

INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

Political Science 2051
Louisiana State University
Spring 2017
Tue/Th 12:00-1:20
Audubon Hall 114

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COURSE OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this course is to achieve a higher understanding of the political landscape in America. As part of the social sciences LSU graduates will demonstrate an understanding of the informing factors of global interdependence, including economic forces, political dynamics, and cultural and linguistic difference. This course will provide a brief summary of American political institutions such as the legislative, judicial, and presidential branches of government. We will also survey other integral parts that make up the American political fabric such as voting and elections, interest groups, and the media at both the federal and state level. However, most of the emphasis in this course will be placed on American politics at the federal level. This is an introductory course that will provide students with an initial review of basic theories, concepts, and analyses in American government. There are many other topics and literature to consider beyond what is covered in this course.

PARTICIPATION

Daily participation is an important component of this course and is worth 20% of your final grade. Beyond contributing to class discussions, I will periodically assign short in-class assignments and/or give opportunities to earn extra credit points for the final exam. If you miss class due to an unexcused absence, you will not earn points for that class period(s). Please read the required materials *before* each class period and bring a copy of the required text to each class meeting for reference during discussions.

MAKE-UP ASSIGNMENTS

If you miss a class due to an emergency or illness, see me with the proper documentation to schedule a make up date. Please keep in mind that this does not include the final exam.

CLASs ETIQUETTE & COMMUNICATION

- We will discuss a wide range of topics during the semester. You are free to share your interpretation of the readings, and I ask that you give your classmates the same courtesy, even if you disagree with their assessment.
- Cell phone use is strictly prohibited during class. The use of laptops/tablets is for the sole purpose of note-taking or class discussion.
- Grade grievances are welcome beginning 24 hours after I return an assignment, and they should be submitted in writing via e-mail. Please use that time to research the deduction

in question, and be prepared to show why you should receive additional points when we meet to discuss your grade.

- I will respond to your e-mail in a timely manner, usually within a few hours, but please note I will not guarantee a same-day response to e-mail sent after 9pm. Keep this in mind as due dates approach.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

This course follows the LSU Code of Student Conduct. Be sure to familiarize yourself with its guidelines for academic misconduct. I will immediately report any infractions to the Office of Student Advocacy & Accountability.

MOODLE

Log in to Moodle through your myLSU account to access readings marked (M), additional course materials, and grades.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- *Congress: The Electoral Connection, Second Edition* by Mayhew
- *We the People, Tenth/Eleventh Essentials Edition* by Ginsberg, Lowi, Weir, Tolbert, and Spitzer
- News of current events in U.S. politics
- Readings marked (M) will be in Moodle, where I will also post any additions to the syllabus.

GRADING SCALE

A+ = 97-100
A = 93-96
A- = 90-92
B+ = 87-89
B = 83-86
B- = 80-82
C+ = 77-79
C = 73-76
C- = 70-72
D+ = 67-69
D = 63-66
D- = 60-62
F = <60

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance and participation = 20%
Writing Assignments/Quizzes = 30%
Midterm Exam = 20%
Final Exam = 30%

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 January 12	Introduction to American Politics: Part 1 Course Introduction
Week 2 January 17	Introduction to American Politics: Part 2 Chapter 1: The Citizen and Government Chapter 2: The Founding and the Constitution
January 19	Chapter 3: Federalism Chapter 4: Civil Liberties and Civil Rights
Week 3 January 24	Bureaucracy/Interest Groups/The Presidency Chapter 11: Bureaucracy Chapter 8: Interest Groups
January 26	Chapter 10: The Presidency Mayer (1999) Executive Orders and Presidential Power (M)
Week 4 January 31	Congress/Congress: The Electoral Connection Chapter 9: Congress
February 2	Fenno (1977) U.S. House Members in Their Constituencies: An Exploration (M)
Week 5 February 7	Congress: The Electoral Connection Part 1: The Electoral Incentive
February 9	Part 2: Processes and Policies
Week 6 February 14	The Judiciary and Quiz 1 Chapter 12: The Federal Courts
February 16	Quiz/Assignment 1
Week 7 February 21	Public Opinion Chapter 5: Public Opinion

	Lippmann (1921) Public Opinion (M)
February 23	Converse (1964) The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics (M) Zaller (1992) A Simple Theory of the Survey Response (M)
Week 8	Mardi Gras/The Media
February 28	<u>No Class – Mardi Gras</u>
March 2	Chapter 6: The Media Entman (1993) Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm
Week 9	Midterm/The Media
March 7	Midterm Exam
March 9	Cook (1998) Governing With The News (M)
Week 10	Political Participation
March 14	Chapter 7: Political Parties, Participation, and Elections
March 16	McDonald and Popkin (2001) The Myth of the Vanishing Voter Moodle
Week 11	Voting and Elections
March 21	Downs (1957) An Economic Theory of Democracy (M)
March 23	Lewis-Beck, et al. (2009) The American Voter Revisited (M)
Week 12	Presidential Election and Quiz 2
March 28	2016 Presidential Election Readings TBA
March 30	Quiz/Assignment 2
Week 13	Protest and Dissent
April 4	Tarrow (1994) <i>Power in Movement</i> (M) 13 th
April 6	Papacharissi (2010) A Private Sphere: Democracy in a Digital Age (M) 13 th
Week 14	Spring Break
April 11	<u>No Class – Spring Break</u>
April 13	<u>No Class – Spring Break</u>
Week 15	Polarization
April 18	Niemi, Weisberg, and Kimball (2011) Is the American Electorate Polarized? (M)

April 20

Arceneaux and Johnson (2010) Does Media Fragmentation Produce Mass Polarization? (M)

Week 16

April 25

April 27

Foreign and Domestic Policies

Chapter 13: Domestic Policy

Chapter 14: Foreign Policy

Week 17

May 4

Finals Week

Final Exam 3:00-5:00pm

