

101: Introduction to American Government

Winter 2005

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Office Hours:
T, R 1:30-2:30 Main Library
W 10:30-11:30 Main Library
378-1256

Welcome to American Politics! I hope to have a great class this quarter. I intend for this class to be very challenging, yet exciting and interesting. I think our government and political system is a fascinating topic, and I hope to convey that to you. This class is about learning the basics that you need to know about government as well debating current issues. Some people think that politics isn't a topic for polite conversation, but I think the reason so many people think this is because so many people don't learn how to talk about politics. Learning the mutual political respect, background information on the hot topics of today, the history of politics, and the mechanics of our political system are the goals of this class.

Grading:

Debates: 30% (15% paper, 10% team grade, 5% individual grade)

Reading questions: 15%

Midterm: 25%

Final: 30%

Plus there will be a tiny bit of extra credit, 2%. Political science graduate students often do experiments for their dissertation, and you can help. More details will be offered later.

Debates:

There will be 5 debates in this class, with roughly five people on each team, and two teams debating each debate. You will be allowed to express preference for which debate topic you would like to address on the second day of class, January 5th. I will do my best to assign you to your first preference debate. Each team will produce one paper, conveying the entirety of their argument. It must be typed, and will be judged by presentation of the argument, information, style, and grammar. A bibliography is required. It should be 5-6 pages in length, double-spaced, 10-12 point font, with regular margins. The paper will be worth 15% of your total grade. There will also be a team grade, based on how well the team as a whole debates their topic as well as answers the other students' questions on the topic. **YOU MAY NOT SIMPLY READ FROM THE PAPER FOR ANY PART OF THE DEBATE.** Outside of the introduction, you are expected to respond to points the other team will make. The team debate grade is 10% of your total grade. Finally, 5% of your total grade will be determined by an average, on a scale of 0 to 5, of the grades issued to you by your fellow debate teammates judging the amount of work you have put forth in putting together the debate and paper. The debate topics are as follows: Electing non-Supreme Court justices; The legitimacy of the electoral college; The pros and cons of gay marriage in terms of the government; The

pros and cons of the current war in Iraq; and, the legalization of marijuana. The schedule of the debate is as follows:

Team 1 Introduction: 5 minutes

Team 2 Introduction: 5 minutes

Team 1 Rebuttal: 4 minutes

Team 2 Rebuttal: 4 minutes

Team 1 Rebuttal: 4 minutes

Team 2 Rebuttal: 4 minutes

Team 1 Conclusion: 3 minutes

Team 2 Conclusion: 3 minutes

Student Questions: 15-20 minutes

Reading questions:

For each day you are assigned readings, you will be asked a reading question. You can make up one reading question, and only if you have a legitimate excuse, with proper documentation and decided by me. The total grade for the reading questions is 15% of your total grade.

Exams:

The exams will be comprised of four parts. The first part is multiple choice. The second part will be a terms section, where you will choose 5 out of 8 to define. The fourth part will be short answer, which should be answered by about a paragraph or so. You will answer 2 out of 3 offered. The fourth part will be a couple of extra credit questions. The midterm is worth 25% of your total grade, and the final is worth 30% of your total grade. The final will be cumulative.

Exam Make-ups:

Make-up for the midterm will be held right after the final. If you have a final immediately following your exam in this class, you must provide proof and then you can take the make-up exam at another, pre-arranged time and date during exam week. The make-up exam will be harder than the regular exam. Basically, it is better to take the exam during the regular time.

More Notes on the Exams:

I will hand out a review sheet and hold extra office hours prior to the midterm and the final. I may decide to hold a review for the exams, but that will be decided as we near the exams.

Texts:

The text for this class is **The Basics of American Politics** by Gary Wasserman, 12th edition, Pearson Longman Press, ISBN 0-321-31795-5. It has been ordered at all the regular bookstores and you should have access to a copy by January 5th. There are several other readings for the class, which I will either put on reserve or hand out in class.

Readings:

Reading should be done prior to the day they are listed on the syllabus, and you should be freshly prepared for class. You will be tested on the readings, as detailed above.

Class Schedule:

Part 1: The Institutions of American Politics

January 3: No class

January 5: Introduction to Politics and the Class; How a Bill Becomes a Law

Reading: Chapter 1

January 10: The Constitution

Reading: Chapter 2

January 12: Elections

Reading: The Federalist Papers

January 17: Presidency

Reading: Chapter 3

January 19: The Cabinet and Bureaucracy

Debate 1: The legitimacy of the electoral collage

January 24: Congress, Part 1

Reading: Chapter 4

January 26: Congress, Part 2

January 31: The Judiciary, Part 1

Reading: Chapter 5

February 2: The Judiciary, Part 2

Debate 2: The election of non-Supreme Court justices

February 7: Midterm Exam

Part 2: The People and American Government

February 9: Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

Reading: Chapter 6

February 14: Current Debates in Civil Rights and Liberties

Debate 3: Legalization of marijuana

February 16: The Media, Part 1

Reading: Chapter 8

February 21: The Media, Part 2

February 23: Interest Groups

Reading: TBD

Debate 4: Gay Marriage in Politics

February 28: Parties

Reading: Chapter 7

March 2: Policy Making and Representation

March 7: Changing Expectations of Government

Reading: TBD

Debate 5: The current war in Iraq

March 9: Pluralism and Elitism

Reading: Chapter 9

March 13-16: Exam Week

Disability Info:

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. Please contact the Office for Disability Services at 614-292-3307 in room 150 Pomerene Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

Information from the Counseling and Consultation Office that some students may find helpful:

The social, emotional, and academic concerns that occur occasionally in everyone's life can generate conflicts and questions. Such concerns can make it difficult for a person to function in a satisfying manner, in class and otherwise. If you need help, there are places and people that can help.

Contact Information:
Younkin Success Center
1640 Neil Avenue, 4th Floor
Columbus, Ohio 43201
Phone: 614-292-5766, FAX: 614-688-3440

Academic Honesty:

Do not cheat-it is bad for you. The University Rule for this is 3335-31-02. Please understand that if any of these rules are violated, I will take appropriate action. I want YOUR ideas, not something from someone else, a test file of some sort, or an Internet posting! I WILL TAKE ACTION IF I DISCOVER CHEATING IN ANY FORM.