

Political Science 110
American Political Systems
Spring 2006

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Office Hours: M, T, W, TH 1:00-2:00 and by appointment

INTRODUCTION

This course is an introduction to the institutions, processes and policies of the American political system. This introduction strives for three basic goals. First, the course attempts to develop the students' basic understanding of the fundamental characteristics of American political institutions and the forces that influence the decisions of elites who direct those institutions. Second, the course tries to introduce students to a critical evaluation of the performance of those institutions and elites and to encourage the student to examine the achievements of the political system in comparison to the ideals of democracy. Third, the course aims to offset the cynicism and privatism prevalent in the American political system and to help students recognize the positive and necessary role that politics play in the health of any democratic political system. It is assumed that each of these goals represents a necessary condition for participation in a democratic polity.

ATTENDANCE

Students are required to attend all classes. Attendance will be part of the instructor evaluation grade. Students missing class for legitimate reasons will be excused but the instructor reserves the right to judge the legitimacy of the excuse. Common courtesy also requires that students inform the instructor as soon as when absences will be unavoidable.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

All students should be aware of their obligations under the Academic Honesty Policy published in the Student Handbook.

BOOKS

Edward Greenberg and Benjamin Page, **America's Democratic Republic**, (Pearson Longman, 2005)

William Hudson, **American Democracy in Peril**, (Congressional Quarterly Press, 2004)

Beth Shulman, **The Betrayal of Work**, (The New Press, 2003)

EVALUATION OF THE STUDENTS' WORK

The student's final grade will be based on a 300 point system.

Mid term exam	100 points
Final Exam	100 points
Response to <u>The Betrayal of Work</u>	50 points
Journal and Instructor Evaluation	50 points

Mid Term Exams

The mid-term will consist of two parts. Part I will include five identification items that will focus on key ideas, terms or concepts introduced during the first half of the course. Each will be worth 10 points and should be explained in three or four sentences. Part II will require the student to choose one of two essay questions to answer. The essay will be worth 50 points.

Final Exam

The final exam will consist of two parts. Part I will be sixty multiple choice questions that will focus on key ideas, terms or concepts introduced throughout the course. Part II will require the student to choose one of two essay questions to answer. The focus of the essays will be limited to material presented after the mid term exam and will be worth 40 points.

The Betrayal of Work

Students will submit a book review of Beth Shulman's **The Betrayal of Work**. This paper should be three to five pages typewritten and should engage the questions such as those listed below. Some of the questions overlap or are otherwise related to each other. As such, students might answer them simultaneously and should not treat them as a series of take home essay questions. Rather, students should write an integrated essay reflecting on what they have read. Students should also be aware that they need not address every question listed below with a distinct answer. This book review is **due 2/10**.

- What is the principal thesis of the book?
- Does the material in the book support the thesis offered by the author? What evidence in the book can be offered to support her conclusions? What examples, data, or illustrations best represent the author's thesis?
- What are the books strengths? What are the books weaknesses? What elements of the book did you find most compelling? What element of the book did you find least compelling? Why?

JOURNALS and INSTRUCTOR EVALUATION

The instructor will evaluate each student for his or her participation, involvement in and contributions to the course. This portion of the grade will reflect all activities in the course that are not otherwise specified in the syllabus including attendance and participation in class discussion.

This portion of the grade will also involve a “news” journal that students will keep and submit for periodic review. Each entry will focus on a news story that the student has read in a newspaper or on the internet. This journal will include one entry per week for the semester. There will be a total of 13 entries. **At least half of the entries must be from a newspaper. Internet articles provided by newspaper web sites do not count as articles from a newspaper.**

The stories to be selected will need to be within the areas of class interest as indicated below. Prior to each set of articles, the class will be given guidance on what subject matter can be included in the topic. *Students who have questions about whether or not specific articles fall within the subject area should direct them to the instructor.*

Weeks 1 and 2: American beliefs and democracy

Weeks 3: The Constitution

Weeks 4, 5 and 6: Economic power and public policy

Weeks 7: National security policy

Weeks 8, 9 and 10: Parties and elections

Week 10: Interest groups

Weeks 11 and 12: Congress and the President

Entries should include a summary of the story that is at least 150 words in length. (Longer stories will more readily lend themselves to this requirement) Students should also write **at least one** question (multiple questions are welcome) that is prompted by the story and indicates what additional information the student would like the author of the story to provide. The entries must be typed and kept together in a folder or binder.

