

Syllabus: Political Science 101--Fall 2010

Introduction to American Politics

University of Illinois at Chicago

Spring 2010 (Revised August 24, 2010)

Instructor: Evan McKenzie- mckenzie@uic.edu, (312) 413-3782

McKenzie office hours: T/Th 930-1045 am, BSB 1122-D

Teaching assistants/Discussion leaders:

Magdalen Guzzo mguzzo2@uic.edu

Ryan Maness ryan.maness75@gmail.com

Heidi Lawson heidilynnlawson@gmail.com

Catherine Griffiths cgriff.geo@gmail.com

TA offices and office hours will be announced by the TAs to their discussion sections.

Meetings and room assignments: You are registered for the lectures by Prof. McKenzie on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and also for a discussion section with your teaching assistant/discussion leader on Friday.

Lecture: 13190 Tuesday/Thursday 11:00-11:50, BSB 250

Discussion sections:

FRIDAY time	Guzzo	Maness	Lawson	Griffiths
9am			30381 BSB 1115	30383 LH 120
10am			30380 BSB 1115	
11am		13184 SES 138	13180 BSB 215	30382 BSB 1115
12am	13185 BSB 1115			13186 EPASW 2435
1pm	13178 BSB 1115	13179 EPASW 2433		

2pm 30384 30385
 TH 316 TH 317

Blackboard

This course is being taught using the [Blackboard](#) course management software, version 9. Use of a computer and internet access are required. A high-speed connection, while not required, is strongly suggested.

If you lose this syllabus, print another copy from the Blackboard site. The syllabus will be revised periodically throughout the semester. If you spot any errors in the syllabus, please point them out to me.

Course materials:

Textbook: The textbook book is: American Government, Power and Purpose, Brief 11th Edition, by Theodor Lowi, Benjamin Ginsberg, Kenneth Shepsle, and Stephen Ansolabehere, published by Norton in 2010.

You also need to buy an **I-clicker**, which is a student response device that is used to record your attendance and answer questions in class. You must register the I-clicker at www.iclicker.com. The book and the I-clicker are for sale in the UIC bookstore. You must bring the I-clicker to lecture (not discussion) with you every day because that is the way we take attendance.

Do not purchase any other edition or version of this book, do not buy a different student response device, and do not attempt to use somebody else's I-clicker. If you decide to buy the book or the I-clicker someplace other than the UIC Bookstore, you do it at your own risk. Do not ask me or your TA to assist you with your comparison shopping decisions or the problems that result. You can buy the book directly from the publisher at:

<http://books.wwnorton.com/books/978-0-393-11821-6/>, with free shipping,

Disability statement: Students with disabilities must inform the instructor of the need for accommodations. Those who require accommodations for access and participation in this course must be registered with the Disability Resource Center. Please contact ODS at 312/413-2183 (voice) or 312/413-0123 (TTY).

Course Drops. Only a student can initiate the dropping of a course. The student can drop a course through Banner up through the 10th day of the semester; there is no academic penalty nor does a 'W' appear on the transcript. After the 10th day and through Friday of the 10th week, the student may drop courses by seeing a college academic advisor. These late drops are indicated by 'W' on the transcript and are limited to a total of four for the student's entire UIC career. In emergency situations, the college will entertain petitions for drops beyond the official deadlines. The student must see an academic advisor for guidance and a petition form.

Topic/Chapter Folders:

Expect that most of your exam questions will be drawn from the textbook, along with the lectures. Other materials and activities are on your Blackboard site. You will find a series of folders there under the "Topics/Chapters" button that correspond to the book chapters and the readings in your schedule below. They cover the entire content of the typical American Government course, and go beyond what we will cover here.

The Powerpoints and film clips that are referenced below in the list of readings and assignments are required, and are in the folders. Other than that, the folders are full of interesting and helpful explanatory and OPTIONAL supplementary material that reflects my own understanding of American politics and government. If all you want to do is prepare for the tests, all you need to do is read the textbook, watch the film clips, attend classes, and study the Powerpoint presentations that I will use in my lectures. You also need to do whatever your TA asks you to do, which may include assignments that go toward your participation grade. Be aware that we cannot cover everything that is in the book, so if you ignore the text you will not be fully prepared for the tests. However, I encourage you to expand your knowledge by using whatever other materials you find interesting in these folders..

