Political Science 2051 – 5
Fall 2008

Instructor:

Bryan Vincent, Ph.D.
Contact Information: 342-2398; bvincent@lsu.edu
Office: 8th floor; state capitol
Office Hours: 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.

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 frame for making sense out of the governmental and political landscape, a landscape which often appears unnecessarily complex and even chaotic. And hopefully, this understanding will facilitate your lifelong engagement in the betterment of American government and society.

Grading:

Three tests – 2/3 of final grade

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

Make-up tests:

If you must miss any of the three tests, you may take a make-up test on Tuesday, December 2, 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 with which to study for the cumulative final.

Readings:

Course reading will include a combination of classic texts and contemporary articles. Assignments will be posted on Moodle. In some cases the Moodle posting will include a link to the reading, and sometimes I will hand out photocopies. No textbook is required for this class.
Tentative Class Schedule:

Aug 26: Influences on the Constitution

Sept. 1: The Constitution & The Legislative branch

Sept. 8: The Legislative Branch

Sept. 15: The Executive Branch

Sept. 22: TEST NO. 1; The Judicial Branch

Sept 29: The Bill of Rights/Civil Liberties

Oct 7: Political Culture

Oct. 14: Public Opinion & Democracy

Oct. 21: TEST NO. 2; Federalism

Oct. 28: State and Local Government

Nov. 4: Civil Rights

Nov. 11: Civil Rights

Nov. 18: TEST NO. 3; Economic Policy

Nov. 25: Economic Policy

Dec. 2: NO CLASS; make-up day for all tests

Friday, Dec. 5: Final Exam review session @ House Chamber, La. State Capitol (time: TBA)

Dec. 9: Final Exam 8:00-10:00 pm