

Political Science 101
 American Government
 Spring 2009
 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 to better understand why the U.S. government is structured as it is. The second section of the course will be focused on the current structure of the U.S. government, and the third section of the course will address the policies the government undertakes.

While each student's learning assessment will be comprised primarily of project work, we will have a midterm and a final examination to assure continuing participation in the lecture and discussion sessions. The project and examination schedule will be distributed separately.

The textbooks for the course are *American Government, Roots and Reform, 2009 Edition*, by O'Connor and Sabato, and *A Brief History of Western Civilization, Volume I, Fifth Edition*, by Kishlansky. We will also read *1776*, by McCullough. 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
1/12	Introduction; Historical origins of the American Society	Kishlansky, Chapters 1-5
1/14	OFF	Kishlansky, Chapters 6-10
1/16	Discussion	
1/19	OFF	Kishlansky, Chapters 11-16
1/21	Historical origins of American Society, continued	McCullough
1/23	Discussion	
1/26	Historical origins of American Society, continued	McCullough
1/28	US Constitutional Framework	O/S Chapters 1 and 2
1/30	Discussion	
2/2	US Constitutional Framework	O/S Chapters 3 and 4
2/4	US Constitutional Framework	O/S Chapters 5 and 6
2/6	Discussion	
2/9	Legislative Branch	O/S Chapter 7

Date	Topic	Reading Due
2/11	Legislative Branch	O/S Chapter 7
2/13	Discussion	
2/16	Executive Branch	O/S Chapters 8 and 9
2/18	Executive Branch	O/S Chapters 8 and 9
2/20	Discussion	
2/23	Invited Speaker: Hon. Emil Jones	
2/25	Judicial Branch	O/S Chapter 10
2/27	Discussion	
3/2	Judicial Branch	O/S Chapter 10
3/4	Parties, Elections, and Public Opinion	O/S Chapters 11 and 12
3/6	Discussion	
3/9	Parties, Elections, and Public Opinion	O/S Chapters 13 and 14
3/11	Parties, Elections, and Public Opinion	O/S Chapters 15 and 16
3/13	Discussion	
3/16	Institutional History of the US	Supplemental readings provided
3/18	Institutional History of the US	Supplemental readings provided
3/20	Discussion	
3/23	SPRING BREAK	
3/25	SPRING BREAK	
3/27	SPRING BREAK	
3/30	Economic Policy	O/S Chapter 18
4/1	Economic Policy	O/S Chapter 18
4/3	Discussion	
4/6	Social Welfare Policy	O/S Chapter 17
4/8	Social Welfare Policy	O/S Chapter 17
4/10	Discussion	
4/13	Foreign Affairs and Defense Policy	O/S Chapter 19
4/15	Foreign Affairs and Defense Policy	O/S Chapter 19
4/17	Discussion	
4/20	Policy Project Presentations	
4/22	Policy Project Presentations	
4/24	Discussion	
4/27	Policy Project Presentations	
4/29	Policy Project Presentations	
5/1	Discussion	
5/4	Policy Project Presentations	
5/6	Policy Project Presentations	
5/8	Discussion	

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

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Assignments

Grades in this course will be determined by five projects, two examinations, and discussion session participation. They are briefly described below along with their approximate weight in your grade and applicable due dates.

1. Town Council Observational Report Due: May 1
You will observe and report on a series of two town meetings of a local municipality. (20%)
2. Western Civilization Analysis Due: March 6
You will briefly describe the evolution of Western Civilization from its beginning to 1700. (15%)
3. 1776 Analysis Due: February 13
You will analyze this historical account of the Revolutionary War in light of the characteristic themes of American Society presented in class. (5%)
4. Policy Investigation Report and Presentation Paper due: April 20
You will investigate and present a report on some specific policy initiative of the Federal Government. (25%)
5. Midterm Scheduled for: March 13
This will cover the founding of the US, the Constitution, and the structure of the three branches of the Federal Government. (10%)
6. Final Scheduled for: 10:30-12:30, May 8
This will cover policy-making, elections, and political parties. (10%)
7. Discussion Session participation Ongoing Assessment
This will be described by your Teaching Assistant. (10%)
8. Wild Card project Date to be determined
I reserve the right to create a project to emphasize or expand on a particular lecture topic. (5%)