Course Description:

Many students begin this course with the assumption that they have studied the subject already, because periodically during elementary and secondary education they were exposed to material dealing with American political institutions. However, what we expect to do in this course is actually different in a number of ways from the standard "high school civics" that virtually all American students are exposed, or subjected, to. I encourage you at the start to set aside your preconceived notions and approach the course with the same open mind you would bring to any new subject, rather than assuming you have "heard that, been there," already, because you haven't. The most significant difference between this course and what you may have learned in high school is in the perspectives we bring to the subject.

This course is intended to accomplish several objectives. One is to provide you with information. A second is to help you develop your critical and analytical thinking abilities. The third is to help you develop your own view of American politics and government.

Regarding the first objective, you will see that the course materials present a great deal of information about American government and politics. This includes a recounting of how our basic institutions of government were founded and how they have evolved over the last two hundred years. By "institutions," I mean not just Congress, the executive branch, and the courts, but federalism, separation of powers, constitutional government, limited government, civil liberties and rights, popular sovereignty, and other institutions involved in the public policy process. These institutions are social and conceptual rather than concrete, and they depend upon mutual understandings among people in order to function. I do not expect you simply to memorize vast quantities of information about these institutions, but you do need to know certain things in order to participate in society as a citizen, and even to make an informed decision not to participate any more than absolutely necessary. And your employers will certainly expect you to have some comprehension of how the government functions, because every aspect of our economy is affected by the activities of government. The American government is deeply involved in the lives of every person who lives in this country, not to mention other countries, and unless you have some comprehension of how that government works, you may spend much of

your life feeling bewildered by the things that happen to you. This perpetual state of bewilderment is probably the norm for most Americans, and based on experience with previous classes, I believe that most people who start this course know next to nothing about their system of government, how it developed, and how it works.

This leads to the second course objective: developing understanding, or critical thinking abilities. Here I am speaking not just of understanding this subject, but developing your ability to understand in general. This is consistent with the general mission of the liberal arts and sciences to encourage you to develop the capacity for independent thought, for reflection, for comparing things as they are with things as they might be, and, in an important way, to become a different kind of person than you were when you entered this university. There are some significant differences between people with a college education, particularly in the liberal arts and sciences, and those without. Perhaps the most important is the development of this critical thinking ability, which will serve you well for a lifetime once you acquire it. This will lead to you developing more of an understanding of what your own values are, and how you view the American system of government and politics.

So, you will see that the materials we use in this course challenge you to think critically about American government and politics, while providing you with substantial information to fuel the critique. Keep in mind that this course can generate controversy. In fact, it is one of our main objectives to get past the "don't talk about politics" taboo that afflicts Americans in general. We can only do this if we all show respect for each others opinions, whether or not we agree with them. Everybody in the course should feel free to express or analyze any point of view without fear of ridicule or retribution. You are not being graded on the basis of whether you agree or disagree with anybody else's opinions, but on what you learn and how effectively you express it.

Requirements:

Please be advised that we will not accept late papers or other assignments, and we will not administer makeup exams, except in cases of documented emergencies. "Documented" means written proof, such as a letter from a physician in the case of medical emergencies. "Emergencies" means last-minute occurrences that make attendance impossible. If you know before an exam that you can't make it on the scheduled date, see me, and you may be allowed to take the exam early, but you will not be allowed to take the exam after the scheduled date for any reason that you knew about before the exam. The same rules apply for turning in written assignments.

Here is a summary of how your grade will be calculated:

Mid-term examination : 30%. The exam will be half multiple choice and half essay.

Final examination : 30%. Same format as midterm. This is not a comprehensive exam. It covers only material from the second midterm on.

