

**PSC 105-04: POLITICAL ISSUES**  
**Fall 2009**  
**Tuesdays & Thursdays 2:00 - 3:15**  
**Graham 207**

**Instructor:** Professor Carisa R. Showden

**Office:** 226 Graham Building

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays 11:00 – Noon; Thursdays 3:30-5:00; and by appointment.

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**Course Overview:**

This course will trace the historical development and contemporary understanding of a number of political “isms” or ideologies. Thus, to learn what contemporary ideologies stand for, we will spend quite a bit of time thinking about the contexts in which they arose, their philosophical underpinnings, and the social and economic forces that have shaped them from their earliest points to the present. By the end of the semester, you should be able to articulate the concepts that are central to defining and differentiating these ideologies and explain why these ideals arose when they did historically. Once you have a firm grasp of particular ideological standpoints, you will also discuss how they help us think through some contemporary policy problems and political issues.

Please note that as this is an introductory course, we will cover a range of issues, considering a broad scope of information. That is, we will sacrifice depth for breadth in many cases. Furthermore, you will be introduced to a number of new concepts and a new way of thinking about politics through what is known as “political theory”. The theoretical and political aspects of the course are deeply entwined, and you will be expected to engage both with equal vigor. While there are no specific academic prerequisites for the class, I do expect you to come prepared to engage intensively with a new topic and to be willing to approach a diverse body of material with an open mind.

**Goals of the Course (Student Learning Objectives):**

By the end of this course, students should have:

1. A working knowledge of the range of ideological perspectives that inform political debates in modern democracies;
2. Some familiarity with common arguments and assumptions about important issues in U.S. politics today;
3. The ability to assess critically arguments for and against specific public policies;
4. The ability to explain why “democracy” is not an ideological perspective.

**Required Texts:**

1. *Political Ideologies and the Democratic Ideal (7<sup>th</sup> Edition)*. By Terence Ball and Richard Dagger. 2009. New York: Pearson Longman Publishers. (Abbreviated “**PIDI**” in the schedule of readings below.)

2. *e-Reserve Readings*: These assignments are marked with asterisks (\*\*) and can accessed using the course blackboard site (<https://blackboard.uncg.edu>), and clicking on “e-reserves.”

3. *Other Blackboard readings*: These assignments are marked with “BB” and can accessed on the course blackboard site, and clicking on the “BB Readings” button.

## **Assignments/Course Requirements:**

Three (3) In-Class Exams: 15% each (45% total)

Four (4) Unit Quizzes: 8% each (32% total)

Final Exam: 23%

- In-Class Exams

- All exams will be held in class on the days indicated in the course schedule below.
- Exams will include multiple-choice and short answer questions.
- Exam One will cover Unit One.
- Exam Two will cover Units Two and Three.
- Exam Three will cover Units Four and Five

- Unit Quizzes

- All four quiz days are noted in the schedule of readings and class meetings below.
- Quizzes are to be taken ON-LINE—on the course Blackboard page.
- Quizzes can be accessed by clicking on the “Quizzes” Button and then on the appropriate link.
- Quizzes are TIMED. You will **not** have time to look up information while taking the quizzes. Study in advance.
- Quizzes will become available to you once the class meeting for that day has ended and will remain available until 11:59 p.m. on the day of the quiz. But **note well**: while you can log back into the quiz if you need to switch computers or go off-line for some reason while you’re in the middle of taking the quiz, once you have submitted an answer to a question, you cannot go back and change it.

- Final Exam

- The final exam will be comprehensive, covering all six units of the course.
- The final exam will be held in our regular classroom during our university-scheduled final exam period.
- The final exam schedule is set by the university long before the start of the semester. You are expected to make your semester break travel arrangements to accommodate your final exams. Your final exams are not scheduled at your traveling convenience.

- A Note on Attendance and Participation

- I take attendance and note participation daily, and I take seriously the advice offered to you in the Undergraduate Bulletin:
- “Regular class attendance is a responsibility and a privilege of university education. It is fundamental to the orderly acquisition of knowledge. Students should recognize the advantages of regular class attendance, accept it as a personal responsibility, and apprise themselves of the consequences of poor attendance.” (Undergraduate Bulletin: <http://www.uncg.edu/reg/Catalog/current/AcaRegs/ClassAttendance.html>)
- Further, the Undergraduate Bulletin stipulates that I am responsible for the “exaction of penalties for unsatisfactory class attendance. Possible penalties are lowering the course grade, including a grade of F, and, in extreme circumstances, dropping the student from the course.”
- You can take up to 4 absences for whatever reasons you choose. At absence #5, your course grade will drop by 5 points. Each subsequent absence after that will result in another 5 point drop in your final grade. Further, while there is no formal “participation” grade in this class, demonstrating engagement with the readings and lectures by asking questions, responding to questions, and positively contributing to class discussions throughout the term may help grades in borderline cases.

