

**Introduction to American Politics**  
**PS 101**  
**Autumn 2006**

Instructor: Elizabeth Kloss  
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Office Hours: M/W 7:30pm - 8:30pm or by appointment  
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**OVERVIEW**

This course is designed to introduce students to the study of political science and the structures and functions of the governing institutions in the United States of America. We will begin by focusing on the founding of the United States and the ideals and the realities of American democracy. Secondly, we will explore the roles of various institutions of government and key political actors. Finally, we will conclude the quarter by exploring the “outside” influences on governmental actors and the policy making process. In addition, we will be paying particular attention to the events and factors influencing the state and national elections in November.

This course will consist of both lectures and discussion. It is critical that you attend class prepared and willing to discuss the assigned reading material *and* current events. You should always feel free to ask questions during lectures and my office hours. Together, we can make this class an interesting and, I hope, enjoyable learning experience.

**GOALS/RATIONALE**

This class, like all courses in social science, helps students understand human behavior and cognition and the structures of human societies, cultures and institutions. This course will not only expand your knowledge of American political structures and political culture but also will help you understand the role political science can play in understanding the conflicts and dilemmas in American society. It is my hope that this course increases your interest in American government, its actions and its effects and will help empower you to make thoughtful and informed political choices.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

1. Students will learn to understand the theories and methods of scientific inquiry as they are applied to the studies of individuals, groups, organizations, and societies. This course will introduce students to the comparative method of inquiry and other research techniques used in political science. We will focus on several different models of government and various theories of representation.
2. Students will learn to comprehend human differences and similarities in various psychological, social, cultural, economic, geographic, and political contexts. Specifically, this course will discuss the importance of federalism and regional differences in the United States. We will also explore the individual and institutional motivations and disincentives for voting and other political activities.
3. In this course, students will develop their abilities to comprehend and assess individual and social values, and recognize their importance in social problem solving and

policy making. We will explore a wide range of controversial political issues and students will develop a real understanding of how reasonable and thoughtful people can and do come to very different conclusions about what is “best” for the United States and the larger global community.

## **REQUIREMENTS**

Students should purchase *We the People: An Introduction to American Politics, Shorter fourth edition* by Benjamin Ginsberg, Theodore J. Lowi and Margaret Weir and *Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Controversial Political Issues, 14<sup>th</sup> edition* edited by George McKenna and Stanley Feingold. Both are available at local bookstores. In addition, students are required to keep up with current political events by reading the “Washington” section (print edition only) of *The New York Times* on a daily (Monday - Friday) basis. Students can read *The New York Times* on the internet ([www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com)) for free.

Students are expected to have read the pages assigned prior to the class and attend class ready to actively participate in the learning process. During the first part of the quarter, I will be showing a series of “Schoolhouse Rock” cartoons that deal with American political history and government. These clips are entertaining and provide students an opportunity to think critically about how Americans perceive their own system of government. These cartoons are also available at the Law Library.

Class discussion will be held throughout the quarter to discuss the contemporary controversial issues raised by the assigned reading in *Taking Sides* and, if appropriate, *The New York Times*. The purpose of these discussions is not to change anyone’s opinion, but to allow students to explore their own beliefs and the beliefs of those who hold differing opinions. It is an important part of the university experience for students to learn to express themselves and listen critically to others in a respectful and thoughtful manner. Any student who is unable to engage in a respectful manner will be asked to leave.

## **EVALUATION**

There are 100 points available in this course. Students will be evaluated as follows:

Exam 1:	25 points
Exam 2:	25 points
Final Exam:	25 points
Writing Assignment	25 points

In addition, there will be several unannounced, “pop” quizzes, based on the assigned reading from the books and *The New York Times*, throughout the quarter. Each of these quizzes will be worth 1 point of EXTRA CREDIT. No make-up quizzes will be offered. Class attendance and

participation (particularly in the controversial “discussions”) will also be taken into account at the margins when determining final grades. Grades will be assigned based on the following scale:

A =	94.00% or higher
A- =	90.00 - 93.99%
B+ =	88.00 - 89.99%
B =	82.00 - 87.99%
B- =	80.00 - 81.99%
C+ =	78.00 - 79.99%
C =	72.00 - 77.99%
C- =	70.00 - 71.99%
D+ =	68.00 - 69.99%
D =	60.00 - 67.99%

## EXAMS

There will be three exams in this course. The final exam is comprehensive, meaning it will ask you to draw larger conclusions based on the knowledge you have developed throughout the class. The final exam will also focus on the material from the last part of the quarter. All three exams will have a similar format and be a mix of multiple choice, (on scan-tron forms, so please bring pencils to class) short answer and essay questions.

