POST GUSTAV SYLLABUS

POLI 2051
Introduction to American Government
Fall 2008
T&Th (9:10 – 10:30)
129 Tureaud Hall

Instructor:        Kaitlyn Sill
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                  307 Stubbs Hall
                  225-578-2141

Office Hours:     T&Th 10:40am – 12:10pm
                  Other times by appointment

* I am happy to discuss, review, or clarify any questions that students may have. Furthermore, I encourage students to come to office hours if they have any question regarding the material as soon as the question arises rather than waiting until the test approaches.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

This course examines the principles, institutions, and functions of the American national governmental system by exploring its different components. In particular, we will study the structure of the government, the political behavior of individuals, and the mechanisms through which the structure and behavior leads to political outcomes. However, rather than viewing the governmental system as fixed or stable over time, we examine the dynamic evolution that the system has undergone throughout history which has led to the contemporary government. In particular, we will compare the original constitutional design and its intended function of the government to the modern system and examine how and why it evolved. To do so, we will pay particular attention to the system envisioned by the founding fathers, the modern governmental system, and the significant events in history that have resulted in any differences. Ultimately, the goal of this course is to instill students with an understanding that the governmental system changes, while providing them with a basic understanding the forces that shape contemporary American government, so that he or she recognizes the importance of current events and actions of the long term functioning of the government and becomes a more critically engaged political participant.

GENERAL EDUCATION OBJECTIVES:

In addition to enabling students to demonstrate a mastery of the factual knowledge of American Government, this course will provide them with a better understanding of levels of associations, from friends and family, to economy and polity, and to civilizations of global significance and describe how people relate to each other and the world around them.
BOOKS:


Other readings available online or through Moodle:


Occasionally I may recommend additional readings to aid your understanding of the lectures. These readings will be available online or will be posted on Moodle.

*THE READINGS FOR THIS CLASS ARE INTENDED TO SUPPLEMENT THE MATERIAL PRESENTED IN LECTURE. THOUGH THE READINGS AND THE LECTURES WILL BE RELATED, MUCH OF THE MATERIAL COVERED IN THE READINGS WILL NOT BE COVERED IN LECTURE AND MUCH OF THE MATERIAL COVERED IN LECTURE WILL NOT BE COVERED IN THE BOOKS. STUDENTS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR KNOWING BOTH THE MATERIAL IN THE READINGS AND THE LECTURES.*

COURSE OUTLINE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS:

Section 1: Introduction

08/25: Syllabus
08/28: NO CLASS (APSA)
   *Readings:* United States Constitution, Patterson Appendix 5
   *(Also Available Online: http://www.usconstitution.net/const.html)*

Section 2: Political Development

09/02 NO CLASS (Hurricane Gustav)
09/04 NO CLASS (Hurricane Gustav)

*CHANGES TO SYLLABUS HERE:*

09/09: Democracy
   *Readings:* Patterson, pp. 1 – 34
   The Federalist Papers, no. 10

09/11: The Constitution
   *Readings:* Patterson, pp. 37 – 71
   The Federalist Papers, nos. 14 – 17, 21, 22, 47, 48, 51

09/16: Federalism
   *Readings:* Patterson, pp. 73 – 108
   The Federalist Papers, no. 46
Section 3: Political Institutions

09/18: Congress, Part 1
Readings: The Federalist Papers, nos. 52 – 66

09/23: Congress, Part 2
Readings: Patterson, pp. 359 - 405

09/25: President, Part 1
Readings: The Federalist Papers, nos. 67 - 77

09/30: President, Part 2
Readings: Patterson, pp. 407 - 447

10/02: Courts, Part 1
Readings: The Federalist Papers, nos. 78 – 81
The Anti-Federalists, “Essays of Brutus”, nos. XI - XIV

10/07: Courts, Part 2
Readings: Patterson, 487 – 524
Supreme Court Opinion: Marbury v. Madison

10/09: EXAM # 1

Section 4: American Public

10/14: Civil Rights and Liberties, Part 1
Readings: Patterson, pp. 109 - 150

10/16: Civil Rights and Liberties, Part 2
Readings: Patterson, pp. 151 – 189

10/21: Public Opinion, Part 1
Readings: Patterson, pp. 191 - 222

10/23: Public Opinion, Part 2
Readings: Neimi and Weisberg (2001), pp. 100 – 163 (AVAILABLE ON MOODLE)

10/28: Elections: Voting Turnout
Readings: Patterson, pp. 223 – 250

10/30: Elections: Vote Choice

11/04: EXAM # 2

Section 5: Political Linkages

11/06: Elections: Campaigns, Part 1
Readings: Patterson, pp. 280 - 291
Cox and Katz (1996) (AVAILABLE ON MOODLE)
Abramowitz, et. al. (2006) (AVAILABLE ON MOODLE)

11/11: Elections: Campaigns, Part 2
Readings: Lau, et. al. (1999) (AVAILABLE ON MOODLE)
Kahn and Kenny (1999) (AVAILABLE ON MOODLE)

