

Political Science 110
American Political Systems
Fall 2008

John Reynolds
Comenius 113
Phone: 861-1408
E-mail: mejvr01@moravian.edu

Class meetings: M,W, F 7:50 to 8:40

Office Hours: M, F 9:00 – 10:30; T, 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.

BOOKS

Edward Greenberg and Benjamin Page, **America's Democratic Republic**, (Pearson Longman, 2007)

William Hudson, **American Democracy in Peril**, (Congressional Quarterly Press, 2006)

Katherine Newman and Victor Tan Chen, **The Missing Class: Portraits of the Near Poor in America**, (Beacon Press, 2007)

Washington Post National Weekly Edition (available by subscription at Moravian College Bookstore)

ACADEMIC HONESTY

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

CELL PHONES

Cell phones should be turned off and stored away during class. Students whose cell phones are visible will be asked to put them away. Students who answer them or use them in any way **during class time** will be asked to leave.

EVALUATION OF THE STUDENTS' WORK

The student's final grade will be based on a 400 point system.

Mid-term exam	100 points
Final exam	100 points
Washington Post quizzes	100 points
Book review	60 points
Instructor evaluation	40 points

Exams

For each exam, students will be provided possible essays in advance of the exam that will focus student preparation for the exam.

Quizzes

Students will be given 10 quizzes - 1 per week for 10 weeks - based on materials from the **Washington Post National Weekly Edition**, which is available, by subscription through the Moravian College Book Store.

The Missing Class: Portraits of the Near Poor in America

Students will submit a book review of **The Missing Class: Portraits of the Near Poor in America** by Katherine Newman and Victor Tan Chen. This paper should be four to six 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 9/24**.

- 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 book's strengths and weaknesses? What elements of the book did you find most compelling? What elements did you find least compelling? Why?

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.

COURSE OUTLINE AND CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

Date	Topic	Assignment
8/25	Introduction	
8/27	Politics, Culture and Belief	Hudson, Ch. 3; Greenberg and Page, pp. 143-163
8/29	Politics, Culture and Belief continued	
9/3	Democratic Theory and American Politics	Hudson, Introduction; Greenberg and Page, Ch. 1
9/5	Democratic Theory and American Politics continued	
9/8	Washington Post Quiz 1 and class discussion	
9/10	The Political Theory of the Constitution	Greenberg and Page, Ch. 2, <u>Federalist #10</u> and #51, A-20 to A-26
9/12	Constitutional Structure	Hudson, Ch. 1
9/15	Constitutional Structure Washington Post Quiz 2	Greenberg and Page, Ch. 3
9/17	Political Economy: Why Structure Matters I	Hudson, Ch. 6
9/19	Political Economy: Why Structure Matters II	
9/22	Washington Post Quiz 3 and class discussion	
9/24	Social Class and Power	Newman and Chen, <u>The Missing Class: Portraits of the Near Poor in America</u>
9/26	Social Class and Power continued	

9/29	The Functions of the State - Capital accumulation	Hudson, Ch.7; Charles Lindblom, "The Market as Prison," <u>ON RESERVE</u>
	Washington Post Quiz 4	
10/1	Capital Accumulation continued	
10/3	Mid Term Exam	
10/8	The Functions of the State - Legitimation	Greenberg and Page, Ch. 15
10/10	Functions of Parties and Elections	Greenberg and Page, Ch. 9
10/ 13	Washington Post Quiz 5 and discussion	
10/15	Modern Political Campaigning I	Hudson, Ch. 5
10/17	Modern Political Campaigning II	
10/20	The Context of Presidential Leadership Washington Post Quiz 6	Greenberg and Page, Ch. 12
10/22	Foreign Policy and War Powers	Hudson, Ch. 8
10/24	Abuses of Presidential Power	
10/27	Washington Post Quiz 7 and discussion	
10/29	The Public Presidency	
10/31	The Executive Branch	Greenberg and Page, Ch. 13
11/3	Washington Post Quiz 8 and discussion	
11/5	The election of 2008	
11/7	The Institutionalized Presidency	
11/10	Interest Groups Formation and Activities Washington Post Quiz 9	Greenberg and Page, Ch. 8
11/12	Organization Costs and Incentives	
11/14	Interest Group Winners and Losers	
11/17	Washington Post Quiz 10 and discussion	

11/19	Congressional Structure and Functions	Greenberg and Page, Ch.11
11/21	Representation	
11/24	Congressional Committees	
12/1	Congressional Leadership	
12/3	Congressional Process	
12/5	The Courts	Greenberg and Page, Ch. 14
12/8	Judicial Review and Democracy	Hudson, Ch. 2
12/10	Conclusion	