

Political Science 110  
American Political Systems  
Spring 2010

John Reynolds  
Comenius 113  
Phone: 861-1408  
E-mail: [mejvr01@moravian.edu](mailto:mejvr01@moravian.edu)

**Office Hours:** M, W 1:00 – 2:00, 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 four 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 seeks to foster students' attention to public affairs and political events and provide the foundation for making a habit of paying attention to ongoing political activities and issues. Third, 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**

William E. Hudson, **American Democracy in Peril**, 6<sup>th</sup> edition, (Congressional Quarterly Press, 2010)

Samuel Kernell and Steven Smith, **Principles and Practice of American Politics**, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, (Congressional Quarterly Press, 2010)

## 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
Public Affairs Journal	75 points
Instructor evaluation	25 points

### Exams

Both the midterm and final exams will be essay exams. Students will be provided possible essays in advance of the exam that will focus student preparation for the exam.

### Public Affairs Journal

Given that one of the goals of this course is to develop in students the habit of being attentive to ongoing political events and activities, students are required to keep a Public Affairs Journal. There will be 10 journal entries and one will be due on each Monday that the class meets. Specific dates are listed in the class schedule below.

Unless otherwise approved by the instructor, entries for the journal are to be based on material taken from the "News" section of the National Public Radio web site. Students seeking to use other on line or print sources must get approval from the instructor. Students can choose any item presented on the NPR site during the week prior to when the entry is due. Students are not required to submit a hard copy of the story but should have a copy available electronically in case a request to produce or share the article is made. If additional copies of the article need to be produced or distributed, the instructor will assume responsibility for the reproduction or distribution of the original.

Each journal entry will be 3 to 5 type written paragraphs in length. Each entry should include a summary of the story, a statement of why the student selected the article and a question or questions that the student had about the focus of the story after reading it. The entries can also include statements that connect the story or item to material learned in this course or in other courses. ***The entries should also include the proper citations for on line sources. The format of such citations can be found in the Bedford Handbook.***

Each entry will be scored on a 5 point scale. Points will be earned based on

- the quality of the summary – how well the students appears to understand what the story was about
- clarity of the writing – how well the student communicates the content of his or her ideas to the reader
- the thoughtfulness of the questions posed after reading the story
- the use or integration of materials from this or other courses
- appropriate citation

On selected Wednesdays (specified below), class time will be devoted to discussing journal entries. Students will be asked to volunteer to have a journal entry discussed by the class. Volunteers will be solicited on the Friday before the scheduled discussion. For discussion days, the student will provide the instructor with a copy of the article on which the journal entry is written but will not be asked to share the written entry. The student volunteer will be asked to present the entry orally (preferably not by reading it) including stating the question or questions that were developed for the entry. Student presentations will be incorporated into the instructor evaluation portion of the course grade. No one will be allowed to volunteer more than once unless after each student has been accorded a chance to volunteer.

After completion of the 10 entries, students will submit an “op-ed” piece on one of the issues featured in the entries. This is essentially short (700-800 word) persuasive essay in which the student will seek to present and defend a thesis about a pending issue. The op-ed piece will be worth 25 points.

### **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**

<u><b>Date</b></u>	<u><b>Topic</b></u>	<u><b>Reading</b></u>
1/18	Introduction	
1/20	Democratic Theory	Hudson, pp. 1-23
1/22	Democratic Theory	Kernell and Smith, pp. 683-703
1/25	Individualism <b>Journal entry #1 due</b>	Hudson, pp. 101-133 and Kernell and Smith, pp. 25-32
1/27	The U.S. Constitution	Kernell and Smith, pp. 33-57, 62-72
1/29	The U.S. Constitution <b>Discussion volunteers due</b>	Hudson, pp. 25-61
2/1	Federalism <b>Journal entry #2 due</b>	Kernell and Smith, pp. 82-106
2/3	Journal discussion	

- 2/5 American political economy: Charles Lindblom, "The Market as Prison,"  
how we allocate power <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdfplus/2130588.pdf>
- 2/8 Class and inequality Hudson, pp. 251-193  
**Journal entry #3 due**
- 2/10 Class and inequality
- 2/12 The Functions of the State Hudson, pp. 213-249  
**Discussion volunteers due**
- 2/15 The Functions of the State Hudson, pp. 295-341  
**Journal entry #4 due**
- 2/17 Journal discussion
- 2/19 Interest groups in the Kernell and Smith, pp. 625-641  
policy process
- 2/22 Interest groups: organizational Kernell and Smith, pp. 642-653  
costs and methods  
**Journal entry #5 due**
- 2/24 Interest groups: incentives Kernell and Smith, pp. 1-24  
and interest group success
- 2/26 Party functions and Kernell and Smith, pp. 587-599, 488-502  
partisanship  
**Discussion volunteers due**
- 3/1 **Mid-term exam**  
**Journal entry #6 due**
- 3/3 Journal discussion
- 3/5 Voting Kernell and Smith, pp. 600-610, 503-510
- 3/15 Party organization and history  
**Journal entry #7 due**
- 3/17 From "New Politics" to Hudson, pp. 169-212  
conventional practice
- 3/19 Media, marketing and money Kernell and Smith, pp. 654-669  
**Discussion volunteers due**

3/22	Presidential power and leadership <b>Journal entry #8 due</b>	Kernell and Smith, pp. 273-293
3/24	Journal discussion	
3/26	The “Public Presidency”	Kernell and Smith, pp. 303-336
3/29	The President as Chief Executive <b>Journal entry #9 due</b>	Kernell and Smith, pp. 337-364
3/31	The institutionalized presidency	Kernell and Smith, pp. 294-302
4/7	The President and foreign policy <b>Journal entry #10 due</b>	
4/9	No Class	
4/12	Congressional functions and organization <b>Discussion volunteers due</b>	Kernell and Smith, pp. 212-228
4/14	Journal discussion	
4/16	Committees in Congress	Kernell and Smith, pp. 251-272
4/19	Parties in Congress	Kernell and Smith, pp. 228-250
4/21	The congressional process <b>Journal Op-ed piece due</b>	
4/23	The Supreme Court and judicial review	Kernell and Smith, pp. 421-427
4/26	Judicial decision making	Kernell and Smith, pp. 389-420
4/28	Review	
4/30	Review	