## WRITING ASSIGNMENT

Students in this course are expected to complete a writing assignment of at least five and no more than eight pages. You will have considerable freedom regarding the topic for your paper but your assignment is to select a controversial, current political issue (from your reading of *The New York Times*) and **research** the topic in order to write a paper which defends both positions, following the model in the *Taking Sides* book. In other words, your assignment is to argue thoughtfully and convincingly for BOTH sides of a controversial issue.

This assignment is a challenging one, and it is designed to help you develop your critical thinking skills and explore the conflicting values which shape contemporary politics. It is important that you select a topic that you can cover comprehensively in a relatively short paper. I strongly encourage students to select the topic of their paper carefully and I am happy to help brainstorm ideas and review draft papers until **48** hours before the due date.

**PLEASE NOTE:** All written assignments are expected to be typed, doubled spaced with one inch margins and in a 10 or 12 point font. Acceptable fonts are CG Times or Times New Roman. Please number your pages and be sure that your paper is stapled before you turn it in. The clarity of your writing will affect the strength of your argument and therefore students should proof-read and spell-check their work carefully.

Remember, you **must** cite any information and/or ideas that you take from someone else’s work. Also note, you should limit your use of direct quotations (someone else’s words surrounded by “”) to the **rare** occasion when the original author has stated your point perfectly and it cannot be improved. Otherwise, you are generally better off stylistically using your own words and citing the ideas and facts provided by other authors.

For citations, I prefer that students use the Scientific Style outlined in the *Chicago Manual of Style*. However, any citation method is acceptable as long as it is used correctly and consistently. For help with citations, I recommend you refer to this helpful web site: <http://www.lib.ohio-state.edu/guides/#citationguides>

**Written assignments and exams are expected to be completed on time, according to the class schedule, unless arrangements have been made with me in advance or the student provides a documented excuse of a verified medical emergency. Make up exams must be completed within one week of the original test date. Hard copies of all papers should be turned in directly to me during class. No electronic copies of any assignment will be accepted.**

I am happy to help students with this writing assignment by discussing ideas and brainstorming. Students can also get help with writing assignments from The Writing Center at CSTW, which is located in 475 Mendenhall Laboratory at 125 South Oval Mall. You can contact them at (614) 688-4291 or make an appointment by e-mailing them at: [wcenter@osu.edu](mailto:wcenter@osu.edu)

## **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Academic integrity is essential to maintaining an environment that fosters excellence in teaching, research, and other educational and scholarly activities. Thus, The Ohio State University and the Committee on Academic Misconduct (COAM) expect that all students have read and understand the University's Code of Student Conduct, and that all students will complete all academic and scholarly assignments with fairness and honesty. Students must recognize that failure to follow the rules and guidelines established in the University's Code of Student Conduct and this syllabus may constitute "Academic Misconduct."

The Ohio State University's Code of Student Conduct (Section 3335-23-04) defines academic misconduct as: "Any activity that tends to compromise the academic integrity of the University, or subvert the educational process." Examples of academic misconduct include (but are not limited to) plagiarism, collusion (unauthorized collaboration), copying the work of another student, and possession of unauthorized materials during an examination. Ignorance of the University's Code of Student Conduct is never considered an "excuse" for academic misconduct, so I recommend that you review the Code of Student Conduct and, specifically, the sections dealing with academic misconduct.

If I suspect that a student has committed academic misconduct in this course, I am **obligated** by University Rules to report my suspicions to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. If COAM determines that you have violated the University's Code of Student Conduct (i.e., committed academic misconduct), the sanctions for the misconduct could include a failing grade in this course and suspension or dismissal from the University.

If you have any questions about the above policy or what constitutes academic misconduct in this course, please contact me.

