**Chapter 1**

***A Novel Approach to Politics: Introducing Political Science through Books, Movies, and Popular Culture***

**Class Activities:**

Brainstorming Activity: Utopia/Dystopia

Learning Objective(s):

Students will be able to identify and discuss the difference between a utopia and a dystopia.

Students will apply critical thinking skills in an experiential activity-connecting utopia to dystopia

Materials needed: Whiteboard, Dry-erase markers (or newsprint and markers)

Class Size: Ideal for a small class size or for breakout discussion groups

The students are tasked to design their utopian society.

1. Students collaboratively brainstorm on the whiteboard what ideals would make up their utopian society. Allow all of the students the opportunity to have input. (The instructor can write the information on the white board or have a student volunteer to be the “record keeper”).
2. Once all possible ideas are submitted change the scope of the discussion by asking the students if they disagree with any of the ideals suggested on the white board. Using a different colored dry-erase marker underline, circle, or place a check mark on the ideal where there is disagreement.
3. Students discuss the ideals where there is disagreement, can they agree to leave or remove the ideal in their new society? Or can they reach a compromise? Why is there disagreement? Why is one person’s ideal not another’s?
4. After editing the list based on the discussion, present the New Utopian Society created by the students and debrief. Did their utopian vision turn out as they expected, why or why not? What might have hindered their idealist vision?

Graphic Interpretation Activity: A Growing Ideological Consistency

Learning Objective(s):

Students will be able to read and interpret data presented in a graph

Students will make observations about political ideologies over time

Students will be able to discuss the shifting political ideologies of the United States

Materials needed: minimum: Computer/Projector with Internet access

Class size: Ideal for small class size, but adaptable for larger groups

For this activity the instructor will utilize the interactive Political Polarization 1994-2014 graphic from the Pew Research Center:

<http://pewrsr.ch/TKA0Kg>

Set the interactive graphic tabs to the general population and by party. Begin with the year 1994 and work your way to 2014.

Ask students what they observe as the year(s) are changed on the graphic. What are their thoughts about these observations?

Change the graphic settings from the general population to politically active. Start the timeframe again. Now what do students observe?

When comparing the data on the general populace to those who are politically active, is there a difference in the political polarization? What might this tell us about politics, ideology, and political participation?