POLI 2051 – Sec 1 Introduction to American Government
Instructor: Josh Harris  
Summer 2012 1:20 – 2:20 M-F; 129 Allen  
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

The purpose of this course is to introduce you to the fundamentals of the United States government and its politics. In addition, this course will also attempt to sharpen your skills in critically evaluating and considering issues in U.S. politics. The course will be broken up into two sections, separated by a midterm. The first section will be concerned with the foundations of the U.S. government (i.e. the constitution and federalism) and the ideals of democracy (i.e. civil liberties and civil rights). The first section will also introduce some major political institutions (i.e. public opinion and the news media). The second section of the course will complete our discussion of political institutions (i.e. interest groups, political parties, and elections and citizen participation) and the semester will conclude with U.S. government institutions (i.e. congress, the presidency, the bureaucracy, and the courts).

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course is designed to make you sophisticated consumers of political information. Political science research has identified a troubling trend in mass political behavior; that the U.S. public, as a whole, knows very little about U.S. politics. After having this course, I want you to find politics interesting, controversial, and puzzling. You will be able to demonstrate mastery of the factual knowledge, recognize politics as a large network of interactions between individuals, institutions, and organizations, and appreciate the social scientific nature of politics. It’ll be fun.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

There will be two exams; one midterm and one final. The final exam WILL NOT be cumulative. Each exam will cover the previous sections covered in the course. Each exam will be worth 100 points. In addition, there will three quizzes as noted in the course readings. Each quiz will be worth 33.333 (you get the point). The format of the quizzes and exams will be discussed during the first week of class. Your final grade will be determined as follows:

270 – 300 (90%) A  
240 – 269 (80%) B  
210 – 239 (70%) C  
180 – 209 (60%) D  
Below 179 F

Attendance is expected. We’ll cover topics that are not in the book and that will be fair game on quizzes and exams. It is always in your best interest to attend a class, you know this.
REQUIRED READING


Reading Schedule

Week 1: Monday June 4th – Friday June 8th
Chapter 1 and 2

4th and 5th – Introduction Chpt 1 if Available
Wednesday 6th – Transition
7th and 8th – Chpt 2: The Constitution
Appendix Readings:
The Constitution
Declaration of Independence

Week 2: Monday June 11th – Friday June 15th (Random Quiz)
Chapter 3 and 4

11th and 12th – Chpt 3: Federalism
Appendix Readings
Federalist Papers (#10 and #51)
Wednesday 13th – Transition
14th and 15th – Chpt 4: Civil Liberties

Week 3: Monday June 18th – Friday June 22nd (Random Quiz)
Chapter 5 and 6

18th and 19th – Chpt 5: Civil Rights
Wednesday 20th – Transition
21st and 22nd – Chpt 6: Public Opinion

Week 4: **Monday June 25th** – Friday June 29th (Midterms June 25th – June 27th)
Chapter 7 and 8

Monday June 25th Midterm – More Information Later
26th and 27th – Chpt 7: The News Media
28th and 29th – Chpt 8: Interest Groups

Week 5: Monday July 2nd – Friday July 6th (Independence Day Holiday – July 4th)
Chapter 9 and 10

2nd and 3rd – Chpt 9: Political Parties
Wednesday 4th – Independence Day Holiday
5th and 6th – Chpt 10: Elections and Citizen Participation

Week 6: Monday July 9th – Friday July 13th (Random Quiz)
Chapter 11 and 12

9th and 10th – Chpt 11: Congress
Wednesday 11th – Transition
12th and 13th – Chpt 12: The Presidency

Week 7: Monday July 16th – Friday July 20th (Random Quiz)
Chapter 13 and 14

16th and 17th – Chpt 13: The Federal Bureaucracy
18th and 19th – Chpt 14: The Courts
Friday July 20th – Catch up, questions, and general prep day.

Week 8: Monday July 23rd – Thursday July 26th (Reading Day 23rd and Finals 24th – 26th)

Final exam as scheduled; more information later.

*Based on the pace of the course, it is possible that some changes will occur to the schedule. I will give you detailed and clear information should this happen. I assure you, nothing will come as a surprise. Except the random quizzes, of course.