COURSE DESCRIPTION
The purpose of this course is to introduce you to the fundamentals of the United States government and its politics. In addition, this course will also attempt to sharpen your skills in critically evaluating and considering issues in U.S. politics. The course will be concerned with the foundations of the U.S. government (the constitution and federalism) and the ideals of democracy (civil liberties and civil rights), political institutions (public opinion, the news media, interest groups, parties, elections) and U.S. government institutions (congress, the presidency, the bureaucracy, and the courts).

COURSE OBJECTIVES
General Education courses are required to ensure that...“LSU graduates will demonstrate an understanding of factors associated with global interdependence, including economic, political, psychological, cultural and linguistic forces.” This course contributes to this goal by providing students with a basic understanding of American government, from inception through current times. My personal goal, as an instructor, is to provide a safe, productive, and professional environment in which individual thought is able to flourish. By the end of this course, you should have a good understanding of the principles, functions, structures and processes of the American political system, as well as how to critique and analyze these.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS
There will be two exams; one midterm and one final. The midterm will survey your knowledge on material covered up to that point. The final exam will survey your knowledge on material covered from the midterm through the last day of classes. Each exam will be worth 100 points and will consist of a combination at multiple choice and short answer. In addition, there will be 6 random quizzes on the reading material throughout the semester, totaling 50 points. The lowest quiz grade will be dropped. You are also required to watch two of the four scheduled presidential (VP is ok) debates and provide a written response. These will each be approximately 3 pages (12 pt font, double spaced) in length; you will receive more detailed instructions before the first debate on October 3rd. See http://www.2012presidentialelectionnews.com/2012-debate-schedule/2012-presidential-debate-schedule/ for a schedule of the presidential debates. If you ABSOLUTELY can not watch one of these on TV or the Internet while it is live or syndicated, there will be transcripts available online or through me. Please note in your response if you used a transcript; points won’t be deducted, but it will make a quality response much more difficult to produce.

Your final grade will be determined as follows:
TOTAL of 300 POINTS - Midterm Exam (100) + Final Exam (100) + Quizzes (50) + Final Paper (50):
270 - 300 (90%) A
240 - 269 (80%) B
210 - 239 (70%) C
180 - 209 (60%) D
Below 179 F

POLICIES
1. If a student engages in any form of academic dishonesty this will be reported to the Dean of Students. LSU’s policy on plagiarism is the following: “Plagiarism is defined to include any use of another’s work and submitting that work as one’s own. This means not only copying passages of writing or direct quotations but also paraphrasing or using structure or ideas without citation.” If you use material from a source (either one assigned from this class or something you’ve retrieved through outside research), you must cite it. Please review the University’s guidelines on plagiarism and academic integrity at http://www.lsu.edu/judicialaffairs/ and http://www.lsu.edu/judicialaffairs/Plagiarism.htm and on academic dishonesty at http://appl003.lsu.edu/Slas/dos.nsf/$Content/Code+of+Conduct?OpenDocument#5.1 or https://paws002.lsu.edu

2. The Americans with Disabilities Act requires that reasonable accommodations be provided for students with physical, cognitive, systemic, learning and psychiatric disabilities. Please contact me at the beginning of the semester if you are registered with disability services and need accommodation. You can find more information at http://appl003.lsu.edu/Slas/ods.nsf/index.

3. Be on time. Do the readings before class. I will assume you have read the assigned materials and are ready to participate. Attendance is expected. We’ll cover topics that are not in the book and this material will be fair game on quizzes and exams. It is always in your best interest to attend class and be prepared. Any makeup exams or assignments will be allowed only in the case of university excused absences—documentation must be provided. Please do not engage in disruptive behavior (e.g. cell phones, side conversations etc.) during class.

4. About me: I am currently a fourth year PhD. Candidate in American Political Science. You may call me Cassie if prefer- I am not a doctor yet. I received my BS in Psychology (concentration: music performance, minor: business) and my MA in Experimental Psychology from Appalachian State University; my research primarily uses psychological theories to explain political behavior. I am only in my office during office hours; however, I am always willing to make an appointment or discuss anything but grades through email… a virtual open door policy, if you will. Keep in mind that I have been and am still a student; be honest and communicate with me if you have any concerns and I will do everything in my power to address them appropriately.