The evaluation of the entries will include the following considerations:

- The entries should present information from news stories, not editorials or commentary. **The summaries are not to represent the student’s opinion.** This concern should be taken into consideration in selecting the source for the entry.
- Questions should be thoughtful and very short questions will likely be evaluated poorly. Questions can be pointed or raise critical issues, however. E.G., if the student thinks that a story neglects key facts or is bias, he or she can write a question raising that concern. Avoid overtly rhetorical questions, however.
- Clarity and economy of language, organization and editing of the writing and basic rules of grammar will all be considered in evaluating the entry.

Six times during the semester as specified in the course outline below, the class will be dedicated to discussing the questions generated by the articles that students have selected for the journals.

COURSE OUTLINE AND CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

Date	Topic	Assignment
1/16	Introduction	
1/18	Political Economy: Why Structure Matters I	Hudson, Ch. 6
1/20	Political Economy: Why Structure Matters II	
1/23	Politics, Culture and Belief	Greenberg and Page, Ch. 1 and 6
1/25	Theories of Democracy	Hudson, Introduction and Ch. 3
1/27	Theories of Democracy II	
1/30	Class discussion: American beliefs and democracy	
2/1	The Political Theory of the Constitution	Greenberg and Page, Ch. 2, <u>Federalist</u> #10 and #51, A-20 to A-26
2/3	Constitutional Structure	Hudson, Ch. 1
2/6	Federalism	Greenberg and Page, Ch. 3
2/8	Class discussion: The Constitution	
2/10	Social Class and power	Shulman, <u>The Betrayal of Work, entire</u>
2/13	The Distribution of Income and Wealth	Hudson, Ch. 7
2/15	The Functions of the State	Charles Lindblom, "The Market as Prison," <u>ON RESERVE</u>
2/17	Economic Policy	Greenberg and Page, pp. 451-466

2/20	Economic Policy	
2/22	Social Welfare	Greenberg and Page, pp. 467-477
2/24	Class discussion: Economic power and public policy	
2/27	National Security Policy	Greenberg and Page, Ch. 16; Hudson, Ch. 8
3/1	Class discussion: National Security Policy	
3/3	Mid Term exam	
3/13	Functions of Parties and Elections	Greenberg and Page, pp. 247-251, 274-282; Hudson pp. 169-175.
3/15	Parties Organization	Greenberg and Page, pp. 256-264, 292-304
3/17	Voting	Greenberg and Page, pp. 282-292; Hudson, Ch. 4
3/20	Party competition	Greenberg and Page, pp. 252-256, 265-270.
3/22	No class	
3/24	Modern political campaigning	Hudson, pp. 175-192, 199-206
3/27	Media	Greenberg and Page, Ch. 7: Hudson , pp. 192-198
3/29	Class discussion: Parties and elections	
3/31	Interest Groups formation and activities	Greenberg and Page, pp. 216-232
4/3	Organization costs and incentives	Greenberg and Page, 233-244
4/5	Congressional representation	Greenberg and Page, Ch. 11
4/7	Congressional committees	

- 4/10 Congressional leadership
- 4/12 The context of presidential leadership Greenberg and Page, Ch. 12
- 4/19 Presidential resources and the institutionalized presidency
- 4/21 The President and Foreign Policy
- 4/24 The executive branch Greenberg and Page, Ch. 13
- 4/26 **Class discussion: Congress and the President**