INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN GOVERNMENT
Summer 2008

Instructor:  N. Susan Gaines
Course: POLI 2051-01, MTWThF 11:00 - 12:00, 112 Audubon Hall
Office: 216 Stubbs Hall
Office Hours: 12:00 – 1:30 Monday and Tuesday, or by appointment
Email: ngaine3@tigers.lsu.edu

But what is government itself, but the greatest of all reflections on human nature? - Publius, Federalist 51

Course Objectives

American government is an essential course for understanding the basis for our way of life, examining the problems of contemporary society, and exploring our own beliefs. In this course we will examine both the underlying principles and the contemporary concepts of American government. We will ask questions about the nature of America’s founding, American institutions, the rights and liberties desired by Americans, the current scheme of parties and elections, and the public policy goals of government.

This course will trace the emergence of the American system from European tradition and examine its contemporary functions. We will pay particular attention to the relationship between the founding ideals for American government and the current state of the system. Why did the founders construct the system as they did? Is the American system essentially the same as it was at the founding? If so, what continuity is present? If not, how has the government changed and is it more effective as a result? At the end of this course, students will be expected to:

1) Possess an understanding of the historical ideas, texts and thinkers that shape contemporary governmental structure and policy
2) Have a rudimentary knowledge of a few influential texts from Europe, the founding, and constitutional development
3) Retain knowledge about institutions, civil rights and civil liberties, political parties, elections, and public policy, particularly as they relate to the intended and current structure of government
4) Develop their readings skills and be capable of critically analyzing the texts
5) Develop the ability to express themselves articulately in discussion and in writing

Course Requirements

This course is designed to provide a general overview of the historical aspects and contemporary issues of American government. While the material is, by no means, exhaustive, it encompasses a wide array of thinkers and topics. Each class will be focused on a particular set of readings, as indicated in the syllabus, and will relate those readings to previous weeks’ assignments and discussions as appropriate. It is imperative that each student come to class with the reading materials. Students will be expected to have thoroughly read and analyzed the texts assigned for each class. While some material may be difficult, students are expected to make an attempt to participate in discussions about the readings and
provide thoughtful input on possible implications of the assigned materials. We will draw from two required texts, as well as an occasional handout from the instructor, to be posted on Moodle.

**Required Texts**


All required texts can be found at the LSU Bookstore, the Coop Bookstore, and other campus area college supply bookstores. Required texts were chosen because of their importance to the themes of the course. Do not be tempted to avoid purchasing these books, as we will be using a great deal of each of them.

**Assignments**

This course will be scored as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Quizzes:**

This element of the course is designed to stimulate class discussion and ensure that students come to class prepared. The instructor will hand out at least one quiz each week. The two lowest quiz grades will be dropped. As such, make-up quizzes will not be administered. There is no set format for the quiz. Quizzes count for 15% of each student's final grade.

**Midterm Exam:**

The midterm examination will test the student's knowledge of the material covered to that point in the semester. It will be comprised of both an objective section and an essay section. In the essay, students will be expected to draw connections between the readings and concepts discussed to that point in the class. Make-up exams will ONLY be scheduled if the instructor is notified at least ONE WEEK in advance of a conflict. The tentative date for the midterm exam is **July 2**.

**Final Exam:**

The final exam for the course will be taken during the final exam period, as assigned by the university. It will be a cumulative exam, though the focus will be on the material covered from the midterm forward. Again, the exam will include both an objective portion and an essay section. Students should feel free to consult with the instructor during the time leading up to the final. Again, if any student cannot take the final at the assigned time, he or she should contact the instructor at least ONE WEEK prior to the exam date, and arrangements will be made for the exam to be taken BEFORE the scheduled time. Make-up exams will not be considered. The final exam will be in the regular classroom on **July 30 from 4 - 6pm**.
Plagiarism and Cheating:
Though there are no take home essay assignments, students should remember that plagiarism and cheating are severe academic transgressions that will be dealt with harshly. Both involve passing off someone else's work (whether that of a classmate or a scholar) as one's own. These are violations of the Code of Student Conduct and university regulations require that they be reported to the Dean of Students Office. If you have questions about what constitutes either of these, please see the instructor, or refer to the student handbook.

Reading Schedule:

**Origins and Development of the American System**
June 8, (M): Introduction
June 10, (W): Locke, handout. **Final day to drop without receiving a “W”**
June 11, (Th): Montesquieu handout.

June 15, (M): Lasser, Ch.1, pt. 1-5, (1-18); Welch, Ch. 2, (41-52).
June 16, (T): Lasser, Ch. 2, pt. 1, (48-64).
June 17, (W): Lasser, Ch. 5, pt. 1, (149-160).
June 18, (Th): Lasser, Ch. 3, pt. 1-3, (85-93).
June 19, (F): Welch, Ch. 3, (58-84).

**Institutions**
June 22, (M): Lasser, Ch. 9, pt. 1, (269-275); Welch, Ch. 10, (319-338).
June 23, (T): Welch, Ch. 10, (338-357).
June 24, (W): Lasser, Ch. 10, pt. 1, (295-301); Welch, Ch. 11, (363-367).
June 25, (Th): Lasser, Ch. 10, pt. 1, (302-303); Welch, Ch. 11, (367-385).
June 26, (F): **Class canceled**

June 29, (M): Lasser, Ch. 11, (333-337); Welch, Ch. 12, (405-431).
June 30, (T): Lasser, Ch. 12, pt. 1, (360-370); Welch, Ch. 13, (437-453).
July 1, (W): Welch, Ch. 13, (453-464).
July 2, (Th): **Midterm Exam**
July 3, (F): **No class – July 4th Holiday**

**Civil Rights and Civil Liberties**
July 6, (M): Welch, Ch. 14, (471-498).
July 7, (T): Lasser, Ch. 3, pt. 2, (93-101); Welch, Ch. 14, (498-514).
July 8, (W): Lasser, Ch. 4, pt. 1, (117-126); Welch, Ch. 15, (520-525).
July 9, (Th): Welch, Ch. 15, (526-550).
July 10, (F): Welch, Ch. 15, (550-564).

**Parties and Elections**
July 13, (M): Lasser, Ch. 8, pt. 1, (238-245); Welch, Ch. 7, (204-222).
July 14, (T): Welch, Ch. 7, (222-233); **Final date to drop course**
July 15, (W): Lasser, Ch. 8, pt. 2, (245-256).
July 16, (Th): Welch, Ch. 8, (238-256).
July 17, (F): Welch, Ch. 8, (256-280).

Public Policy
July 20, (M): Welch, Ch. 16, (571-600).
July 21, (T): Welch, Ch. 17, (607-617).
July 22, (W): Welch, Ch. 17, (617-629).
July 23, (Th): Welch, Ch. 18, (635-652).
July 24, (F): Welch, Ch. 18, (652-667).

July 27, (M): Review, Final day of classes

July 30, (Th): FINAL EXAMINATION (cumulative) – In regular classroom, from 4:00 – 6:00 pm.