

POLS 101 Introduction to American Government Summer 2005

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Focus

The primary focus of this course is to assist you in understanding the basic institutions and processes of politics in the United States, while also trying to link these to your everyday life. The assignments and lectures in this course are designed to assist you in developing an ability to think critically and communicate effectively, both in general and in particular about political institutions and public policies. The course covers four main topics: the foundation of American politics, political institutions, political participation, and public policy. Your textbook and readings cover these topics with an emphasis on managing conflict in the political system, with power as the ultimate goal. Further, the class focus will go from the very broad notions of what government is and what ideas are incorporated in our system of government to a gradually more narrow view of government and how it impacts your daily life.

Required Reading

Dye, Thomas R., *Politics in America, Brief Edition*, 6th ed., Pearson Prentice Hall

You are also responsible for any videos or handouts used in the lecture, as well as any materials placed on reserve. Over the course of the semester, articles may be placed on reserve which will aid in the discussion of the material, and which you will be responsible for. You will be notified at least one week prior to the time the readings are to be done. Ignore them at your own peril.

Grading

All work will be graded on a 100 point scale. *There is no curve in this course.* An "A" in the course will require a course average of at least 90; "B" is 80-89.9; "C" is 70-79.9; "D" is 60-69.9; and "F" is for an average of less than 60.

Your course average and grade will be based on the following assignments:

3 Tests 20% Each	60
4 Pop Quizzes @ 5% Each	20
Participation	10
Homework	5
Attendance	5
Total 100%	

To calculate your final average, multiply each grade received (such as 90%, 80%, etc.) by the appropriate amount of the final grade that assignment represents and then add all to get your course average. For instance, if you receive an 80% on an exam, you would take $0.8 \times 20 = 16$, which means you received 16% of your total grade from that test, instead of 20%.

As noted, there will be three tests, each worth 20% of your total grade. Each will cover a separate section of the material, and there is no cumulative exam at the end. The exams will be mainly multiple choice, with two or three short answer questions possible. There will be no essays on the

exams, nor should you attempt to answer the short answer questions in essay length, unless you like to annoy the instructor (i.e., risk an angry individual determining your grade).

In addition to these exams, you will be given four pop quizzes. The length and difficulty of these quizzes will be determined by you (See Participation).

Attendance will be taken each day, with five percent of your total grade dependant on just showing up. While this is somewhat annoying to have to keep track of, it is necessary to get across the importance of coming to lecture. You will be given one “free” absences (excused or unexcused), but after that each absence (excused or unexcused) will reduce your overall grade by one percent, down to the five percent possible. (In other words, don’t show up six times, you get a zero on attendance). Any further absences (excused or unexcused) beyond these will be seen as a flagrant amount of absences, and will result in the dropping of an additional letter grade per absence (excused or unexcused).

The next part of your grade will result from homework. While there won’t be many assignments, together they will add up to 5% of your total grade. While this may not seem like much, come the end of the semester they will make a big difference.

Participation is **strongly** recommended. Not only does it account for 10% of your total grade, your participation, or lack thereof, will impact your grade in several indirect ways. First, it will help to determine the length and difficulty of the quizzes. The more you all participate, the easier and shorter the quizzes. Also, participation can serve to sooth the instructor, thus saving you from an irate individual determining what other assignments you are to be assigned. An angry instructor is an ugly thing, and is legendary in his cruelty (i.e., think an assignment of a five page essay describing the changes in the tax code from 1940 to the present). However, an instructor confronted with a room full of active, inquisitive, bright students will be more likely to arrive at assignments which might serve to aid in your understanding of political events or possibly aid in your studying for the tests. It is important to remember that not all participation is created equal. Simply opening your mouth and blurting out something is not participating. Be prepared to answer questions when called upon, to ask questions about the readings and lectures, and to try to connect the information from the materials to current events. Don’t be a class of bumps on the log. Further, simply showing up is not participation. If you are here but never talk, you will lose 10% of your total grade.

Late assignments will be accepted, but with a loss of one letter grade per 24 hour period until they are physically in my hands. Missed exams can only be made up with proper documentation, and if the reason is not an emergency (such as having your arm torn off by a bus), and it is a reason you knew of ahead of time (such as having to go to court), you must take the exam ahead of time. No exceptions. Make-up exams will be taken on the day of the final test. There are no make-ups for missed quizzes. Any exams or assignments not completed by the end of the semester will result in a grade of zero. Incompletes will not be given in the course.

Classroom Etiquette

There are several rules which, it is sad to note, must actually be put in writing. First, it is expected that the students come to class on time. If you are more than five minutes late, you will be counted

absent for the day. It is further expected that students will pay attention to lecture. Talking to other students, passing notes, reading the paper, doing the crossword, doing homework for other courses, or sleeping during class is unacceptable. If you plan to do any of these, drop the class now. The first occurrence will result in a warning. The second occurrence will be counted as an absence. After that, the student will lose one half letter grade for each occurrence. It is expected that students will turn off their cell phones, beepers, etc. before they come into class. The first beep, ring, etc. that occurs will result in a warning. The second time you will lose a letter grade. A third occurrence will result in my initiating a withdrawal from the course for you, or, if it is too late in the semester for that, in an F. If you ever lose all sense and actually answer your phone in class, you will lose all participation and attendance points for the semester, plus will be penalized two letter grades of your total grade. It is expected that students complete the readings for each meeting before coming to class. It is expected that students will treat each other with respect during discussions, and will refrain from *ad hominem* attacks.

Grade Appeals

If you have a question about the grade you receive for any assignment or test, there is first a twenty-four hour waiting period before you are allowed to question it. Think of this as a cooling off period. If you have a general question (such as, could you explain why the answer to number two was b?), I will be happy to answer it when the tests/assignments are handed back and gone over. Otherwise, in addition to the waiting period, you must put your concern in writing, along with an explanation as to why the concern is valid. Then you can come to me and discuss your problem. Don't come to me and say "I meant this, but forgot to put it down," or any other silly excuse. Failure to follow these guidelines will result in my ignoring you.

Academic Honesty

You are expected to do your own work in this class. The Political Science department and I follow the University standards in defining academic honesty and plagiarism, and will refer cases of academic dishonesty to the Vice President of Academic Affairs. Conviction will result in an "F" for the course and may incur additional penalties from the University. Copies of university policies can be found on the university web site.

Lecture and Assignment Schedule

Part 1: Foundation and Context for American Politics

May 31	Introduction and Overview, Who Gets What, When and How	Ch. 1
June 2	Political Culture: Ideas in Conflict, start on The Constitution	Ch.2 &3
June 7	Finish the Constitution, Federalism	Ch. 3&4
June 9	Participation & Political Parties	Ch. 5&7
June 14	Finish Political Parties & Mass Media	Ch. 6&7
June 16	TEST 1	

Part 2: Political Institutions

June 21	Congress	Ch. 8
June 23	Presidency	Ch. 9
June 28	The Bureaucracy	Ch. 10
June 30	The Courts	Ch. 11
July 5	TEST 2	

Part 3: Government and You

July 7	Civil Liberties & Civil Rights	Ch. 12
July 12	Policy	Ch. 13
July 14	Security	Ch. 14
July 19	TEST 3	

The syllabus and schedule for the readings will change as the semester progresses!!! Be sure to attend class for the changes.