

Introduction to American Government Political Science 101

Winter 2007

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Welcome to American Politics! I hope to have a great class this quarter. I intend for this class to be 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. 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.

Goals/Rationale of this Class:

Introduction to American Government is designed to help students understand human behavior and cognition, and the structures of human societies, cultures and institutions.

Learning Objectives of this Class, as a GEC Class:

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.

GRADING

Debates: 25% (10% paper, 10% team grade, 5% individual grade)

Midterm: 25%

Final: 30%

Reading Discussions: 5%

Reading questions: 15%

Plus extra credit

Cards

Your grades and reading questions will all be kept track of via cards, which will be handed out the second day of class. These cards are for ease of tracking reading questions and all other grades you receive in class. Please make sure they are current and accurately reflect your work. I keep the cards at the end of class for future reference.

Debates

There will be 4 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, but not the side of the debate you would like to be on. I will do my best to assign you to your first preference debate. The debate is worth 25% of your total grade. 10% of this 25% will come from your team debate paper. 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, and the paper should be fully cited. (If you do not know how to do this, there is a writing center on campus that can offer some assistance.) It should be 5-6 pages in length, double-spaced, 10-12 point font, with regular margins. It should present a full argument and rebut the other side as well as you can anticipate. 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. This debate part is worth 10% of the 25% total the debate accounts for-10% of your total grade. You may not simply read from your paper for any part of the debate. Outside of the introduction, you are expected to respond to points the other team will make. Finally, 5% of your total grade (and the final part of your debate 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.

Team and Debate Information

Debate 1: Legalization of Marijuana

Team 1 should argue for the legalization of marijuana, while Team 2 should argue against the legalization of marijuana. The following topics should be addressed: the War against Drugs, other drugs that may be associated with the use of marijuana (but remember the drug you are focusing on must be marijuana), the effects of marijuana, and the international politics associated with drug trafficking.

Debate 2: The Election of Non-Federal Court Judges

Team 1 should argue that the election of non-federal court justices contributes to our democracy, detail how the public and American political system are aided by these elections, present a history of electing judges, and different ways judges can be elected. Team 2 should argue that electing justices is not a good idea, as it does not contribute to America's democratization. Team 2 should be able to refute the various ways of electing justices and propose alternative ways for justices to gain their posts.

Debate 3: Fat Politics

Team 1 should argue that the federal, state and local government have the right and should be able to legislate on issues of public health, while team 2 should argue that the government should not and does not have the right. In this instance, the teams should focus on legislation of 'fat politics', like New York City's proposal to mandate restaurants not utilize trans-fat in food preparation and the like. The debate should touch on the topics of first amendment rights, health care costs, tax dollars, and the overall role of the government. The teams can touch on topics such as smoking bans and seat belt laws, but the focus should be 'fat politics.'

Debate 4: The Politics of Gay Marriage

Team 1 should argue in support of gay marriage, while team 2 should argue against gay marriage. You may touch on the topics of the tourism industry, adoption policies, insurance issues, federalism, the separation of church versus state, and the role of morality in politics. It may also aid your arguments to distinguish between gay marriage and civil unions. Please note, this debate is about the *politics* of gay marriage, not necessarily about the morality of homosexuality itself.

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR DEBATE TOPIC, PLEASE SEE ME.

Debate Schedule

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: 2-3 minutes
Team 2 Conclusion: 2-3 minutes
Student Questions: 15-20 minutes

Other Debate Notes

Lastly on debate grading, the debate that wins the debate, as judged by the class, will receive 2% extra credit. As soon as I have graded the debate performance, the paper, and have received student evaluations of fellow students, your grades will appear on your cards. Remember to introduce the topic to the class well. While the burden of this falls to team 1 in particular, both teams are responsible for presenting background information. The key to getting a good grade on the debate is not only to completely research your argument, but also anticipate and refute the opposing argument. I suggest you have note cards or some kind of organization system for refuting arguments the other side makes. Again, the key to doing well is anticipation of the other side. Also, I encourage students who are debating to take notes on the various points and background of the subject matter, as the debates will appear on your exams. Concerning sources for your paper: You may use internet sources, but they must be legitimate sources. A good rule of thumb would be if the site has a companion in actual print. For example, someone's blog cannot be used, but articles from Time, Newsweek, or any newspaper are fine. There are some sources that may not have companions in print (like CNN) that I find acceptable. Please ask me if you have any questions. Also, be very careful when doing your research to distinguish between opinion pieces and news articles. You may do interviews or use documentaries as well, as long as those are cited. You are more than welcome to use visual aids in your debate, but keep in mind the type of classroom that we are in.

Exams

The exams will be comprised of four parts. The first part is multiple choice. The second part will be a terms section. The third part will be short answer, which should be answered by about a paragraph or so. You will answer a certain amount out of a larger amount for the terms and short answer sections. The short answer questions will be based on what you learn during debate. The fourth part will be a couple of extra credit questions. The first midterm is worth 25% of your total grade, and the final is worth 30%. The midterm will be on February 12th. The final will be cumulative, but the emphasis will be on the second part of the quarter. It will be offered during the regularly scheduled time during finals week and via Carmen.

Exam Make-ups:

Make-up for the midterm will be held on the last day of class. The make-up exam will be harder than the regular exam. Basically, it is better to take the exam during the regular time.

Readings

Discussions

Readings are to be completed before the class meeting. A group of 3-5 students will lead discussion of the readings once in the quarter. These students will present the readings and lead discussion. These students should not be the only ones that we hear from that day; they are responsible for facilitating discussion. They should be prepared to present the objectives, relevance, and low and high points of the reading. You will be able to choose which day you present on the second day of class. This section of the class will be judged by how well-prepared a student is, judged by myself. The classes available for discussion leaders are starred below. By midnight the day before you are assigned to be discussant, you are to email me 3-4 discussion points for the day, as well as a reading question to ask the other students in class. The discussion points should relate the readings to current events, the other readings in class, and commonly accepted knowledge. Your discussion performance is worth 5% of your grade.

