POLITICAL SCIENCE 2051
AMERICAN GOVERNMENT
Fall 2008

Dr. Renée L. A. Renegar
POLI 2051, Section 1
MW 4:40 – 6:00
218 Coates

Office Hours:
MW 1:00 – 1:30 or by appointment
114 David Boyd Hall
Telephone: 578-1128
Email: rreneg1@lsu.edu

Course Description:

This course is designed to introduce students to the fundamentals of American government and politics, with particular emphasis on policymaking. The first part of the course introduces students to the fundamentals of policymaking, explores the constitutional context of politics, and examines political participation. The second part of the course explores components of the political system (elections, interest groups) and institutions of government (executive, legislative, and judicial branches) that create and implement public policies. The third part of the course examines the policymaking process in specific areas such as the economy, civil liberties, and national security. The preponderance of our time will be spent on national-level politics, but aspects of state and local governments will be incorporated throughout the semester.

As a General Education Course, POLI 2051 classes are designed to address the following General Education outcomes:

- A familiarity with the nature and function of the social sciences.
- An appreciation of the methods of critical inquiry.

Required Texts:

Two texts are required for this course:


Student Evaluation and Policies:

Grades for the course are based on a student’s class participation and on performance on two in-term exams and a final exam. Letter grades are determined on the following scale:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>90% - 100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>80% - 89%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70% - 79%</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60% - 69%</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0 - 59%</td>
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Class Participation
Students are expected to attend class and participate in class discussions. Class participation will be assessed by performance on pop quizzes given throughout the semester. Up to 25 points can be earned for class participation.
Exams
Two exams and one final consisting of 100 points each will be given. The final exam will focus on the last section of material covered; however, material covered earlier in the semester may be drawn upon as well. Please note that any readings not covered in class will still be on the exams. It is the student's responsibility to complete all readings and be prepared to answer any questions about them on the exams.

On exam days, please bring a scantron form and a pencil to class. Scantrons are available for purchase in the bookstore.

Students are expected to show up on time for exams. Students who are late for exams will earn a 0 and will not be given the opportunity for a make-up exam.

Makeup exams are only provided for students who can produce a valid excuse (serious illness, family crisis, etc.). For problems that can be anticipated, students must let me know in advance of the problem. For problems that crop up at the last minute, students should contact me as soon as is reasonably possible. Students who do not meet these conditions will earn a 0 on the exam. Note that it is the student's responsibility to make arrangements with me about makeup exams. Makeup exams are generally scheduled for the Friday following the date of the missed exam and are written essay tests.

For students who have special needs or who require accommodations through Disability Services, please advise me of your situation. For accommodations involving the exams, please contact me about the necessary arrangements well in advance of the testing date.

The Final Exam schedule is posted on the University Registrar website. Students who have more than two exams scheduled for the same day may request – through their college – that an examination be rescheduled. According to published University Registrar guidelines any such requests must be made prior to 4:30 on Friday, November 7. Requests made after this date will NOT be considered.

Extra Credit - Voter Registration
Students may earn two (2) points added to their final, raw score. Proof of registration is due November 3. Register to vote and submit a copy of your voter registration card. (This copy will be returned to protect your privacy.) Students who are already registered to vote need only submit a current copy of their registration card.

Classroom Policy
Please be considerate of those around you who are trying to listen and take notes. Keep in mind that class will begin promptly at 4:40. Please be on time and seated prior to the beginning of class each day and leave early only for emergencies. Most importantly, do not talk during class. Use of cell phones is prohibited during class – turn off all cell phones prior to the beginning of class. Disruptive students will be asked to leave immediately.
Course Schedule:

August 25  
Introduction to Course

August 27  
Government, Politics & the Policymaking Process  
*American Government*, Introduction (pgs. 1-12)  
*You Decide*, Web Issues: Debate 19-Poverty in America

September 1  
LABOR DAY HOLIDAY

September 3  
Influences Upon Policymaking  
*American Government*, Chapter 1  
*You Decide*, Debate 5

September 8  
The Constitution  
*American Government*, Chapter 2  
*You Decide*, Debate 1

September 10  
Federalism  
*American Government*, Chapter 3  
*You Decide*, Debate 2

September 15  
Public Opinion  
*American Government*, Chapter 4  
*You Decide*, Web Issues: Debate 20-Gay Marriage

September 17  
Political Participation I  
*American Government*, Chapter 5

September 22  
Political Participation II  
*You Decide*, Debate 6

September 24  
The Media  
*American Government*, Chapter 6  
*You Decide*, Debate 7

September 29  
EXAM 1

October 1  
Political Parties  
*American Government*, Chapter 8  
*You Decide*, Chapter 9

October 6  
Elections I  
*American Government*, Chapter 9, pgs. 213-231  
*You Decide*, Web Issues: Debate 22-Regulating “Soft Money”

October 8  
Elections II  
*American Government*, Chapter 9, pgs. 231-253  
*You Decide*, Debate 10

October 13  
Interest Groups  
*American Government*, Chapter 7  
*You Decide*, Debate 8

October 15  
Congress I  
*American Government*, Chapter 10
October 20  Congress II
You Decide, Debate 11

October 22  Presidency I
*American Government*, Chapter 11, pgs. 297-312
*You Decide*, Debates 12

October 27  Presidency II
*American Government*, Chapter 11, pgs. 313-331

October 29  The Federal Bureaucracy
*American Government*, Chapter 12
*You Decide*, Debate 13

November 3  The Federal Courts
*American Government*, Chapter 13
*You Decide*, Debates 14

November 5  EXAM 2

November 10  Economic Policymaking
*American Government*, Chapter 14
*You Decide*, Debate 18

November 12  Regulatory Policy
*American Government*, Chapter 15
*You Decide*, Web Issues: Debate 21-Achieving Gender Pay Equity

November 17  Civil Liberties Policymaking I
*American Government*, Chapter 16, pgs. 451-466
*You Decide*, Debates 3, 4

November 19  Civil Liberties Policymaking II
*American Government*, Chapter 16, pgs. 466-483
*You Decide*, Debates 15, 16

November 24  Civil Rights Policymaking
*American Government*, Chapter 17
*You Decide*, Debate 17

November 26  THANKSGIVING – NO CLASS

December 1  Foreign and Defense Policymaking I
*American Government*, Chapter 18

December 3  Foreign and Defense Policymaking II
*You Decide*, Web Issues: Debates 23, 24
(Torturing Terrorists, U.S. Troop Surge)

December 10  FINAL EXAM
3:00 P.M. – 5:00 P.M.
IN THIS ROOM