

**Syllabus**  
**Introduction to American Politics**  
**Political Science 101**  
**University of Illinois at Chicago**  
**Fall 2009** (revised Sept. 4, 2009)

**Instructor:** Evan McKenzie [mckenzie@uic.edu](mailto:mckenzie@uic.edu) (please note this: you are not allowed to send any of your assignments to me using email. I will delete them without reading them. All assignments are to be turned in using the appropriate Blackboard assignment box--see below.)

**Telephone:** 312-413-3782

**Office:** BSB 1122D. Office hours are Tuesdays from 9:00 to 10:50 am and by appointment.

**Teaching Assistants:**

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**Course meetings:**

16190 Learning Center A-1 11:00-11:50 am Tuesday for Lectures

note: lectures will be Tuesday only. There are PowerPoint presentations and other activities in your weekly folders that you will complete in place of a live lecture.

TA	CRN	Start	Day	Room	Building
Stodolka	13180	11:00 AM	F	1115	BSB
Stodolka	13185	12:00 PM	F	1115	BSB
Stodolka	13178	1:00 PM	F	1115	BSB
Maness	13184	11:00 AM	F	289	BSB
Maness	13186	12:00 PM	F	2233	EPASW
Maness	13179	1:00 PM	F	2419	EPASW
Owens	30384	2:00 PM	M	103	LH
Smith	30385	2:00 PM	W	103	TH
Owens	30383	3:00 PM	F	207	SH

Use of a computer and internet access are required. This course requires students to complete approximately eight hours of online materials per week. A high-speed connection, while not required, is strongly suggested.

Blended - Online & Classroom

You must be registered for the lecture and a discussion section. You must attend the discussion section for which you are registered.

This course is being taught using the Blackboard course management software. If you lose this syllabus, print another copy from the website. 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:**

The reading materials are on your Blackboard site. You do not need to buy a textbook. You will find a series of folders corresponding to the "weekly topics" that are italicized in the schedule below. Inside each of these folders is a set of readings for the week. You need to purchase an I-clicker at the UIC Bookstore. Bring it to every lecture, including the first one.

**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.

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. Our third objective is to help you with that process by presenting a variety of perspectives, asking challenging questions, and encouraging you to listen to your fellow students and speak your own mind. 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 examinations: 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: 10%. You will use the Blog Tool on the Blackboard site to keep this journal, and you will print it out at the end of the semester for grading. The idea is to record your general understandings of government and politics throughout 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. The journal entries should include (1) 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/or the way it was covered. You must have at least two entries per week. Each week starts on Monday and ends on Sunday. No making up for missed weeks--you need to follow the media throughout the course or the assignment will serve no purpose.

Political films paper: 10%. 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.

Research Assignments: 10%. You have ten short written assignments, each of which is worth a maximum of 10 points. You will submit them using text boxes on your Blackboard site. They should be short enough to fit within the size limit of the box, which works out to about a page and a half. If it won't fit (but please try to keep them short enough so they do) you can submit the file as an attachment which must be Word (.doc, not .docx) or Rich Text Format (.rtf) files. No other file format is acceptable. Please note that there are research assignments due for every Chapter (or week) except Chapters 6, 9, 12, 14, and 15. All these assignments are due by Friday morning at 9am, at which time the assignment box will disappear. No other form of submission is acceptable--no hard copies, no email, no carrier pigeon, no mental telepathy, and no late papers.

Participation: 10%. Your discussion leaders will take roll in your discussion sections and we will take roll in lecture using your I-clickers. Your participation grade will be determined by a combination of attendance in lecture and discussion, and your

teaching assistant's assessment of your contribution to the quality of classroom discussions. If you arrive after roll is taken, you are late, and that equals 1/2 of an absence. Anybody who accumulates more than six absences is subject to receiving a zero for their participation grade. 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 can also participate using the on-line discussion boards. 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 and assignment schedule:

All these readings should ideally be done by the Tuesday of the week for which they are listed so that you can understand the lecture. The research assignments are due by Friday morning at 9am of the week they are assigned.

Note that each week is designated by that Tuesday's date. The terms "week" and "chapter" mean the same thing wherever they are used.

**WEEKLY TOPICS:**

1. August 25. UNIT ONE: FOUNDATIONS FOR POLITICAL ANALYSIS. On Tuesday I will introduce the course and we will cover the first weekly topic, which is Theories and Ideologies.

Research Assignment: Analyzing Locke's 2nd Treatise (due no later than Friday, August 28, 9:00 am).

