Introduction to American Government (Honors)
POLI 2052
Fall 2012

Instructor: Dr. K. Bratton
Class Location: Turceaud 100
Office: 118 Himes Hall
Office Hours: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, 1-2
& by appointment
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Class Overview

This course is designed to acquaint you with the fundamentals of American government and politics, and to improve your skills in evaluating and analyzing issues in American politics. The class is organized into five main sections. The first section provides an overview of the development of our representative government, placing particular emphasis on how the 16th and 17th European experience shaped our development into an independent nation with a republican form of government, and particularly emphasis on the federalist nature of our political system. The second section of the course provides an overview of public opinion and political behavior, and of the "linkage" institutions in American politics: media, political parties, and interest groups. The third section of the course provides an overview of the institutions of American Government: Congress, the Presidency / Bureaucracy, and the Courts. The fourth section of the course provides an overview of civil rights and liberties, with particular emphasis on contemporary interpretation of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Finally, the fifth section examines several public policy issues, which may include deficits / debt, immigration, criminal justice issues, etc.

The objectives for this class are:

1. To understand the origins of our democratic republican form of government, and critically analyze how that form of government has changed in operation and influence over time
2. To understand civil rights and liberties in the U.S.
3. To understand the powers and limits of national government institutions in the U.S., and how those institutions can influence public opinion
4. To critically analyze the influence that the mass public has (and to analyze the limits of that influence) over public policy making.
5. To analyze contemporary political issues in the context of our existing political system.

Required Reading: All required reading is posted on Moodle, including a draft textbook. Reading should be done before class.

Grading Scale
A: 90- B: 80-89 C: 70-79 D: 60-69 F: Below 60
ACADEMIC INTEGRITY
The following is the University’s official statement on Academic Integrity: "Academic misconduct includes but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, falsifying academic records, and any act designed to give an unfair academic advantage to the student." (Sec. 5.1, C. of the LSU Code of Student Conduct). For more specifics, see: http://www.lsu.edu/judicialaffairs/AI.htm. Cases of academic misconduct will be referred to the Office of Academic Honesty.

DISABILITY CODE
According to the our General Catalogue, "the Office of Disability Services assists students in identifying and developing accommodations and services to help overcome barriers to the achievement of personal and academic goals. Services are provided for students with temporary or permanent disabilities. Accommodations and services are based on the individual student’s disability-based need. Students must provide current documentation of their disabilities. Students should contact the office early so that necessary accommodations can be arranged."

Please see me during office hours as soon as possible if you need accommodations.

GENERAL EDUCATION
From the Faculty Senate Website: "The Social Sciences inquire systematically into the nature of human association, the bonds and interactions among human beings. The goal of the General Education requirement in the Social Sciences is to introduce students to this systematic inquiry so that they will better appreciate the complexity of the social world and act as free and responsible citizens, able to make informed choices in governing their own lives and participating in their communities. As there is a diversity of associations – both in that everyone associates with others in various ways (for example, as members of families and as citizens of states), and in that these associations take a variety of forms (for example, the different forms of government) – so there is a diversity of method and approach to the study of human society."

This course offers general education credit in the social sciences, and is therefore designed to increase student awareness of diversity in society, and to guide students to an understanding of the different approaches that social scientists take to examine individuals, associations and institutions within societies and cultures.

Course Requirements

1. Two Midterms 10/5 and 11/9 15%, 15%
2. Cumulative Final (12/4) 20%
3. Moodle quizzes 15%
The first quiz will be on Moodle by August 17, and will be due at 9:30 am, August 31. There is a quiz due on most Fridays (and generally, the quiz covers the material covered a week to ten days earlier.) Students can make multiple attempts on the quizzes (although there is a small penalty for each attempt), and the quizzes are open book. Quizzes can be
turned in after the due date, but the quiz grade will be penalized 10 points for each day late.

4. Video / Powerpoint Project 25%
   Students will pick a public policy area (out of a set of choices) and apply sections of the course material to that issue.

   Will have three components:
   - a written component (3-5 page essay) worth 50% of the final project grade.
   - a powerpoint / video (visual component) (worth 30% of the final project grade)
   - a presentation component (worth 20% of the final project grade).

