

## Introduction to American Government and Politics

Political Science 101

Spring 2008

(M W: 10:00-10:50am at BSB 145)

Instructor: Dukhong Kim

Office Hours: M W: 1:30-2:30 or by appointment

Contact Information

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### Teaching Assistants:

Magdalyn Guzzo : mguzzo2@uic.edu

Anika Bishka : abishk2@uic.edu

16177 DIS AD1 8:00 AM - 8:50 AM F 1115 2BSB Guzzo, M

16178 DIS AD2 10:00 AM - 10:50 AM F 1115 2BSB Guzzo, M

16180 DIS AD3 10:00 AM - 10:50 AM F 1171 2BSB Bishka, A

16181 DIS AD4 12:00 PM - 12:50 PM F 2219 2EPAS Guzzo, M

16182 DIS AD5 12:00 PM - 12:50 PM F 2217 2EPAS Bishka, A

16187 DIS AD6 8:00 AM - 8:50 AM F 1171 2BSB Bishka , A

16188 LCD AS1 10:00 AM - 10:50 AM MW 145 2BSB Kim, D

**Class meetings:** Lecture are on Monday and Wednesday at 10:00am in Behavioral Sciences Building(BSB), Room 145. Discussion sections meet on Friday at 8, 10 and 12. You must be registered for the lecture and a discussion section. You **must attend the discussion section** for which you are registered.

### Course Description

The goals of this course are to gain a clear idea of how the American political system - as a democratic government - was created and reformed, to understand how it works, and to evaluate whether it lives up to the standards of a democracy. To achieve these goals, we will explore the theories of democracy and government which provided a basis for the construction of the American political system; examine how the system originated and has been maintained through the interaction between major actors in the political arena; and study the role and function of the major political institutions, both formal (i.e., Congress, the Presidency, the Courts) and informal (e.g., public opinion, the mass media, and interest groups).

In surveying the American political system, we focus on theoretical concepts and frameworks which provide criteria for the evaluation of the system. We will analyze *why* and *how* political actors (both elites and the public) create and change political institutions and rules

over the years. Specifically, we want to address the following questions: Why was the Constitution created as it was? How has it changed? How are individuals' rights protected and expanded? How do local, state, and national governments interact under federalism? How does public opinion influence decision making? Are American citizens capable of making reasonable choices in elections and informed opinions on policies? How do interest groups and the mass media mediate citizens' choices and opinions? How do political parties attempt to mobilize and organize citizens to gain political power? How do the President, Congress, and the Supreme Court make policies and interact with each other? And how do international politics affect the American political system?

**Teaching format:** The class will be a combination of lecture and discussion. I will lecture based on the text book, covering the main points of the chapters and providing illustrations from the readings or current news sources. To encourage discussion, I will regularly ask questions of the class. Students are strongly encouraged to bring their own questions, comments, and ideas to participate in the discussion.

**Evaluation:** Grades will be determined as follows.

Midterm exam (20%)

Final exam (30%)

Essays (30%)

Participation/presentation (20%)

**Exams:** There will be two exams - midterm and final. Both exams will include short identification and multiple choice questions. The final will be cumulative, but will be weighted toward the topics covered after the midterm. The questions will be drawn from the text book and the readings.

**Essays:** Each student must write three short essays on the questions that are listed below after they read the relevant texts. The length of the essays should be 4-5 pages double spaced with 12 font size and one-inch margins (maximum length is 5 pages). The essays need to address the questions directly with coherent arguments and evidence to support your main thesis. The due dates of the essays are Feb. 4, Mar. 19, and April 16. Students should submit a hard copy of the essay to the Teaching Assistants by the end of the class on the due date. Students are encouraged to use the essay materials for discussions and presentations.

**Discussion :** The exchange of ideas, discussions, and debates is important tools for learning about American politics. Thus, it is important to engage in constructive debates in the class as well as to make good comments on the subjects and issues. It is expected that you will read the text and the other books in advance to prepare and participate in the discussions. Since your grade for participation will be based on attendance and your contribution to class-

room discussions, the teaching assistants will take roll in the discussion sections. Discussion section will begin at the stated time. Late arrival counts as only 1/2 attendance. More than 6 absences from discussion section results in zero credit for participation.

**Group presentation:** There will be three times of presenting the materials on the 3 books. The format of presentation will be discussed more later.

Students should turn off their cell phones before class, and should refrain from surfing the internet or responding to email or IM during class.