Introduction to Elitism/Class and Power in America--Domhoff, G. William

Liberal Idea--Stephen Holmes

Democracy and the American Political System--Shank, Alan

(Second Treatise of Government--John Locke)

(American Democracy as a legitimating Device--Hellinger, Daniel and Dennis R. Judd)

2. September 1. The Founding and the Constitution

Research Assignment: Good/Bad Parts of the Constitution

Introduction to the Constitution--Robertson, David Brian

Policy Crisis of the 1780s--David Brian Robertson

Federalist No.10--James Madison

(Do We Really Need A Guide: /Where and How Did Democracy Develop?--Dahl, Robert)

(Constitutional Origins and American Values--James Pfiffner)

(Federalist No.1--Alexander Hamilton)

### 3. September 8. The Development of the Federal System

Research Assignment: Major Events in American Federalism

Chronology of Events--Robert P. Sutton

Introduction to Federalism--Robert P. Sutton

Federalist No. 51 - The Structure of the Government Must Furnish the Proper Checks and Balances Between the Different Departments--Hamilton/Madison

(Federalism and Theory--Richard H. Leach)

(Federalist No. 39- The Conformity of the Plan to Republican Principles--Madison, James)

### 4. September 15. UNIT TWO: POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS.

Interest Groups and Social Movements

Research Assignment: Collective Action

Studying Lobbyist and Lobbying/Lobbying and Lobbyists in the United States: A Primer--Anthony J. Nownes

Interest Groups --Gerald S. Strom and Richard M. Johnson

### 5. September 22. Political Parties

Research Assignment: Political Parties

Political Parties, Political Mobilization and Political Demobilization--Martin Shefter

Changing Role of Political Parties--David McKay

What are Voting Systems and Why are They Important?--Douglas J. Amy

### 6. September 29. The Media

No research assignment this week.

American Journalism in Historical Perspective--Michael Shudson

and Susan E. Tifft

Nature and Sources of News--Robert M. Entman

Definitions of Journalism--Barbie Zelizer

What Democracy Requires of the Media--James Curran

7. October 6. Elections and Public Opinion.

Research Assignment: Where do you stand?

Candidate Appeals and The Meaning of Elections--Richard Joslyn

Prologue/The Reasoning Voter--Samuel L. Popkin

(Elections-Electoral Decision Making--Gerald S. Strom and Richard M. Johnson)

8. October 13. Tuesday: Mid-term examination.

Thursday (NOTE: If possible, there will be a special additional THURSDAY lecture session this at the usual time and place. This is to make up for the exam day. I will be lecturing on last week's topic, which is to begin UNIT THREE: GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS. Congress.

Research Assignment: Searching for legislation using Thomas

Congress and Lawmaking--Walter J. Oleszek

Introduction/Perceptions of the Constituency (ch.1)--Richard F. Fenno, Jr.

(Congress--Gerald S. Strom and Richard M. Johnson)

Research Assignment #3: Searching for legislation using Thomas

9. October 20. The Presidency

No research assignment.

Plural Presidency--Gary King and Lyn Ragsdale

Presidential Character and How to Foresee It--James David Barber

Presidency--Gerald S. Strom and Richard M. Johnson

10. October 27. The Federal Bureaucracy

Research Assignment: Finding government information

Flagellating the Federal Bureaucracy--Morris P. Fiorina

Politics of Regulation--James Q. Wilson

(Promises, Promises: The Why and How of Bureaucracy--Dennis D. Riley and Brayn E. Brophy-Baermann)

11. November 3. The Federal Judiciary

Research assignment: Legal Research

Supreme Court, Judicial Review, and Constitutional Politics--O'Brien, David M.

Judicial Organization--Murphy, Walter F., C. Herman Pritchett, Lee Epstein, and Jack Knight

12. November 10. State and Local Government

Enemies of the State?--Alan Greenblatt

Federalism's Ups and Downs--Carl Tubbesing

The Devil in Devolution--John Donahue

13. November 17. UNIT FOUR: PUBLIC POLICY. Civil Liberties and Civil Rights

Research assignment: Filing a civil rights complaint

Civil Liberties: The Government v. the Individual--Gerald S. Strom and Richard M. Johnson

Civil Rights: The Persisting Problem of Equality--Gerald S. Strom and Richard M. Johnson

14. November 24. Political Economy. Political Film papers due on Tuesday, November 24, by 9:00 am via Blackboard.

No research assignment this week.

Economic and Environmental Policy: Contributing to Prosperity--Thomas E. Patterson

15. December 1. Foreign Policy.

Media journals finished this Friday, December 6, by 5:00 pm--no entries will be accepted after that time.

Defining U.S. Foreign Policy in a Post-Post-Cold War World--Richard N. Haas

State of the Global Nuclear Non-Proliferation Regime: 2001--Jayantha Dhanapala -

(NSC 68: United States Objectives and Programs for National Security--National Security Council)

(Sources of Soviet Conduct--"X")

16. December 7-11. Finals Week. Final examination will be held at the time and place scheduled by the University.