11/13: Political Parties
Readings: Patterson, pp. 251 - 280

11/18: Interest Groups
Readings: Patterson, pp. 293 - 325

11/20: Media Development

11/25: NO CLASS (THANKSGIVING)
Readings: NONE

11/27: NO CLASS (THANKSGIVING)
Readings: NONE

12/02: Media and Public Opinion
Readings: Patterson, pp. 327 - 357

12/04: Media and Elites
Readings: Cook (2005), pp. 117 - 164

12/10: FINAL EXAM, 12:30 – 2:30pm

CLASS ATTENDENCE:

Attendance in lecture is not required, and no record of attendance will be taken; however, students are expected to attend class regularly, punctually, and remain for the duration for the class. Failure to attend lectures will result missing substantial portions of the course material and will have a negative impact on grades. Achieving a passing grade without regular attendance is unlikely. As such, students should come to class prepared to be attentive and responsive during the lecture which includes completing required reading assignments before class. Students are also expected to be respectful of their fellow classmates when in attendance. This involves arriving on time, turning cell phones off before entering the classroom, refraining from talking during lecture, and keeping newspapers, magazines, and other outside sources of entertainment out of sight. Students who disrupt other students will be asked to leave. Attendance is not mandatory. If you do not desire to pay attention and learn the material presented, do not disrupt your classmates that do desire to learn.

READING ASSIGNMENTS:

Students are expected to attend lecture and complete all reading assignments. MATERIAL PRESENTED IN LECTURE THAT IS NOT IN THE TEXTBOOK WILL BE ON THE EXAM. LIKewise, MATERIAL IN THE
READINGS THAT ARE NOT COVERED IN LECTURE WILL BE ON THE EXAM. Reading assignments are intended to supplement the material presented in lecture not reiterate the material. Though the reading assignments will be related to the lectures and the material may occasionally overlap, THE MATERIAL PRESENTED IN LECTURE WILL NOT COVER THE READING ASSIGNMENTS AND THE READING ASSIGNMENTS WILL NOT COVER THE LECTURE MATERIAL. To receive a passing grade in the class, students must know the information in both. Furthermore, students are encouraged to do the readings before lecture, especially the readings assigned from Patterson.

NOTE: Currently, weekly reading assignments average 100 pages per week, so students should be prepared to devote substantial time to preparing for class.

CLASS PARTICIPATION:

Class participation is not required; however, students are strongly encouraged to actively participate in constructive class discussions and ask any questions during lecture in order to ensure they understand the material presented.

COURSE EVALUATIONS:

For this course, students will be required to take three ninety minutes exams and turn in eleven in-class response papers. Final grades are assigned based upon the total number of points (out of a possible 333 points). Grades will be assigned according to the following scale:

- 89.5% - 100% of 333 points = A
- 79.5% - 89.4% of 333 points = B
- 69.5% - 79.4% of 333 points = C
- 59.5% - 69.6% of 333 points = D
- 0.0% - 59.4% of 333 points = F

Exams:

In total, the three exams together constitute 300 of the points awarded in the class (or 90% of the final grade). Each of the three exams is worth 100 points, or 30% of the total points awarded. The exams will each consist of 20 multiple choice questions and 6 short answer/identifications. Each multiple choice question will be worth 2 points, so the multiple choice section will constitute 40% of the each test. Each short answer question will be worth 10 points, so the short answer section will constitute 60% of the each test. The multiple choice questions will be drawn from the assigned readings, and the short answer questions will be drawn from the lectures.

For the first five minutes of each lecture, five to seven terms that will be covered in lecture will be listed. The identification questions will be drawn from these lists.

Prior to each exam, I will stop responding to email questions at 12:00pm the day before the examination in order to encourage students to study early and ask questions with plenty of time to learn the information.
In Class Responses:

The last 33 points (10% of the final grade) will be awarded for eleven required in-class response papers, worth three points each. For eleven of the lectures during the semester, students must turn in a one or two paragraph response paper at the end of the lecture. The response papers must either 1) summarize the key points or ideas of that day’s lecture, or 2) present questions that the student needs clarified concerning that day’s lecture or reading assignment. Full points will be given for a response as long as the student writes in complete sentences and paragraphs and makes a concerted effort to summarize the lecture or ask clarifying questions.

MAKE UP EXAMS:

All make up exams will be administered in the second half of the scheduled final exam period. Thus, students making up exams will be required to take all make up exams and the final exam in the time allotted for the final exam. Make up exams will only be administered if notification is given prior to the examination and the absence was necessitated by a documented, university approved emergency or excuse.

MISCELLANEOUS:

Power Point Presentations: The Power Point presentations are intended to aid the lecture by providing visuals to better enable students to keep pace. They are not used to present the relevant information from lecture and are not exhaustive, thus simply copying the information from the slides is insufficient. Furthermore, because the slides are to assist you in following the lectures, they will contain minimal information. The slides will NOT be distributed or otherwise made available under ANY CIRCUMSTANCE.

Lecture notes: Students who miss lecture are responsible for obtaining notes from another student. I will NOT provide notes to any student under ANY CIRCUMSTANCE. It is your responsibility to obtain any information missed in your absence.

Extra Credit: No extra credit will be given under any circumstance. Students will be assigned the grade they earn based on the points they receive on the exams and from the in class response assignments regardless of extenuating circumstances.

Incompletes: The instructor cannot give incompletes for this introductory course.