

The Ohio State University
PS 101: INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN POLITICS
Autumn 2006

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Office Hours: TR, 10:30 to 11:30 a.m., and by appointment

Class Meeting: TR, 8:30 to 10:18 a.m.
Mendenhall Laboratory 0191

SYLLABUS

This course provides a broad overview of the basic governing institutions and political processes of American government. Specifically, the class will begin with an examination of the historical foundations of American government and the impact of democratic ideals and principles on our political system. The course will then focus on the political opinions and behavior of American citizens and the political processes in which they participate. Finally, the course will examine the institutional and procedural framework within which political decisions are made. Throughout the course, contemporary political events will be emphasized.

GEC Goals/Rationale

Courses in social science help students understand human behavior and cognition, and the structures of human societies, cultures and institutions.

GEC Learning Objectives

1. Students understand the theories and methods of scientific inquiry as they are applied to the studies of individuals, groups, organizations, and societies.
2. Students comprehend human differences and similarities in various psychological, social, cultural, economic, geographic, and political contexts.
3. Students develop abilities to comprehend and assess individual and social values, and recognize their importance in social problem solving and policy-making.

This course meets these objectives by providing an overview of governmental institutions and procedures in the United States – as well as Americans’ political behavior and decision-making. Throughout the course, both the historical and contemporary context in which these processes and behavior take place will be emphasized. Students are encouraged to approach these topics through the lens of political science. The course also emphasizes the values of individuals and American society in the context of political conflict and compromise.

Required Readings

The following required textbooks are available at the University bookstore (sold together as one package) and are also on reserve at Sullivant Library:

- Ginsberg, Benjamin, Theodore J. Lowi and Margaret Weir. 2005. *We the People: An Introduction to American Politics*. Shorter 5th ed. New York, N.Y.: W.W. Norton & Co.
- Canon, David T., John J. Coleman and Kenneth R. Mayer. 2006. *The Enduring Debate: Classic and Contemporary Readings in American Politics*. 4th ed. New York: N.Y.: W.W. Norton & Co.

In some cases, required readings have been selected from outside of these textbooks. These readings (denoted below by **) are available for download on the course’s CARMEN web site.

Student Evaluations and Course Expectations

Your grade for this course will be based on your performance in three areas: **exams** (two midterm exams and one final exam); **written assignments**; and **class attendance and participation**. The worth of each component is as follows:

Exams

Exam #1	25%	(50 points)
Exam #2	25%	(50 points)
Final Exam	30%	(60 points)
Written Assignments	15%	(30 points; 6 points each)
Attendance / In-class Participation	5%	(10 points; ½ point per class session)
Total	100%	(200 points)
<i>Extra Credit</i>	2%	(4 points)

The **exams** will cover material presented in lectures and/or the assigned readings. The final exam will be cumulative, although the majority of the exam will come from the final portion of the course. Exams are scheduled for Thursday, Oct. 12 and Thursday, Nov. 9. The final exam will be given at the time scheduled by the Registrar's Office. Exams must be taken during the designated class sessions on the dates indicated. If you have an unbelievably good reason to miss an exam, you must get permission from me at least one class session prior to the test date and schedule a time for a make-up exam within one week of the regularly scheduled exam. Make-up exams will consist of essay questions only. If you miss an exam without prior permission, ordinarily you will receive a score of zero for that exam.

The second component of your grade will be based on five one- to two-page **written assignments** that will reflect your responses to the readings assigned for that class session. In most cases, the written assignments will consist of brief answers to the discussion questions posed in the textbook following the assigned readings as well as your personal opinion regarding the debated discussion topic for that class session. The questions for each assignment will be available on the course's CARMEN web site. All written assignments should be typed and turned in by the end of the class session on the dates they are due. If you are not present in class on a particular due date, you may submit your written assignment via email by 10:30 a.m.

Finally, your grade will be based on your class attendance and in-class participation. Students are expected to have read the assigned readings prior to each class session, attend class prepared to actively participate in the learning process, and be willing to discuss both the assigned material and current political events.

There will also be opportunities to earn **extra credit** points. Participation in an academic experiment conducted by the political science department or other special activities that I assign can raise your total grade by two percent (4 points).

Your final grade will be assigned based on the following scale:

A	92% or higher
A-	90 to 91.99%
B+	88 to 89.99%
B	82 to 87.99%
B-	80 to 81.99%
C+	78 to 79.99%
C	72 to 77.99%
C-	70 to 71.99%
D+	68 to 69.99%
D	60 to 67.99%
E	59.99% or lower

Sensitive Issues

Class discussion will be held throughout the quarter to address contemporary issues raised by the assigned readings. The purpose of these class discussions is three-fold: 1) to advance your knowledge, think critically and develop your own views about pertinent issues related to American politics; 2) understand alternative views regarding these issues; and 3) defend your views in a rational way when presented with these alternative views. In some cases, the issues we explore are those that many would consider to be sensitive and/or controversial. Remember, there are no “right” or “wrong” answers to any of the sensitive issues we discuss. However, we should keep in mind that our discussions should reflect a constructive dialogue on issues related to American politics. Students who make comments that are deemed to be blatantly out of decorum or are unable to engage in the discussion in a respectful manner will be asked to leave.