   More details to follow.

5. Class participation 10%
   Involves answering and asking questions, building on other student comments, etc. Participation is graded daily on a 5 point scale. It

**Tentative Schedule (Consult Moodle 2 for all assignments, and an updated schedule)**

M, 8/20  
Introduction

W, 8/22  
Constitutional Foundations  
- read pages 1-12 in "Constitutional Founding" text notes (through III, Seeds of the Revolution); Magna Carta; Divine Right of Kings; Bill of Rights 1689; John Locke

F, 8/24  
Constitutional Foundations  
- Read pages 12-30 in "Constitutional Founding" text notes, selections from Patrick Henry and Thomas Paine

M, 8/27  
Constitutional Foundations  
- Read Federalist 10, Declaration of Independence, Skim Constitution

*Tuesday 8/28 is final day to drop courses without receiving a "W" (4:30 pm)*

W, 8/29  
Federalism  
- Read text notes on "Federalism", Federalist 51, McCulloch v. Maryland (1819) and Gibbons v. Ogden (1824).

*Final day for adding courses for credit and making section changes (4:30 pm)*

F, 8/31  
Class Cancelled

M, 9/3  
Labor Day Holiday
W, 9/5  Federalism
    • Read *Economist* article, skim additional cases relevant to federalism

F, 9/7  Public Opinion
    • Read text notes on "Knowledge, Opinion, Values"

M, 9/10 Public Opinion
    • Read Delli-Carpini selection, and selection on heuristics

W, 9/12 Public Opinion
    • Read Converse selection, and selection on polling

F, 9/14 Voting
    • Read selection on rational choice

M, 9/17 Interest Groups
    • Read text notes on "Interest Groups"

W, 9/19 Interest Groups
    • Read selections from Schattschneider and from Truman

F, 9/21 Political Parties
    • Read text notes on "Parties"

M, 9/24 Political Parties
    • Read selection from APSA and historical selections

W, 9/26 Voting & Elections
    • Read text notes on "Presidential Elections"

F, 9/28 Voting & Elections
    • Reading selection TBA

M, 10/1 Voting & Elections
    • Read text notes on "Legislative Elections"

W, 10/3 Catch Up/Review

F, 10/5 **Midterm I (material covered through Friday, 9/26)**

M, 10/8 Media
    • Read text notes on "Media"

W, 10/10 Media
    • Reading selection TBA

F, 10/12 Congress
• Read text notes on "Congress"

M, 10/15
Congress
• Read selections from Fenno / Kingdon
Mid-Semester Grades Due 10/16

W, 10/17
Congress
• Reading selection TBA

F, 10/19
Fall Holiday

S, 10/21
Scheduling begins for spring session / intersession

M, 10/22
Presidency
• Read text notes on "Presidency"

W, 10/24
Presidency
• Reading selection TBA (imperial presidency)

F, 10/26
Courts
• Read text notes on "Courts"

M, 10/29
Courts
• Reading selection TBA

W, 10/31
Bureaucracy
• Read text notes on "Bureaucracy"

F, 11/2
Civil Liberties
• Read text notes on "Civil Liberties"
Draft of project due
Final date for resigning from university and/or dropping courses (4:30 pm)
Final date to request rescheduling final if 3 exams scheduled in 24 hours

M, 11/5
Civil Liberties
• Reading selection TBA

W, 11/7
Catch up & review

F, 11/9
Midterm II (material covered through Friday, 11/2)

M, 11/12
Civil Liberties
• Reading selection TBA

W, 11/14
Civil Rights
• Read text notes on "Civil Rights"
F, 11/16  Civil Rights
    • Reading selection TBA
    Final version of project due

M, 11/19  Public Policy
    • Read text notes on "Public Policy"

W, 11/21  Public Policy
    • Reading selection TBA

F, 11/23  Happy Thanksgiving!

M, 11/26  Presentations

W, 11/28  Presentations

F, 11/30  Presentations, Review & Wrap Up

Tu, 12/4   Final Exam, 7:30 AM