Other sources of information on academic misconduct (integrity) to which you can refer include:

- \* The Committee on Academic Misconduct web pages ([oaa.osu.edu/coam/home.html](http://oaa.osu.edu/coam/home.html))
- \* Ten Suggestions for Preserving Academic Integrity ([oaa.osu.edu/coam/ten-suggestions.html](http://oaa.osu.edu/coam/ten-suggestions.html))
- \* Eight Cardinal Rules of Academic Integrity ([www.northwestern.edu/uacc/8cards.html](http://www.northwestern.edu/uacc/8cards.html))

The above statement concerning academic integrity was taken verbatim from the web site of the Office of Academic Affairs on July 8, 2004, located at:  
<http://oaa.osu.edu/coam/faq.html#academicmisconductstatement>

## **ARRANGEMENTS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Students with disabilities that will make it difficult to carry out the work as outlined in this syllabus, or will require extra time for quizzes and exams, must notify me as soon as possible so that appropriate arrangements can be made. You must also contact the University's Office of Disability Services (292-3307) to receive appropriate documentation. All information and documentation of disability are confidential. For further information, consult the ODS website at <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/ods/students/handbook/>.

## **COURSE SYLLABUS**

The following is a topical outline for the course, the reading assignments for each topic and the schedule of assignments and due dates.

### **WEEK 1: September 18 - 22**

Wednesday: Course Introduction  
McKenna and Feingold, Introduction, pp. xvii - xxvii

### **WEEK 2: September 25 - 29**

Monday: American political culture and a quick introduction to systems of government  
Schoolhouse Rock: "No More Kings" and "The Shot Heard Round the World"  
Ginsberg, Lowi and Weir, chap. 1

Wednesday: The Creation of the United States of America and The Constitution  
Schoolhouse Rock: "Fireworks" and "The Preamble"  
Ginsberg, Lowi and Weir, chap. 2 and the Declaration of Independence, pp. A3 - A5 and the Articles of Confederation, pp. A6 - A9 and the Constitution of the United States of America, pp. A10 - A15.  
Class discussion – McKenna and Feingold, Issues 16 and 17.

### **WEEK 3: October 2 - 6**

Monday: Federalism  
Ginsberg, Lowi and Weir, chap. 3

Wednesday: Civil Liberties and Civil Rights  
Ginsberg, Lowi and Weir, chap. 4 - 5  
MOVIE DAY

### **WEEK 4: October 9 - 13**

Monday: Civil Liberties and Civil Rights, part 2  
Schoolhouse Rock: "Sufferin' Till Suffrage"

Wednesday: Class discussion - McKenna and Feingold, Issues 9, 10 and 12  
Catch up and Review for Exam 1

### **WEEK 5: October 16 - 20**

Monday: ***EXAM #1***

Wednesday: Congress  
Schoolhouse Rock: "I'm Just A Bill"  
Ginsberg, Lowi and Weir, chap. 12  
Class discussion - McKenna and Feingold, Issues 5 - 6

### **WEEK 6: October 23 - 27**

Monday: The President  
Schoolhouse Rock: "Three - Ring Government"  
Ginsberg, Lowi and Weir, chap. 13

Wednesday: Political Parties  
Ginsberg, Lowi and Weir, chap. 9  
Class discussion - McKenna and Feingold, Issue 3

### **WEEK 7: October 30 - November 3**

Monday: Elections and Campaigns  
Schoolhouse Rock: "I'm Gonna Send Your Vote to College"  
Ginsberg, Lowi and Weir, chap. 10  
Class discussion - McKenna and Feingold, Issue 2

Wednesday: Political Participation  
Ginsberg, Lowi and Weir, chap. 8

**WEEK 8: November 6 - 10**

Monday: Catch-up and Review for Exam 2

Wednesday: *EXAM #2*

**WEEK 9: November 13 - 17**

Monday: Public Opinion  
Ginsberg, Lowi and Weir, chap. 6  
Class discussion – McKenna and Feingold, Issue 1

Wednesday: The Media  
Ginsberg, Lowi and Weir, chap. 7  
Class Discussion - McKenna and Feingold, Issue 4

**WEEK 9½: November 20 - 24**

Monday: Interest Groups  
Ginsberg, Lowi and Weir, chap. 11  
Writing Assignment Due at the beginning of class

Wednesday: No class or office hours - Have a good break

**WEEK 10: November 27 - December 1**

Monday: Courts in the United States of America  
Ginsberg, Lowi and Weir, chap. 15  
Class discussion – McKenna and Feingold, Issues 7 - 8

Wednesday: Bureaucracy in a Democracy  
Ginsberg, Lowi and Weir, chap. 14

**COMPREHENSIVE FINAL EXAM - AS SCHEDULED BY THE UNIVERSITY  
MONDAY, DECEMBER 4 @ 5:30pm**