Academic Honesty Policy

I expect all of the work you do in this course to be your own. I will tolerate absolutely no cheating or plagiarism (using someone else’s words or ideas without proper citation). I will report any cases of cheating or plagiarism to the University Committee on Academic Misconduct, and they will be handled according to University policy.

Students with Special Needs

If you need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability, you should contact me to arrange an appointment as soon as possible to discuss the course format, anticipate your needs and explore potential accommodations. I rely on the Office for Disability Services for assistance in verifying the need for accommodations and developing accommodation strategies. If you have not previously contacted the Office for Disability Services, I encourage you to do so.

TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Week One: Introduction

Thurs., Sept. 21: Introduction to the Course

PART I: FOUNDATIONS

Week Two: American Political Culture and the Founding of a Nation

Tues., Sept. 26: Ginsberg et al. Ch. 1; A3-A5
Canon et al. p. 3-26 (Hartz; Wood; Smith)

Thurs., Sept. 28: Ginsberg et al. Ch. 2; A6-A20
Canon et al. p. 37-55 (Kammen; Hamilton; Madison)

Week Three: Civil Rights and Liberties

Tues., Oct. 3: Ginsberg et al. Ch. 4
Canon et al. p. 125-138 (Pearlstein; McCarthy)

Written Assignment #1: Civil Liberties vs. The Fight Against Terror

Thurs., Oct. 5: Ginsberg et al. Ch. 5
Canon et al. p. 101-115 (Lincoln; King)

Week Four: Federalism

Tues., Oct. 10: Ginsberg et al. Ch. 3
Canon et al. p. 73-85 (Peterson; Adler)

Thurs., Oct. 12: **EXAM #1**

PART II: POLITICS

Week Five: Public Opinion and the Media

Tues., Oct. 17: Ginsberg et al. Ch. 6
Canon et al. p. 293-305 (Gallup; Morin)

Thurs., Oct. 19: Ginsberg et al. Ch. 7
Canon et al. p. 311-329 (Bresler; Myrick; Cunningham)

Written Assignment #2: Objectivity in the Media

Week Six: Political Parties and Interest Groups

Tues., Oct. 24: Ginsberg et al. Ch. 9
Canon et al. p. 409-419 (Marlantes; Fiorina)

Thurs., Oct. 26: Ginsberg et al. Ch. 11
Canon et al. p. 420-423; 434-445; 447-453 (Tocqueville; Skocpol;
Madison)

Week Seven: Political Participation, Campaigns and Elections

Tues., Oct. 31: Ginsberg et al. Ch. 8
**Shea, Daniel M. 2004. "Throwing a Better Party: Local Mobilizing Institutions and the Youth Vote" CIRCLE Working Paper #13.
**Olander, Michael. 2003. "How Young People Express Their Views" CIRCLE Fact Sheet.

Written Assignment #3: Why Don't Young People Vote?

Thurs., Nov. 2: Ginsberg et al. Ch. 10
Canon et al. p. 330-335; 345-353 (Key; Menand)

Week Eight: The 2006 Midterm Elections in Ohio

Tues., Nov. 7: ELECTION DAY [NO CLASS SESSION]

Thurs., Nov. 9: **EXAM #2**

PART III: INSTITUTIONS

Week Nine: The Presidency and Executive Branch

Tues., Nov. 14: Ginsberg et al. Ch. 13
Canon et al. p. 192-205 (Wenner; Hacker and Pierson; Kristol)

Written Assignment #4: Presidential Mandates

Thurs., Nov. 16: Ginsberg et al. Ch. 14
Canon et al. p. 206-224 (Wilson; Wilson)

Week Ten: The Federal Courts

Tues., Nov. 21: Ginsberg et al. Ch. 15
Canon et al. p. 248-267 (Hamilton; O'Brien; Friedman)

Thurs., Nov. 23: THANKSGIVING BREAK [NO CLASS SESSION]

Week Eleven: Congress and American Representation

Tues., Nov. 28: Ginsberg et al. Ch. 12
Canon et al. 158-174 (Citizens Against Gov't Waste; Paige; Cohn)

Written Assignment #5: Pork Barrel Politics

Thurs., Nov. 30: Canon et al. p. 141-157 (Mayhew; Faucheux; Hibbing and Theiss-Morse)

The FINAL EXAM will take place as scheduled by the Registrar's Office. Please check the Registrar Office's web site for details.