Reading questions

For many of the days you are assigned readings, you will be asked a reading question. You can makeup 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. Your reading questions will be done on your card, and therefore you will be able to easily keep track of your score for this section of class. Many times I offer a bit of extra credit on the questions as well, so make sure to do your readings thoroughly and try for the extra credit when possible.

Extra Credit

There is a good amount of extra credit available in this class, via the exams, the reading questions, the debates, and the experiment. My advice is to try for as much extra credit is offered- it can add up to more than a letter grade.

TEXT AND READINGS

The texts for this class are **The Basics of American Politics** by Gary Wasserman, 12th edition, Pearson Longman Press, and **Culture War?** By Morris Fiorina, 2nd edition. ISBN 0-205-556-353. This ISBN contains both books for class and access to the publisher's website, which you will need for class. Please make sure you use this particular ISBN. It has been ordered at all the regular bookstores and you should have access to a copy by the second day of class. There are several other readings for the class, which I will put them on my Carmen site.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Part 1: The Institutions of American Politics

January 3: Introduction to Politics and Class

Isle of Ted

Reading: Carmen- Mancur Olson "The Logic of Collective Action"

Carmen- Garrett Hardin "The Tragedy of the Commons"

*January 8: Introduction to Politics and the Constitution

Reading: BAP Chapters 1 and 2

*January 10: Elections-*Taking on the Kennedys*

Reading: Carmen- Samuel Popkin "The Reasoning Voter"

Carmen- David Mayhew "Electoral Connection"

Carmen- Negative Ads

Carmen- Politics and You Tube

January 15: No Class-MLK Day

*January 17: Culture War in America?

Reading: Culture War? Pages 1-78

*January 22: Presidency

Reading: BAP Chapter 3, pages 44-67

Carmen- Samuel Kernell "Going Public"

Carmen-The Fresh Face-Barack Obama

*January 24: The Cabinet and Bureaucracy

Reading: BAP Chapter 3, pages 67-84

Debate 1: Legalization of Marijuana

*January 29: Congress, Part 1

Reading: BAP Chapter 4

Carmen- Political Mavericks

January 31: Congress, Part 2

Reading: Carmen- Richard Fenno "The Senate in Bicameral"

Activity: Web Access #1 See Carmen Announcements

*February 5: The Judiciary, Part 1

Reading: BAP Chapter 5

Carmen-Disorder in the Court

February 7: The Judiciary, Part 2

Reading: Carmen- Lee Epstein and Jack Knight "Choices Justices Make"

Carmen- Deborah Sontag "The Power of the Fourth"

Debate 2: The Election Non-Federal Court Justices

Review

February 12: Midterm

- *February 14: Civil Rights and Liberties
 - Reading: BAP Chapter 6
 - Carmen- English- Only Language?
- February 19: Civil Rights, Civil Liberties, and the Media-*Good Night and Good Luck*
 - Reading: Carmen- Zoltan Hajnal and Elisabeth Gerber “Minority Rights in Direct Democracy”
- *February 21: The Media-*The Daily Show, Ads, Blogs*
 - Reading: BAP Chapter 8, pages 234-254
 - Carmen- Thomas Edsall “The People and the Press”
 - Carmen- Red States
 - Carmen-Permanent Campaign
 - Carmen-The Netroots Hit Their Limits
 - Carmen-Politics Goes Viral
- *February 26: Interest Groups-*The Daily Show*
 - Reading: BAP Chapter 8, pages 222-234
 - Carmen- John Wright “The Evolution of Interest Groups”
 - Activity: Web Access #2- See Carmen Announcements**
- *February 28: Parties-*Wizard of Oz*
 - Reading: BAP Chapter 7, pages 194-219
 - Carmen- John Aldrich “Why Parties?”
 - Carmen- Libertarian Idaho Governor
- March 5: Policy Making and Representation, Part 1
 - Reading: BAP Chapter 7, pages 184-194
 - Carmen- James Stimson, Michael MacKuen, and Robert Erikson “Dynamic Representation”
 - Carmen- Term Limits
 - Carmen-California Global Warming
 - Debate 3: Fat Politics**
- March 7: Policy Making Con’t and Changing Expectations of Government
 - Pluralism and Elitism
 - Reading: BAP Chapter 9
 - Carmen- Horse Politics
 - Carmen- Ballot Initiatives
 - Carmen-LA’s Latino Mayor
 - Debate 4: The Politics of Gay Marriage**

Final Exam: Exam Week March 12th-15th

Recommendations for Success in this Class:

1. Do the readings- Please make sure the you do the readings and understand what you are reading. It helps many students to make an outline. DO NOT JUST SCAN THE READINGS.
2. Come to class-There will be some material that will JUST be available IN CLASS, especially the debate material. You will not be able to get this material if you do not come to class.

3. I will post the outlines for the class on Carmen and put them up in class during lecture. Making sure your notes follow the outline and understanding how the topics fit together as the outline describes may help you when studying for the exams.
4. Prepare for the debates well in advance.
5. Try for the extra credit when you can- there are several opportunities for extra credit: Each exam will have two points, if you win the debate you will earn two extra points, if you do the extra credit experiment you will get two extra points, and sometimes I will offer extra 1/2 points on the reading questions. This can equal over 10 points of extra credit- a whole letter grade.
6. Come to my office hours if you are having problems.
7. Study thoroughly for the exams.

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.