Syllabus, Intersession
Political Science 2051

Dr. Kathleen Bratton
Himes 118A
Email: Bratton@lsu.edu
Office Hours, Mon, Tu, Wed, Fri, 1-2 pm

Class Overview

This course is designed to acquaint you with the fundamentals of American government and politics, and to improve your skills in evaluating and analyzing issues in American politics. The class is organized into five main sections. The first section provides an overview of the development of our representative government, placing particular emphasis on how the 16th and 17th European experience shaped our development into an independent nation with a republican form of government, and particularly emphasis on the federalist nature of our political system. The second section of the course provides an overview of public opinion and political behavior, and of the "linkage" institutions in American politics: media, political parties, and interest groups. The third section of the course provides an overview of the institutions of American Government: Congress, the Presidency / Bureaucracy, and the Courts. The fourth section of the course provides an overview of civil rights and liberties, with particular emphasis on contemporary interpretation of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Finally, the fifth section examines several public policy issues, which may include deficits / debt, immigration, criminal justice issues, etc.

The objectives for this class are:

1. To understand the origins of our democratic republican form of government, and critically analyze how that form of government has changed in operation and influence over time

2. To understand civil rights and liberties in the U.S.

3. To understand the powers and limits of national government institutions in the U.S., and how those institutions can influence public opinion

4. To critically analyze the influence that the mass public has (and to analyze the limits of that influence) over public policy making.

5. To analyze contemporary political issues in the context of our existing political system.

Required Reading: All required reading is posted on Moodle, including a draft textbook. Reading should be done before class.
Grading Scale

A: 90-        B: 80-89        C: 70-79        D: 60-69        F: Below 60

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY
The following is the University’s official statement on Academic Integrity: "Academic misconduct includes but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, falsifying academic records, and any act designed to give an unfair academic advantage to the student." (Sec. 5.1, C. of the LSU Code of Student Conduct). For more specifics, see: http://www.lsu.edu/judicialaffairs/AI.htm. Cases of academic misconduct will be referred to the Office of Academic Honesty.

DISABILITY CODE
According to the our General Catalogue, "the Office of Disability Services assists students in identifying and developing accommodations and services to help over-come barriers to the achievement of personal and academic goals. Services are provided for students with temporary or permanent disabilities. Accommodations and services are based on the individual student's disability-based need. Students must provide current documentation of their disabilities. Students should contact the office early so that necessary accommodations can be arranged."

Please see me during office hours as soon as possible if you need accommodations.

GENERAL EDUCATION
From the Faculty Senate Website: "The Social Sciences inquire systematically into the nature of human association, the bonds and interactions among human beings. The goal of the General Education requirement in the Social Sciences is to introduce students to this systematic inquiry so that they will better appreciate the complexity of the social world and act as free and responsible citizens, able to make informed choices in governing their own lives and participating in their communities. As there is a diversity of associations – both in that everyone associates with others in various ways (for example, as members of families and as citizens of states), and in that these associations take a variety of forms (for example, the different forms of government) – so there is a diversity of method and approach to the study of human society." 

This course offers general education credit in the social sciences, and is therefore designed to increase student awareness of diversity in society, and to guide students to an understanding of the different approaches that social scientists take to examine individuals, associations and institutions within societies and cultures.

Course Requirements
Moodle Exercises: 25%
(Multiple Choice questions and short answer. Moodle exercise is due Wednesday, August 1. 8 total (so, one is due almost every day).)

Exams:
Friday, August 3: 30%
Saturday, August 11: 35%

Participation: 10%

Topics
Constitution / Introduction
Federalism
Knowledge & Public Opinion
Voting
Parties
Media
Interest Groups
Congress
Presidency
Bureaucracy
Courts
Civil Rights
Civil Liberties

Reading Assignments

Material posted on Moodle