**Newspapers:** I strongly recommend that you to read newspapers (e.g., *the New York Times*, *Washington Post*, or *Wall Street Journal*) to keep up with current domestic and international affairs.

**Grading standard:** Letter grades will be assigned according to the following scoring scheme.

A range: 90-100%

B range: 80-89%

C range: 70-79%

D range: 60-69%

F range: below 60%

**Note:** If an emergency arises during the semester that makes fulfillment of class requirements difficult, please discuss the situation with me as early as possible, so we can discuss how to resolve the problem and maintain your good standing. Also if you need special assistance, you need to inform me on the first day of class.

**Late submission and exams:** We will not accept late papers or other assignments, and we will not administer makeup exams, except in case of emergencies. In medical emergencies, you need to submit documents from a doctor. If you cannot make an exam due to a conflict, you need to talk to me, and you can take the exam in advance of the regular exam.

**Academic honesty:** Students should follow the University regulations regarding academic integrity which are laid out in the *Student Handbook*. Students are strongly advised to read and familiarize themselves with these regulations. If students violate standards of academic honesty -i.e., by cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, or academic interference- they will get a failing grade for the class and may face expulsion from the University.

## Required Texts:

1. Janda, Kenneth, Jeffrey M. Berry, and Jerry Goldman. 2007. *The Challenge of Democracy* 9th edition. New York: Houghton Mifflin. <sup>1</sup>
2. Ellis, Joseph J. 2000. *Founding Brothers*. New York: Vintage Books.
3. Price, David E. 2004. *The Congressional Experience*. 3rd edition. New York: Westview Press. <sup>2</sup>
4. Wattenberg, Martin P. 2007. *Is Voting for Young People?*. New York: Pearson Longman.

COD below refers to *The Challenge of Democracy* and BB to Blackboard.

## Reading schedule<sup>3</sup>

Week 1 (Jan. 14/16): Introduction and Theory of Democracy

Reading assignment: COD ch. 1

Week 2 (Jan. 21 no class/ Jan. 23): Theory of Democracy (cont'd)

Reading assignment: COD ch. 2

Week 3 (Jan. 28/ Jan.30): the Constitution and Federalism,

Reading assignment: COD Ch. 3, Articles of Confederation and the U.S. Constitution; COD ch. 4

Week 4 (Feb. 4/ Feb. 6): Ellis' book , Public opinion

Reading assignment: COD ch. 5

Ellis' *Founding Brothers* pp 3-205.

Essay question (Due on Feb. 4): Were the founding fathers men of character and not driven by personal political ambition?

Week 5 (Feb. 11 / Feb. 13): the mass media and Parties

Reading assignment : COD ch. 6 and ch. 7

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<sup>1</sup>You may use earlier edition.

<sup>2</sup>These 2 books and the related essay questions are borrowed from professor John Geer, who is Professor in the Department of Political Science at Vanderbilt University. His syllabus is available at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/home/htdocs/psci/geer/docs/psci100f06.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup>This schedule is subject to change according to the progress of the class.

Week 6 (Feb. 18 / Feb. 20): Voting, and Campaigning  
Reading assignment: COD ch. 8, and 9

Week 7 (Feb. 25/ Feb. 27): Midterm review, Mid-term

Week 8 (Mar. 3/ Mar. 5): Interest groups and Civil Liberties.  
Reading assignment: COD ch. 10 ch.15

Week 9 (Mar. 10/ Mar. 12): Civil liberties(cont'd) and Civil Rights Reading assignment:  
COD ch. 15 ch.16

Week 10 (Mar. 17/ Mar. 19): Video and Youth Voting  
Wattenberg's *Is Voting for Young People?*  
Essay question (Due Mar. 19): Can we expect that American youth would be able to fulfill their duty as citizens in a democratic society?

Week 11 (Mar. 31/ Apr. 2): The Presidency, and Bureaucracy  
Reading assignment: COD ch. 12 and 13.

Week 12 (Apr. 7/ Apr. 9): The Courts  
Reading assignment: COD ch. 14

Week 13 (Apr. 14/ Apr. 16): Congress, and Price's book  
Reading assignment: COD ch. 11 and Price's entire book.  
Price's *The Congressional Experience* Essay question: Does Congress function as a democratic institution?

Week 14 (Apr. 21/ Apr. 23): Economic Policy, Domestic Policy  
Reading assignment: COD ch. 17, 18, and 19.

Week 15 (Apr. 28/ Apr. 30): Foreign Policy, final review  
Reading assignment: COD ch. 20

May 5: Final exam