REQUIRED READING
Greenberg and Page. (2010). America’s Democratic Republic 4th ed. ISBN- 0205806740 OR 978-0205806744. This is available in the LSU bookstore. (This will be referred to as G & P in the schedule) All other materials will be provided on Moodle. You are required to read the articles/text assigned on a date PRIOR to coming to class and you should be ready to discuss it and/or ask questions.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

THE AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

Week 1- In the beginning...
Monday 8/20: Introduction
Wednesday 8/22: VERY VERY brief discussion of research and methods in American Political Science
Friday 8/24: The American Democratic Republic---------G & P Chapter 1

Week 2- The Constitution and Federalism
Monday 8/27: The Constitution------------------------G & P Chapter 2
Wednesday 8/29: Federalism------------------------G & P Chapter 3
Friday 8/31: Constitution/Federalism cont’d

**Week 3- Civil Rights and Civil Liberties**
Monday 9/3: LABOR DAY NO CLASS
Wednesday 9/5: Civil Liberties-----------------------------G & P Chapter 4
Friday 9/7: Civil Rights-----------------------------------G & P Chapter 5

**GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS**

**Week 4- Congress**
Monday 9/10: Overview-----------------------------------G & P Chapter 11
Wednesday 9/12: Representation-----------------------------Reading 1- Sabatier Whiteman 1985 (Moodle)
Friday 9/14: Decision Making-------------------------------Reading 2- Gay 2002 (Moodle)

**Week 5- The Presidency**
Monday 9/17: Overview-----------------------------------G & P Chapter 12
Wednesday 9/19: Institutional Characteristics----------------Reading 3- Ostrum Job 1986 (Moodle)
Friday 9/21: Non-institutional Characteristics

**Week 6- The Federal Bureaucracy**
Monday 9/24: Overview-----------------------------------Reading 4- Nelson 1982 (Moodle)
Wednesday 9/26: The Nuts and Bolts------------------------G & P Chapter 13
Friday 9/28: Relationships with Others (Congress, President, Press etc.)

**Week 7- The Judiciary**
Monday 10/1: Overview-----------------------------------G & P Chapter 14
Wednesday 10/3: Courts and the Public--------------------Reading 5-Benesh 2006
Friday 10/5: Judicial Decision Making

END OF MATERIAL THAT WILL BE ON THE MIDTERM EXAM

**POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS**

**Week 8- Public Opinion**
Monday 10/8: Where does it come from?

**Wednesday 10/10: MIDTERM EXAM**
Friday 10/12: Why does it matter?------------------------G & P Chapter 6

**Week 9- Elections and Electoral Behavior**
Monday 10/15: Institutions-----------------------------G & P Chapter 10
Wednesday 10/17: Behavior-------------------------------Reading 6- Sondheimer Green (Moodle)
Friday 10/19: FALL BREAK NO CLASS

**Week 10- The News Media**
Monday 10/22: The role of the news media
Wednesday 10/24: The effects of the news media--------G & P Chapter 7
Friday 10/26: New media-----------------------------Reading 7-Davy 2010

Week 11- Interest Groups
Wednesday 10/31: Interest Group Influence--------G & P Chapter 8 pp. 236-246
Friday 11/2: Pros and Cons

Week 12- Political Parties
Monday 11/5: The Two Party System---------------G & P Chapter 9
Wednesday 11/7: In Government-------------------Reading 8- Lebo et al 2007 (Moodle)
Friday 11/9: In the Electorate---------------------Reading 9- Huckfeldt Sprague 1992 (Moodle)

POLICY/SELECTED TOPICS

Week 13- Economic Policy and Budget
Monday 11/12: Introduction to Policy
Wednesday 11/14: Economic Policy----------------G & P Chapter 15
Friday 11/16: Budget

Week 14- Foreign Policy
Monday 11/19: A Democratic Superpower------------G & P Chapter 17 pp. 531-542
Wednesday 11/21: Foreign and Defense Policy------G & P Chapter 17 pp.542-559
Friday 11/23: THANKSGIVING BREAK NO CLASS

Week 15- Social Policy and Miscellaneous
Monday 11/26: Social Policy-----------------------G & B Chapter 16
Wednesday 11/28: Politics and other disciplines
Friday 11/30: LAST DAY OF CLASS- optional exam review session

FINAL EXAM: THURSDAY DECEMBER 6th 10:00-12:00

*Information on this syllabus is subject to change. Any changes will be announced in class and/or through your LSU email; it is your responsibility to be aware of these changes and turn in work (etc.) at the appropriate time.