Media journal : 15%. You will use the Journal Tool on the Blackboard site to keep this journal. The idea is to record your general understandings of government and politics before, during, and at the end of the course, and to track events happening in the nation and around the world that you find interesting. You must have at least two entries per week, starting the first week of classes, and you cannot backdate the entries or make up missed entries. The week starts Monday at 12:01 am and runs through Sunday at midnight. Each entry should include (1) a description of news

coverage of significant events in American politics and government, along with a citation of the source, and (2) your reaction to the event and the way it was covered.

Political films paper . 15%: This assignment is fully described in your Course Information folder, but briefly, it requires you to watch two films that deal with politics, which you will choose from a list I will give you, and then writing a 5-8 page paper about them. The paper is due by . NO LATE PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED. The paper must be turned in using the Blackboard assignment box. Note: these are feature length films, not the short film clips that you will watch weekly.

Participation : 10%. Your participation grade will be determined by a combination of attendance and your TAs assessment of your contribution to the quality of discussions. We will be taking roll in every lecture and discussion session. If you arrive after roll is taken, you are late, and that equals ½ an absence. Anybody who accumulates more than six absences is subject to receiving a zero for their participation grade. It does not matter why you are absent or late for a class session. If you aren't present, you do not receive credit for being present. You must participate in class discussions and other activities, which means being prepared and speaking coherently, intelligently, and civilly, recognizing that we need to be free to disagree with each other respectfully so that we can learn from each other. You must be a good classroom citizen, which means not doing things like letting your cell phone or pager make noise, eating in class (a violation of campus rules), talking to the people sitting next to you, arriving late, leaving early, showing a lack of respect for other people or their statements, and other breaches of good manners.

Reading schedule and due dates :

All these readings are to be done by 11:00 am on the Tuesday of the week for which they are listed. In other words, you need to read each chapter before we talk about it in class. I have identified each week by the Tuesday of that week.

1. WEEK ONE-August 24. Begin Part One, FOUNDATIONS. Read Ch. 1, Introduction: Making Sense of Politics
2. WEEK TWO: August 31. Read Ch. 2, The Founding and the Constitution (film clip: "Out of the Home and Into the House")
3. WEEK THREE : September 7. Read Ch. 3, Federalism and Separation of Powers
4. WEEK FOUR : September 14. Read Ch. 4, Civil Liberties and Civil Rights (film clip: "Pioneers in the Struggle")
5. WEEK FIVE-: September 21. Begin Part Two, INSTITUTIONS. Read Ch. 5, Congress
6. WEEK SIX : September 28. Read Ch. 6, The Presidency
7. WEEK SEVEN : October 5. Read Ch. 7, The Executive Branch (film clip: "Local Government Budget Making" NOTE: Discussion sections for Friday, October 8, are cancelled, and instead all students are required to attend the National Student Issues Convention, which will be held on the UIC campus at a location to be determined.
8. WEEK EIGHT : October 12. Read Ch. 8, The Federal Courts (film clip: "Too Flawed to Fix: The Illinois Death Penalty Experience")
9. WEEK NINE-TUESDAY, October 19. MIDTERM EXAMINATION
THURSDAY, October 21. Begin Part Three: DEMOCRATIC POLITICS. Read Ch. 9, Public Opinion and the Media (outside web page: "The Daisy Girl Ad")

10. WEEK 10 : October 26. Read Ch. 10, Elections (film clip: "The 1996 Elections-Bridge to the 21st Century")
11. WEEK 11: November 2. Read Ch. 11, Political Parties (film clip: "Conventions")
12. WEEK 12: November 9. Read Ch. 12, Groups and Interests (film clip: "In Order to Change")
13. WEEK 13: November 16: Read Ch. 13, Introduction to Public Policy
14. WEEK 14: Tuesday, November 23 only (Thursday is Thanksgiving holiday).
Readings and activities for Tuesday to be determined :
15. WEEK 15. Read Ch. 14, Foreign Policy and Democracy. **Political Films Paper due-** must be submitted to Blackboard assignment box by 9:00 am on Tuesday, November 30, at which time box will close automatically.
16. FINALS WEEK: December 6-10 : FINAL EXAMINATION on date and time assigned by University.