Political Science 2051–Intro. to American Government  
Fall 2009

**Instructor:**

Bryan Vincent, Ph.D.  
Contact Information: 342-2398; bvincent@lsu.edu  
Office: Stubbs Rm. 217 & 8th floor; state capitol  
Office Hours: Tues. 5:15-6:00 pm and 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 framework 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.

This course is designed to meet the goals of the LSU General Education requirements for the Social Sciences and as such is intended to introduce you to systematic inquiry into the nature of human association so that you better appreciate the complexity of the social world and may act as a free and informed citizen, able to make informed choices in governing your own life and participating in your communities.

**Grading:**

Three tests – 2/3 of final grade  
Final Exam – 1/3 of final grade (the final exam is cumulative)

**Extra credit:**

There will be a small extra credit assignment after each of the three tests. All assignments are due during the next class period after they are assigned. For example, the first extra credit assignment will be given out after the first test on Sept. 22 and will be due in class on Sept. 29.
**Make-up tests:**

If you must miss any of the three tests, you may take a make-up test on Tuesday, December 1, 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 to use in studying for the cumulative final.

**Readings:**

Course reading will include a combination of classic texts and contemporary articles. Assignments and links to the readings will be posted on Moodle. No textbook is required for this class.

**Tentative Class Schedule:**

Aug 25: 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 6: Political Culture


Oct. 20: TEST NO. 2; Federalism

Oct. 27: State and Local Government

Nov. 3: Civil Rights

Nov. 10: Civil Rights

**Nov. 17:** TEST NO. 3; Economic Policy

Nov. 24: Economic Policy

Dec. 1: NO CLASS; make-up day for all tests

**Friday, Dec. 4:** Final Exam review session @House Chamber, La. State Capitol (time: TBA)

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