whenever possible. All applicable university policies are in effect in this course, so be sure to familiarize yourself with them. Information on academic policies is available at: [**http://academicaffairs.appstate.edu/syllabi**](http://academicaffairs.appstate.edu/syllabi) **.**

**Course Outline (subject to change with sufficient notice)**

**1/16 Introduction**

Reading: Mattern, *Putting Ideas to Work, pp.* 1-22

Review questions 2 & 5, p. 19

**Part I: The Individual and the Community**

**1/18-1/23 Radical Individualism and the Tragedy of the Commons**

Reading: Mattern, *Putting Ideas to Work,* pp. 23-56

Come to class prepared to discuss questions #1 & 7, pp. 51-52

**1/25 Democratic Community**

Reading: Mattern, *Putting Ideas to Work,* pp. 57-88

Come to class prepared to discuss questions #3 & 7, p. 83

**1/30-2/1 Case Study: Environmental Justice**

Reading: Selections from Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015).

**2/1 Climate Change: Right, Left, and Center Panel Discussion**

**Part II: Freedom and Equality**

**2/6 Radical Inequality and Its Roots**

Reading: Mattern, *Putting Ideas to Work,* pp. 89-132

Come to class prepared to discuss questions #1, 4, & 5.

**Environmental Justice Case Study Book Reviews Due 2/6**

**2/8-2/13 More Freedom and Equality?**

Reading: Mattern, *Putting Ideas to Work,* pp. 133-165

Come to class prepared to discuss questions #1, 5, & 6

**2/15-2/20 Case Study: Civil Rights and Voting Rights**

**Reading:** Selections from Doug McAdam, *Freedom Summer* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1990)

**2/20 Voter Suppression: Right, Left, and Center Panel Discussion**

**2/22 First In-Class Exam**

**Part III. Justice and Political Order**

**2/27 Does Might Make Right?**

Reading: Mattern, *Putting Ideas to Work,* pp. 169-218

Come to class prepared to discuss questions 1, 7, & 9, pp. 214-215

**Civil Rights and Voting Rights Case Study Book Reviews Due 2/27**

**3/1-13 No Peace Without Justice**

Reading: Mattern, *Putting Ideas to Work, pp.* 219-258

Come to class prepared to discuss questions #2 and 7, pp. 255

**Spring Break 3/5-3/9**

**3/15-3/20 Case Study: The Prison Industrial Complex**

Reading: Selections from Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Color Blindness (*New York, NY: The New Press, 2012)

**3/20 The Drug Wars: Right, Left, and Center Panel Discussion**

**Part 4: Democracy and Capitalism**

**3/22-3/27 An Unhappy Marriage**

Reading: Mattern, *Putting Ideas to Work*, pp. 261-307

Come to class prepared to discuss questions #1, 8, 9

**Prison Industrial Complex Case Study Book Reviews Due 3/27**

**3/29 Democracy As a Way of Life**

Reading: Mattern, *Putting Ideas to Work,* pp. 309-342

Come to class prepared to discuss questions #1, 5, 6

**4/5-4/10 Case Study: The Great Recession and Economic Recovery**

Reading: Selections from David McNally, Global *Slump: The Economics and Politics of Crisis and Resistance* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2010).

**4/3 State Holiday**

**4/12 The Housing Crisis: Right, Left, and Center Panel Discussion**

**4/17 Second In-Class Exam**

**Part 5: Power and Citizenship**

**4/19 Power and the Disappearing Citizen**

Reading: Mattern, *Putting Ideas to Work,* pp. 345-378

Come to class prepared to discuss questions #4, 5, 8

**Great Recession and Economic Recovery Book Reviews Due 4/19**

**4/24**  **Power and the Revival of Citizenship**

Reading: Mattern, *Putting Ideas to Work,* pp. 379-420

Come to class prepared to discuss questions #4, 6, 9

**4/26-5/1 Case Study: Citizenship and Globalization**

Reading: Selections from Natalie Masuoka and Jane Junn, The *Politics of Belonging: Race, Public Opinion, and Immigration (*Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishers, 2011).

**5/1 Immigration: Right, Left, and Center Panel Discussion**

**Final Exam Scheduled by the Registrar’s Office on Thursday, May 10 from 11:00-1:30**

**15 journal entries due with 3 designated for your journal grade**

**Masuoka and Junn Book Reviews Due**