

Introduction to American Government
POLI 2051
M / W / F 12:30 -1:20 PM

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course comprises a broad overview on _____ designed to familiarize you with the fundamentals of American government, elections, campaigns, mass media, and even public opinion. While this course separates these topics on paper, these individual areas of study actually bleed into each other to a significant degree. Throughout this course, you should obviously develop some expertise in these respective areas; however, one of the major goals of this class is to identify how these components of American government fit together.

The semester is structured into three main parts. The first section will be the obligatory review of the early history of the American government, an overview of the constitution and how federalism shapes politics, and a discussion on civil liberties and civil rights. The second section hits the major formal and informal institutions of the American government: Congress, the Presidency _____), and political parties. Finally, the third section will cover the nuts-and-bolts of elections, campaigns, interest groups, public opinion, and the role that the media plays in covering and shaping all of the above. Obviously this is a

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

I have assigned a fair bit of reading for an intro-level class; however, the trade-off is that there should be very little busy work or filler assignments something to contribute in class. While this _____ enough to have some degree of discussion back-and-forth discussion during class. Speaking of which: *class attendance is obviously expected.*

1. Exams (60%): You will be presented with 3 exams, which comprise 60 percent of your grade. These exams are scheduled for February 12, March 18, and the third examination will be your Final in the first week of May (date/time, tbd). The exams are *not* cumulative; instead, they will cover the material that we spent reviewing during the weeks preceding the examination.
2. Short essays (20%): In addition to these exams, you will be required to write four one-page essays. These essays will comprise 20 percent of your grade, meaning that they are each worth about 5 percent of your total grade. These assignments are based on the readings and are designed to keep you on-track with the material that will be on the exam that I will draw test materials from these essays. The prompts for these and the dates on which they will be due are provided on page 3 of this syllabus.
3. Participation (20%): There are two forms of class participation in which you will engage this semester _____ five class periods where you will take an *extremely* simple quiz that consists of two or three questions that anyone who engaged the readings should be able to answer. These quizzes are worth 15 percent of your overall grade, which means that it would behoove you to attend class there are no makeups for class periods in which you miss and a quiz is assigned. The other 5

percent of your participation grade will be earned through a short, 2-minute presentation of a current-events news stories. I will explain these in greater detail on the next page.

4. Extra credit:

n Government

New American Democracy

class

New American Democracy

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/us-news/2015/nov/19/syrian-refugees-in-america-fact-from->

Week 8 The Judiciary

2/29/2015 Read Chapter 15 in *The New American Democracy*

3/2/2015

<http://listverse.com/2014/10/11/10-strange-supreme-court-cases-with-lasting-impacts/>

3/4/2015

<http://www.tomclarkphd.com/publications/CanesWroneClarkKellyAPSR2014.pdf>

Week 9 The Parties

3/7/2015 Read Chapter 8 in *The New American Democracy*

3/9/2015 Read Federalist no. 10: <http://www.constitution.org/fed/federa10.htm>

3/11/2015

Week 10 The Bureaucracy / Exam 2

3/14/2015 Read Chapter 14 in *The New American Democracy*

ESSAY #2 DUE

3/16/2015

3/18/2015 **EXAM 2**

Week 11 Spring Break

3/21/2015 **no class**

3/23/2015 **no class**

3/25/2015 **no class**

Week 12 Political participation

3/28/2015 Read Chapter 6 in *The New American Democracy*

3/30/2015 Read

http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/the_best_policy/2004/10/you_must_vote_i_ts_the_law.single.html

Read Vote Or Else

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/10/opinion/10ornstein.html>

4/1/2015

Read

[available on Moodle]

Week 13 Campaigns (and Elections)

4/4/2015 Read Chapter 10 in *The New American Democracy*

ESSAY #3 DUE

4/6/2015 Read Chapter 11 in *The New American Democracy*

4/8/2015 **no class**

Week 14 Public Opinion (finish Campaigns)

4/11/2015

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2015/03/01/this-is-the-best-explanation-of-gerrymandering-you-will-ever-see/>

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/03/opinion/sunday/the-great-gerrymander-of-2012.html?pagewanted=all&r=2&>

4/13/2015 Read Chapter 5 in *The New American Democracy*

4/15/2015

<http://www.the-american-interest.com/2013/03/11/polarized-or-sorted-just-whats-wrong-with-our-politics-anyway/>

Week 15 Interest Groups (finish Public Opinion)

4/18/2015

available on Moodle]

4/20/2015

Read Chapter 7 in *The New American Democracy*

ESSAY #4 DUE

4/22/2015

Week 16 The Media

4/25/2015

Read Chapter 9 in *The New American Democracy*

4/27/2015

Read *News that Matters* excerpt [available on Moodle]

EXTRA CREDIT ESSAY DUE

4/29/2015

<http://www.snsoroka.com/files/MenWomenNegativeNews.pdf>

Final Exam prep