

Political Science 101
American Government
Fall 2008
R. H. Bruhl

Syllabus

The objective of this course is to introduce the student to the systematic study of the structure and function of the United States government. From this introductory course, the student may go on to examine the questions of how governments could or should be structured (political philosophy), how different governments might be compared (comparative politics), and how states, represented by their governments, interact with one another (international relations).

This course is divided into three sections. In the first section, we will examine the social and historical context in which the United States was founded. We will use these insights to help explain “why” the U.S. government is structured as it is. The second and third sections of the course will be interleaved and will cover the current structure of the government and the functions, represented as policies, the government undertakes.

Each student’s learning assessment will be comprised of six parts: (1) an essay exam on the social and historical foundations of the political institutions of the United States (15 points); (2) a short-answer and multiple-choice exam covering the current structure of the U.S. government (15 points); (3) a policy analysis project in which students will form groups, research a selected policy area, and report their findings to the class as a whole (20 points); (4) a project in which students will observe and report on the workings of a local municipal legislative body (20 points); (5) a public opinion survey project (15 points); and (6) the student’s participation in the weekly discussion sessions (15 points). The Final Examination will be given during Finals Week.

The textbook for the course is *American Government 9e*, by O’Connor and Sabato. Also recommended is *A Brief History of Western Civilization 5e Volume I*, by Kishlansky. Supplementary readings may also be distributed as necessary.

Any student with special instructional needs is requested to discuss those needs with me at the student’s earliest convenience.

Tentative Lecture and Reading Assignment Schedule

Date	Topic	Reading Due
8/25	Introduction	Kishlansky, or own research
8/27	History	
8/29	Discussion	
9/1	OFF	Kishlansky, or own research
9/3	OFF	
9/5	Discussion	
9/8	History	Kishlansky, or own research
9/10	History/Constitution	O/S Chapters 1,2,3,4
9/12	Discussion	

Date	Topic	Reading Due
9/15	Constitution	O/S Chapters 1,2,3,4
9/17	Legislative Branch	O/S Chapter 7
9/19	Discussion	
9/22	Legislative Branch	O/S Chapter 7
9/24	Executive Branch	O/S Chapters 7, 8, and 9
9/26	Discussion	
9/29	Executive Branch	O/S Chapters 7, 8, and 9
10/1	Judicial Branch	O/S Chapter 10
10/3	Discussion	O/S Chapter 10
10/6	Judicial Branch	O/S Chapter 10
10/8	OFF	
10/10	MIDTERM	
10/13	Parties, Elections, and Public Opinion	O/S Chapters 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16
10/15	Parties, Elections, and Public Opinion	O/S Chapters 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16
10/17	Discussion	
10/20	Parties, Elections, and Public Opinion	O/S Chapters 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16
10/22	Institutional History	Supplemental provided
10/24	Discussion	
10/27	Institutional History	Supplemental provided
10/29	Economic Policy	O/S Chapter 18
10/31	Discussion	
11/3	Economic Policy	O/S Chapter 18
11/5	Social Welfare Policy	O/S Chapter 17
11/7	Discussion	
11/10	Social Welfare Policy	O/S Chapter 17
11/12	OFF	
11/14	Discussion	
11/17	Foreign Affairs and Defense Policy	O/S Chapter 19
11/19	Foreign Affairs and Defense Policy	O/S Chapter 19
11/21	Discussion	
11/24	Policy Project Presentations	TBA
11/26	Policy Project Presentations	TBA
11/28	OFF	
12/1	Policy Project Presentations	TBA
12/3	Policy Project Presentations	TBA
12/5	Discussion	

Note: (O/S) denotes O'Connor and Sabato textbook