

Introduction to American Politics

Political Science 105
Spring 2011
MWF 11:00-11:50 a.m.
106 Bausch & Lomb

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Office Hours
Mondays, Wednesdays 12-1
or by appointment

Teaching Assistants:

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Tuesdays, 2:30-4:00

Course Description

This course will examine how the government of the United States is organized, the rationale behind its organization, and the ways citizens, political actors, and political institutions interact to achieve political goals. As we consider the foundations of American government, major political institutions, and mechanisms that link citizens and government, we will make particular note of the diversity of the American experience as evidenced in research on race and gender. This course is appropriate for political science majors who wish to gain a foundation in American politics as well as for non-majors who simply wish to gain a better understanding of American government and processes.

Objectives

- To acquaint students with the fundamentals of American government
- To introduce students to key political science concepts and research
- To familiarize students with perspectives on American politics informed by research on gender and race
- To develop students' critical thinking and analytical skills through class discussion and written assignments

Required Texts

Bianco, William. 2001. *American Politics*
Kernell Samuel, and Steven Smith, editors. 2007. *Principles and Practice of American Politics*
Fiorina, Morris P., Samuel J. Abrams, and Jeremy C. Pope. 2010. (3rd edition). *Culture War?*

Grading

Participation 10%; Short Papers 15%; 3 Exams, 25% each

Reading and any additional assignments should be completed before class on the day assigned. Lectures from guest speakers and TAs are important contributions to the class and considered fair game for exams. Pay careful attention to the syllabus and to any adjustments that may occur. You are responsible for material presented in lectures and discussed in class regardless of your attendance. Notes will not be supplied for students who have missed class, so plan to make other arrangements. Late and make-up assignments will be allowed only with a doctor's note or other equally serious documented reason for the absence. Athletes and other students who will miss class due to extra- or co-curricular travel should inform the assigned TA and me of the relevant dates early in the semester. Students with any other special needs should meet with me early in the semester so that proper accommodations can be made.

Class participation and attendance accounts for 10% of your final grade. Obviously those who do not attend class cannot participate in class discussion. Attendance in lectures and discussion sections will be taken regularly throughout the semester. Because the exchange of ideas is an important part of learning, you are encouraged to frequently ask questions and share your informed opinions during regular class and in discussion sections. In order to maintain an atmosphere conducive to learning, students should use professional language in class discussions and written work.

Two short papers will be used to calculate 15% of your final grade. These short assignments may involve research online or in the library and require the analysis of course readings and/or current events. Papers should be 2-3 pages in length, typed, and double-spaced with 1-inch margins and a 12-point font. Your opinion alone is not sufficient; support your arguments with evidence from course readings or other documented sources. You are required to complete at least two short papers to receive full credit, failure to do so will result in a grade of zero for the missing work. Papers should follow proper writing and grammar rules and must be turned uploaded to myROCHESTER before class on the date assigned. Late short papers will not be accepted. Paper topics will be provided in class. Scheduled due dates are: Feb 11 (civil rights), Mar 4 (Congress), Mar 25 (presidency), and Apr 18 (political autobiography).

Exams constitute 75% of your final grade. Three exams are each worth 25% and will take place during class on Feb 21, Apr 4 and April 27 (dates may change). Make-up exams will be administered only with prior approval.

Extra credit may be earned by attending U of R lectures on topics directly related to U.S. politics and writing a brief summary and response paper (1-2 pages). Be sure to include the title of the lecture, name of the speaker, and date of the presentation on the first page. Each response paper is worth one additional point on your final grade. Response papers must be submitted to your TA within 7 calendar days of the event (including weekends). A maximum total of 3 points may be granted to any individual student.

Academic honesty is expected. Turn in material that you have completed yourself. Absolutely no cheating or plagiarism (using someone else's words or ideas without proper citation) will be tolerated. Both cheating and plagiarism are serious offenses that will be reported for disciplinary action. Please refer to the University Handbook and/or speak with the instructor if you have any questions in this area.

Course Outline

Jan 12

Introduction and Course Overview

Political Foundations

Jan 14

Designing Institutions

What makes decision-making “political?” What is rationality? What are institutions and why do they matter? What factors influence the likelihood of cooperation and compromise in political decision-making?

Bianco, “Introduction,” pp. 3-15 and “Cooperation in Politics,” pp. 36-66

Jan 17

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday (No Class)

Jan 19, 21

(KS)— Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action* (excerpt), pp. 1-11; Hardin, “The Tragedy of the Commons,” pp. 12-24; Putnam, “The Prosperous Community: Social Capital and Public Life,” pp. 25-33

EC: Annual MLK Address: Dr. Alvin Poussaint, Keynote, Jan 21, 6 pm, Strong Auditorium

Jan 24, 26, 28

The Constitution, Making the Rules

What were the primary debates during the constitutional convention? In what ways did the Constitution provide for a just and fair government?

