

INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN POLITICS

POLITICAL SCIENCE 101
THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
TUES. & THURS. 10:30AM-12:18PM
COCKINS HALL 218

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Office Hours: Tues., 12:30PM-1:30PM;
Wed., 12:00PM-1:00PM
and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is an introduction course to American politics and the government and will focus primarily on the government at the national level. We will begin the course by examining the structural foundation upon which our government rests as well as the basic government institutions. We will then move to an exploration of political behavior, the political process, and citizen involvement in politics. We will conclude by examining the function of the government.

The overall goal of the course is to get students to think about and understand the importance of politics. The most basic goal is for you to master the material from class, thereby gaining a comprehensive understanding of American politics. Such an understanding will hopefully provide you with a greater appreciation for how and why politics is relevant to your own lives as well as an understanding of how citizens attempt to affect what the government does and does not do. Beyond simple memorization of the material, however, I encourage you to develop your own thoughts on many topics we will discuss throughout the quarter so that you will improve your critical thinking skills. This course is a challenging one in the sense that students will be required to think, discuss, and write critically and thoughtfully about the issues. It will also be an interesting one given that all students keep up with the readings and participate actively and regularly.

Students who want to do well in the course should follow a simple but proven formula: come to class regularly and on time, pay attention and ask questions when you do not understand, read thoroughly and prior to the class period in which readings will be discussed, contribute regularly to class discussions, complete assignments carefully and in a timely manner, and use the office hours as a resource as necessary. My plan is to make this course a worthwhile learning experience. If you are experiencing any difficulties, I am happy to offer my assistance.

REQUIRED TEXT

****This book is currently available at SBX****

Greenberg and Page. 2003. *The Struggle for Democracy*, 6th Edition. Longman Publishers.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

READINGS AND CURRENT EVENTS

Readings are to be completed for each class meeting. This will facilitate meaningful class discussion and will make the class more informative and interesting for all. In addition, pay attention to current political events that may be relevant to the class. That means, you should watch the local news, read newspapers, watch Headline News, MSNBC, CNN, etc., and be able to find and discuss issues pertaining to American politics.

GROUP PROJECT

There will be several debates scheduled throughout the quarter. Each of you will be placed in a group of 4-5 members and given a topic. Don't worry; you will only be participating in one debate during the quarter. You will have to argue for or against the topic you are given. The topics are ones that will probably not be discussed much throughout the quarter. Therefore, you and your group members will be responsible for finding and presenting the information. Your debates **should be as interesting and creative as possible** because the group that wins the debate will receive extra credit. The winner of the debate will be determined by a majority vote of your class members. In addition, your group will have to hand in **ONE** paper that addresses your topic and the argument you are making in your debate (this is basically a hardcopy version of your presentation/debate). This paper is a group effort. Everyone must contribute to its content and writing. The paper is due the day of your debate and is to be between 5-7 pages in length, typed, double-spaced, 12-point font (Times New Roman), with page numbers and standard 1-inch margins. They must also include the proper citations, footnotes, a title, names, the date, and a reference page. Your entire group will receive the same grade which will be based on both the presentation and the paper.

EXAMS

Three exams will be given throughout the quarter and will basically cover each of the three sections in class (give or take a few topics). The three exams will be some combination of multiple choice, short identification, and essay. The 3rd exam will be given during finals week on **Tuesday, March 16, 9:30 am-11:18 pm**. Neither of the first two exams will be cumulative specifically, but the second exam may require you to apply concepts and information from the first section of the course. The third exam will pertain to all three sections of the course as a means of wrapping up the class. Specific details of the third exam will pertain to the third section while broader concepts will pertain to the entire course.

CLASS PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDANCE

Class participation is a vital component of this class making attendance both necessary and required. I do not claim to know everything there is to know about American politics, so class discussions are a means for all of us to learn. Attendance will be taken most class periods. Students who miss more than 3 classes will find their final grade reduced by 1/3 of a letter grade for each additional absence beyond 3. Students with perfect attendance (or have at least not missed beyond 3 classes) and contribute meaningfully to class discussions who, at the end of the course, find themselves boarding between two grades will be rewarded for their regular attendance and participation. Your participation will come from your class presentations, speaking in class about readings, raising questions about the presentation of the readings, or any other meaningful and substantive contributions. **Meaningful and substantive contributions do not include talking to your friends in class, sleeping, reading, doing homework, having your cell phone ring, or finding some other clever ways of being disruptive. Show some respect, common courtesy, and maturity by doing what is asked of you in a helpful and constructive way.**

EXTRA CREDIT

There is a maximum of 4 extra credit percentage points. One means of attaining extra credit is through winning your debate. If you win your debate, you and your group members will each receive 2 extra credit percentage points. The second way of getting extra credit is by participating in research conducted by political science faculty members and/or graduate students if the opportunity is available. Generally, there is only one opportunity and usually consists of completing a survey. This is worth 2 extra credit percentage points.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING:

Attendance and Participation	10%
Group Project	15%
Exam 1	20%
Exam 2	25%
Exam 3	30%
Extra Credit	Maximum of 4%

COURSE POLICIES:LATE ASSIGNMENTS AND MISSED EXAMS

Late assignments will be penalized 1/3rd of a letter grade for each day they are late. Assignments more than one week late will not be accepted. Failure to take exams at the scheduled time will result in a grade of zero. Exceptions to this policy must be cleared **in advance** and can only be granted when students present documentation of exceptional circumstance.

DISABILITY STATEMENT

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.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

All of the work you do in this course is expected to be your own. Absolutely no cheating or plagiarism (using someone else's words or ideas without proper citations) will be tolerated. Any cases of cheating or plagiarism will be reported to the university committee on academic misconduct and handled according to university policy.

COURSE OUTLINE AND READING SCHEDULE**Section 1: The Foundations and Institutions of American Government**WEEK 1:

Tuesday, Jan. 6	Course introduction
Thursday, Jan. 8	Chapters 1 (Democracy) and 2 (Constitution)

WEEK 2:

Tuesday, Jan. 13	Chapter 3 (Federalism)
Thursday, Jan. 15	Chapter 4 (Structural Foundations)

WEEK 3:

Tuesday, Jan. 20	Chapter 11 (Congress)
Thursday, Jan. 22	Chapter 12 (Presidency)

WEEK 4:

Tuesday, Jan. 27	Chapter 14 (Courts)
Thursday, Jan. 29	EXAM 1

Section 2: Political Behavior and the Political Process

WEEK 5:

Tuesday, Feb. 3 Chapter 5 (Public Opinion)

Thursday, Feb. 5 Chapter 6 (News Media)

WEEK 6:

Tuesday, Feb. 10 Chapter 7 (Interest Groups)

Thursday, Feb. 12 Chapter 8 (Social Movements)

WEEK 7:

Tuesday, Feb. 17 Chapter 9 (Parties)

Thursday, Feb. 19 Chapter 10 (Elections and Participation)

WEEK 8:

Tuesday, Feb. 24 **EXAM 2**

Section 3: The Function of the Government

Thursday, Feb. 26 Chapter 15 (Civil Liberties)

WEEK 9:

Tuesday, March 2 Chapter 16 (Civil Rights)

Thursday, March 4 TBA

WEEK 10:

Tuesday, March 9 Chapter 17 (Domestic Policy)

Thursday, March. 11 Wrap-up, review, class evaluations

WEEK 11:

Final Exam: Tuesday, March 16, 9:30AM-11:18AM