## Schedule of Class Meetings and Readings:

Tues. Aug. 25<sup>th</sup>: Course Introduction

### Unit One: Politics, Ideology, and Democracy

Thurs. Aug. 27<sup>th</sup>: PIDI, Chapter One: "Ideology and Ideologies"

Tues. Sept. 1<sup>st</sup>: PIDI, Chapter Two: "The Democratic Ideal"

Thurs. Sept. 3<sup>rd</sup>: Class Cancelled. (American Political Science Association meeting)

Tues. Sept. 8<sup>th</sup>: Benjamin Barber: "The Four Myths of Democracy"(BB)  
John Adams excerpt: "What is a Republic?"\*\*  
J. S. Mill excerpt: "Democratic Participation and Political Education" \*\*

Thurs. Sept. 10<sup>th</sup>: "Should the Electoral College Be Abolished?"\*\*

Tues. Sept. 15<sup>th</sup>: "Is Democracy the Answer to Global Terrorism?"\*\*

Thurs. Sept. 17<sup>th</sup>: **EXAM ONE**

### Unit Two: Liberalism

Tues. Sept. 22<sup>nd</sup>: PIDI, Chapter Three: "Liberalism" (pp. 45-66)  
Declaration of Independence\*\*

Thurs. Sept. 24<sup>th</sup>: PIDI, Chapter Three: "Liberalism" (pp. 66-92)

Tues. Sept. 29<sup>th</sup>: J. S. Mill excerpt "Liberty and Individuality"\*\*  
T. H. Green excerpt: "Liberalism and Positive Freedom"\*\*  
Donald Allen excerpt: "Paternalism vs. Democracy: A Libertarian View"\*\*

Thurs. Oct. 1<sup>st</sup>: "Affirmative Action" (CQ Researcher) (BB)  
➔ **Take Quiz #1**

### Unit Three: Conservatism

Tues. Oct. 6<sup>th</sup>: PIDI, Chapter Four: "Conservatism" (pp. 93-102)  
E. Burke excerpt: "Society, Reverence, and the 'True Natural Aristocracy'"\*\*

Thurs. Oct. 8<sup>th</sup>: PIDI, Chapter Four: "Conservatism" (pp. 102-124)  
Michael Oakeshott excerpt: "On Being Conservative"\*\*  
Irving Kristol excerpt: "The Neoconservative Persuasion"\*\*  
➔ **Take Quiz #2**

Tues. Oct. 13<sup>th</sup>: FALL BREAK. NO CLASS MEETING

Thurs. Oct. 15<sup>th</sup> : “Legalizing Marijuana” (CQ Researcher) (BB)

Tues. Oct. 20<sup>th</sup>: **EXAM TWO**

#### **Unit Four: Socialism and Communism**

Thurs. Oct. 22<sup>nd</sup>: PIDI, Chapter Five: “Socialism and Communism: More to Marx”

Tues. Oct. 27<sup>th</sup>: PIDI, Chapter Six: “Socialism and Communism After Marx”

Thurs. Oct. 29<sup>th</sup>: Carol Gould excerpt: “Socialism and Democracy”\*\*  
Michael Walzer excerpt: Town Meetings and Workers’ Control\*\*  
Michael D. Yates: “Can the Working Class Save the World?”\*\*

Tues. Nov. 3<sup>rd</sup>: “Middle Class Squeeze” (CQ Researcher) (BB)  
➔ **Take Quiz #3**

#### **Unit Five: Environmentalism (“Green Politics”)**

Thurs. Nov. 5<sup>th</sup>: PIDI, Chapter Nine: “ ‘Green’ Politics: Ecology as Ideology”  
Aldo Leopold excerpt: “The Land Ethic”\*\*  
Dave Foreman excerpt: “Putting the Earth First”\*\*

Tues. Nov. 10<sup>th</sup>: “Buying Green” (CQ Researcher) (BB)  
Shoumatoff, “An Eco-System of One’s Own”\*\*

Thurs. Nov. 12<sup>th</sup>: “Smart Growth” (CQ Researcher) (BB)

Tues. Nov. 17<sup>th</sup>: **EXAM THREE**

#### **Unit Six: Radical Islamism & The Future of Ideology**

Thurs. Nov. 19<sup>th</sup>: PIDI, Chapter Ten: “Radical Islamism”  
Ayatollah Ruholla Khomeini excerpt: “The Necessity for Islamic Government”\*\*

Tues. Nov. 24<sup>th</sup>: “Understanding Islam” (CQ Researcher) (BB)

Thurs. Nov. 26<sup>th</sup>: THANKSGIVING BREAK. NO CLASS MEETING.

Tues. Dec. 1<sup>st</sup>: PIDI, Chapter Eleven: “The Future of Ideology”  
Benjamin Barber: “Jihad vs. McWorld” (BB)  
➔ **Take Quiz #4**

Thurs. Dec. 3<sup>rd</sup>: Course Wrap-Up. Final Exam Review

Friday. Dec. 11<sup>th</sup>: 3:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.: **FINAL EXAM**