Political Science 2051
Introduction to American Government
Fall 2012

Instructor:

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Office Hours: Tues. 5:00-5:50 pm & by appointment

Purpose:

American government works better to the extent that thoughtful citizens invest time and effort in making it work. And making it work requires more of us than simply making demands of it.

In this class, we will work on understanding the historical, structural, and philosophical context of modern American government and politics. Ideally, this context will provide you with a framework for making sense out of the governmental and political landscape, a landscape which often appears unnecessarily complex and even chaotic. I hope this understanding will facilitate your lifelong engagement in the betterment of American government and society.

As a social science general education elective, this course is designed to prepare you to meet the following competency: *LSU graduates will demonstrate an understanding of the informing factors of global interdependence, including economic forces, political dynamics, and cultural and linguistic differences.*

Grading:

Three tests – 2/3 of final grade

Final Exam – 1/3 of final grade (the final exam is cumulative)

Extra credit:

There will be a small extra credit assignment after each of the three tests. All assignments are due during the next class period after they are assigned. For example, the first extra credit assignment will be offered after the first test on Sept. 18 and will be due in class on Sept. 25.
Make-up tests:

If you must miss any of the three tests, you may take a make-up test on Tuesday, November 29, during the regular class meeting time. However, you should plan on taking a make-up test only if absolutely necessary because: a) you will probably find it more difficult than the original test; b) the last week before exams is usually not a good time to be taking a test; c) you will not have the graded test to use in studying for the cumulative final.

Readings:

Course reading will include a combination of classic texts and contemporary articles. Assignments and links to the readings will be posted on Moodle. No textbook is required for this class.

Class Schedule:

Aug. 21: Influences on the Constitution

Aug. 28: The Constitution; The Legislative Branch

Sept. 4: The Legislative Branch

Sept. 11: The Executive Branch

Sept. 18: TEST NO. 1; The Judicial Branch

Sept. 25: The Bill of Rights/Civil Liberties

Oct. 2: Political Culture and Ideology

Oct. 9: Democracy

Oct. 16: TEST NO. 2; Federalism

Oct. 23: State and Local Government

Oct. 30: Civil Rights

Nov. 6: Civil Rights

Nov. 13: TEST NO. 3; Economic Policy

Nov. 20: Economic Policy

Nov. 27: NO CLASS; make-up day for all tests

Friday, Nov. 30: Final Exam review session (2:00-4:00); location TBA

Dec. 4: Final Exam (8:00-10:00 pm)