(KS)— Roche, “The Founding Fathers: A Reform Caucus in Action,” pp. 34-58; Madison, “Federalist No. 10,” pp. 59-65; Madison, “Federalist No. 51,” pp. 66-68

DISCUSSION SECTIONS BEGIN THIS WEEK

Jan 31

Federalism

(KS)—Buchanan, “Federalism as an Ideal Political Order...,” pp. 77-85; Kettl, “Federalism: Battles on the Front Lines,” pp. 86-106

Feb 2

Civil Rights

Lawson, “Debating the Civil Rights Movement: The View from the Nation,” 3-46 (electronic)

Feb 4

Documentary: *Eyes on the Prize*

NO DISCUSSION SECTIONS: ALL STUDENTS MEET AT REGULAR CLASS TIME IN B&L 106

Feb 7

Payne, “Debating the Civil Rights Movement: The View from the Trenches,” 115-155 (electronic)

Feb 9, 11

Lingering Issues/ New Frontiers

Hodge, Nathan, "Political, Cultural Fights Remain," *Wall Street Journal*, December 12, 2010 (electronic); "Enclosure 2 of DoDD 1304.26: Qualification Standards for Enlistment, Appointment, and Induction" (electronic); "Remarks by the President Upon Signing the Lilly Ledbetter Bill," *Washington Post*, January 29, 2009; Rosin, Hanna, "The End of Men," *Atlantic Magazine*, July/August 2010 (electronic); "Women's Lower Wages Worsen Their Circumstances in a Difficult Economy," National Women's Law Center, April 2010 (electronic)

Feb 14, 16, 18

Civil Liberties

(KS)—Rosenberg, "The Real World of Constitutional Rights: The Supreme Court and the Implementation of the Abortion Decision," pp. 134-164; *Roe v Wade*, pp. 190-198; Epstein, Ho, and Segal, "The Effect of War on the Supreme Court," pp.165-180

Feb 21 (M) Exam 1

American Political Institutions

Feb 23, 25

The Congress

How is Congress organized and why? What motivates the legislative behavior of members of Congress?

(KS)—Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection*, (excerpt) pp. 245-254; Bianco, "Strategic Behavior in Congress," pp.121-146

Feb 28, Mar 2, 4

The Congress

How representative is the Congress?

(KS)—Fenno, "The Senate in Bicameral Perspective," pp. 221-244; Smith, "Congressional Trends," pp. 254-273

Mar 5-13 *Spring Break*

Mar 14, 16, 18

The Presidency

How might we understand presidential power? How does who the president is shape what the presidency is at any given time?

(KS)—Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents* (excerpt), pp. 274-294; Kernell, *Going Public* (excerpt), pp. 295-310; Bianco, "The Separation of Powers and the Executive Branch," pp. 147-173

Mar 21, 23, 25

Gender, Race, and the Presidency

Duerst-Lahti, "Presidential Elections: Gendered Space and the Case of 2004," in Carroll, Susan and Richard Fox (eds.), *Gender and Elections*, pp. 12-42; Sinclair-Chapman, "Black Politics, the 2008 Election, and the (Im)Possibility of Race Transcendence," pp. 739-745

Mar 28, 30, Apr 1

The Judiciary

Is the judiciary the “least dangerous branch?” Can the Supreme insulate itself from major political controversies of modern American life? What are some consequences of “politicizing” the courts?

(KS)—Scalia, *A Matter of Interpretation* (excerpt) pp. 378-395; Breyer, from *Active Liberty*, pp. 396-407; Hamilton, “Federalist No. 78,” pp. 410-415; Carp, Manning, Stidham, “*The Voting Behavior of George W. Bush’s Judges*,” 429-447

Apr 4 (M) Exam 2

Linkage Mechanisms

Apr 6, 8, 11

Voting, Campaigns, and Elections

Bianco, “Voters and Vote Decisions,” pp. 67-90; “Winning and Holding Elective Office” pp. 91-120; (KS)—Popkin, *The Reasoning Voter* (excerpt) pp. 511-518

Apr 13, 15, 18

Public Opinion

(KS)—Asher, “Analyzing and Interpreting Polls,” pp. 448-476; Schudson, “America’s Ignorant Voters,” 492-499

Apr 20, 22, 25

Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope, *Culture War?* (Read entire book)

Apr 27 (W) Exam 3