George Mason University  
Graduate Course Approval/Inventory Form  

Please complete this form and attach a copy of the syllabus for new courses. Forward it as an email attachment to the Secretary of the Graduate Council. A printed copy of the form with signatures should be brought to the Graduate Council Meeting. Complete the Coordinator Form on page 2, if changes in this course will affect other units.

Please indicate:  __X__ NEW  ____ MODIFY  _____ DELETE

Local Unit:  Public and International Affairs  
Graduate Council Approval Date:

Course Abbreviation:  GOVT  
Course Number:  719

Full Course Title: Issues in American Politics

Abbreviated Course Title (24 characters max.): ISSUES AMER POL

Credit hours:  3  
Program of Record: MA/Political Science

Repeatable for Credit?  
__X__ D=Yes, not within same term  
___ T=Yes, within the same term  
___ N=Cannot be repeated for credit

Activity Code (please indicate):  
___ Lecture (LEC)  ___ Lab (LAB)  ___ Recitation (RCT)  
___ Studio (STU)  ___ Internship (INT)  ___ Independent Study (IND)  __X__ Seminar (SEM)

Catalog Credit Format  3:3:0  
Course Level:  GF(500-600)  ____  GA(700+)  __X__

Maximum Enrollment:  
For NEW courses, first term to be offered: F03

Prerequisites or corequisites:  GOVT 510

Catalog Description (35 words or less) Please use catalog format and attach a copy of the syllabus for new courses.: Examination of a significant issue in American politics and political behavior. The course will analyze an issue of contemporary and emerging concern in a seminar format. Course may be repeated for different topics.

For MODIFIED or DELETED courses as appropriate:

Last term offered:  
Previous Course Abbreviation:  
Previous number:

Description of modification:

APPROVAL SIGNATURES:

Submitted by:  
email:  

Department/Program:  
Date:

College Committee:  
Date:

Graduate Council Representative:  
Date:
Approval from other units: NONE

Please list those units outside of your own who may be affected by this new, modified, or deleted course. Each of these units must approve this change prior to its being submitted to the Graduate Council for approval.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit:</th>
<th>Head of Unit’s Signature:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graduate Council approval: ________________________________ Date: __________

Graduate Council representative: ____________________________ Date: __________

Provost Office representative: ______________________________ Date: __________
Course Description

This course examines major works of American political theory in the context of U.S. political history. Using Michael Sandel’s civic historiography of American democracy as our overarching narrative, we will critically evaluate his argument against our own reading of the primary sources, historical facts, and knowledge of current political controversies. The course opens with an in-depth examination of contemporary liberalism, our current public philosophy, as well as the communitarian alternative Sandel presents. Exploring this debate will help clarify our understanding of the philosophical bases of American democracy, recognize their historical constructedness, and evaluate their merits and limitations.

After deepening our knowledge of contemporary theoretical concepts, we will go back to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in order to explore the various traditions and political concerns that shaped the foundation of American democracy. A central topic of investigation will be the contradiction between democratic ideals and the antidemocratic practices of racial and gender oppression characteristic of the early republican period that Sandel valorizes, as well as the emerging contradiction between political equality and accelerating economic inequality.

For the remainder of the course, we will examine the political theories of the 1960s. More specifically, we will evaluate Sandel’s normative argument about American democracy that pinpoints 1968 as the beginning of American civic decline. In order to accomplish this goal, we will read primary documents from the 1960s in their historical context. The course concludes with an informed discussion about whether Sandel is correct in calling for a “new public philosophy” for American democracy.

Required Texts

- Benjamin R. Barber, *A Place for Us: How To Make Society Civil and Democracy Strong*
- Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*
- John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*
- Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of a Slave*
- Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*
- Maurice Isserman & Michael Kazin, *American Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s*
- Other documents (off the Internet or hand-outs, as indicated)
- *Washington Post* (available daily)

Course Requirements

- Paper #1 – 20%
- Paper #2 – 20%
- Final Paper – 40%
• Class participation– 20%

This course will be a seminar in which each student is expected to contribute to the class directly through leading and participating in discussions of course readings. Thus careful preparation of the readings is necessary. Students may volunteer to lead a particular week’s readings.

Please do not hesitate to talk to me about the course materials. If you don’t understand something, you should come talk to me immediately; don’t fall behind. You are welcome to come see me during my office hours. You may also call me at the office or contact me via e-mail (the better option). If you cannot make office hours, we can arrange for an individual appointment.

Class Schedule

Week 1– Political Theory & the Historiography of American Democracy

Liberalism and Its Discontents

Sandel, 4-54

Week 2  The Political Discourse of Rights
Sandel, 4-119
“The Declaration of Independence” (1776), 80-83
“The Virginia Declaration of Rights” (1776)
<http://www.nara.gov/exhall/charters/billrights/virginia.html>
“Bill of Rights” (1787)
<http://www.nara.gov/exhall/charters/billrights/billrights.html>
Roger Williams, “Bloody Tenent of Persecution for Cause of Conscience” (1644), 29-37

Democracy and Its Contradictions in Civic Republican American

Week 3  Re-Reading The Federalist/Anti-Federalist Debate And Radical Republicanism
Madison, “Federalist 10, 39, 51, & 57” (1787-1788), 110-114, 117-127
James Winthrop, “Letters of Agrippa, No. 4” (1787), 140-142
Samuel Bryan, ‘Letter of Centinel, No. 1” (1787), 144-147
“Dissent of the Minority of the Convention of the State of Pennsylvania” (1787), 151-155
Sandel, 123-150
-----, “Letter to Samuel Kercheval” (1816), 160-163
-----, “Letter to Roger C. Weightman” (1826), 84
Paine, Rights of Man (1791) – (hand-out)

Week 3 and 4 – Civil Society
   Tocqueville, Democracy in America, (excerpts)
   ♦♦ Paper #1 Due ♦♦

Week 5 – Gender and Citizenship
Abigail Adams, “Letter to John Adams” (1776), 163-164
Elizabeth Cady Stanton, “Declaration of Sentiments” (1848)
<http://www.closeup.org/sentimnt.htm>
R. Claire Snyder, “Gendered Radicalism and Civil Society” (via email)
Week 6 – The “Golden Age” of Jacksonian Democracy
Sandel, 154-177
Berlet & Lyons, “The Real People” (hand-out)
Orestes Brownson, “The Laboring Classes” (1840), 237-244

Week 7 – Abolition and First Wave Feminism
Sandel, 177-183
Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of a Slave*
Angela Grimke, “Human Rights Not Founded on Sex” (1837), 259-261
Susan B. Anthony, “Speech in Defense of Equal Suffrage” (1873)
Lincoln, “Address before the Young Man’s Lyceum” (1838), 216-221
-----, “Speech on the Dred Scott Decision” (1857), 221-225
-----, “First Inaugural Address” (1861), 225-230
-----, “Gettysburg Address” (1863), 231

Political Equality & Economic Inequality?

Week 8 – Democracy and Economics
Sandel, 183-289
Henry George, “Progress and Poverty” (1879), 361-369
William Graham Sumner, “What Social Classes Owe Each Other” (1883), 322-336
Herbert Croly, “The Promise of American Life” (1909), 402-410
FDR, “Commonwealth Club Address” (1932), 418-426
-----, Campaign Address (1936) and the “Economic Bill of Rights” (1944)
http://www.igc.org/foodfirst/fian/fdr.htm

Week 9—Democracy and Fairness
Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (essays tba)
♦ ♦ Paper #2 Due ♦ ♦

Political Theories of the 1960s

Week 10 – The “Golden Age” and the Civil Rights Movement
Isserman & Kazin, 1-102
Martin Luther King Jr., “Letter From the Birmingham City Jail” (1963), 452-459
Johnson, “The Great Society” (1964)
<http://www.tamu.edu/scom/pres/speeches/lbjgreat.html>
Sandel on Great Society,

Week 11 – The New Left
Isserman & Kazin, 147-164 (skim), 165-186 (read), 221-240, 261-292.
Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), “Port Huron Statement” (1962), 460-66
Betty Friedan, “Our Revolution is Unique (1968), 467-473

Week 12 Rise and Fall
Is Sandel Right?, 290-351
Barber *A Place for Us* (Essays TBA)
**Week 13-14 Paper Presentations**

**Final Paper Due – date tba**

---

**Honor Code:** George Mason has an Honor Code, which requires all members of this community to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. Cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing are all prohibited. Please consult the Student Handbook for a full definition of these terms. **All violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Committee.** Violations include but are not limited to the following:

- **Cheating** includes any “willful giving or receiving of an unauthorized, unfair, dishonest, or unscrupulous advantage in academic work over other students,” by any means whatsoever, or the attempt to do so. **Examples:** copying off another student; using notes during a closed-book exam; obtaining an assignment ahead of time from a student who took the class a previous semester; turning in the same work in more than one class (without prior authorization from all professors concerned).

- **Plagiarism** includes “presenting as one's own the works, the work, or the opinions of someone else without proper acknowledgement” or “borrowing the sequence of ideas, the arrangement of material, or the pattern of thought of someone else without proper acknowledgement.” **Examples:** getting your paper off the internet; turning in a paper that was written by somebody else; buying a paper; taking a written piece from someone else but rewording it so that it looks different.

- **Lying** includes “the willful and knowledgeable telling of an untruth, as well as any form of deceit, attempted deceit, or fraud in an oral or written statement relating to academic work.” **Examples:** lying to faculty member by saying you were sick when you were not; falsely claiming a death in the family or a personal emergency; falsifying any official documentation.

- **Stealing** encompasses “taking or appropriating without the permission to do so, and with the intent to keep or to make use of wrongfully, property belonging to any member of the George Mason University community or any property located on the University campus.” **Examples:** stealing exams or paper assignments from the professor for the purposes of cheating; selling notes you take in class to an individual or a business.