

Political Science 110  
American Political Systems  
Fall 2010

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**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 has four basic goals. First, the course attempts to develop the students' basic understanding of the fundamental characteristics of American political institutions and the decisions of elites who direct those institutions. Second, the course seeks to foster students' attention to public affairs and political events. 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. Fourth, 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.

## **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)

Edward Greenberg and Benjamin Page, **America's Democratic Republic**, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, (Longman, 2009)

David Cay Johnston, **Free Lunch**, (Penguin Books, 2007)

## **EVALUATION OF THE STUDENTS' WORK**

The student's final grade will be based on a 160 point system.

Take home essay 1	25 points
Take home essay 2	50 points
Final exam	50 points
Policy issue report	25 points
Instructor evaluation	10 points

Final grades will be assigned using the following guidelines:

A	150 points
A-	144
B+	140
B	134
B-	128
C+	124
C	118
C-	112
D+	107
D	104
D-	96
F	>96

## Take home essays

Students will complete two take home essays. Essays are to be typewritten and will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- The use of concepts learned in the course
- Clear and concrete use of empirical information developed in the course
- Clarity of organization and writing
- Incorporation of the course readings into the essay
- Appropriate citation of course materials and any outside sources used in the essay.

The essay questions, length requirements and the due date are listed below.

1. **Due 9/24** - What are the origins and consequences of the structure of the U.S. constitutional system? (2-3 pages)
2. **Due 11/3** - What is the nature of inequality in America and how is it reflected in the functions of the state and American public policy? (4-5 pages)

## Policy issue report

Students will submit a short written report on a policy issue of their choosing. Students will select, in consultation with the instructor, an issue by **9/10**. Over the course of the term, students will find a **minimum** of 5 news stories from print or on line sources. No

two stories can be from the same calendar week but the stories do not need to be from consecutive calendar weeks.

For each news story, students will write a one or two paragraph summary of the content of the story without editorial comment from the student. After completion of at least five distinct summaries, students will then write a three to five page summary of what was learned about the issue. Brief editorial comments can be presented as the conclusion to the description of what was learned.

The report will be submitted for grading on **11/22**. Students are welcome to submit a draft of the summary of the first news article to receive feedback but such submissions will not be graded. The final report will be typewritten and the summaries of the articles can be single spaced but the concluding summary of the overall issue should be double spaced.

### **A NOTE ON SOURCES:**

- Students should strive to use stories presented by reputable news organizations (E.G. The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, The Christian Science Monitor, The Washington Post, National Public Radio (web site), The Washington Times, Politico, Congressional Quarterly Weekly Reports).
- Entries should be taken from the news sections of the source. Editorial and commentary should not be used for the basic entries.
- If there is any question about a site, the student should ask the instructor about its standing or its potential bias.
- Students should try to vary their sources. Strive to use at least two different publications or sites.
- Blogs and advocacy publications or sites should not be used
- Appropriate citation is required.

### **Final exam**

The final exam will consist of two essays completed during the exam period assigned by the registrar. Students will be provided with four possible essays in advance of the exam. On the day of the exam, the instructor will select two of the four for students to answer.

### **Instructor Evaluation**

The instructor will evaluate each student for his or her 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 class participation.

## **COURSE OUTLINE AND CLASS ASSIGNMENTS**

<b><u>Date</u></b>	<b><u>Topic</u></b>	<b><u>Reading</u></b>
8/30	Introduction	
9/1	Democratic Theory	Hudson, "Introduction"
9/3	Democratic Theory	Hudson, pp. 117-118
9/8	Individualism	Hudson, Ch. 3
9/10	The U.S. Constitution	Greenberg and Page, pp. A-22 to A- 32 and Ch. 2
9/13	The U.S. Constitution	Hudson, pp. 25-61
9/15	Federalism	Greenberg and Page, Ch.3
9/17	Federalism	
9/20	Party functions and the two party system	Greenberg and Page, pp. 250-255, 279-287, 260-264
9/22	Voting	Greenberg and Page, pp. 287-296, 311-314
9/24	Organization and history	Greenberg and Page, pp. 255-260, 264-274
9/27	"New Politics"	Hudson, Ch. 5
9/29	Media, marketing and money	Greenberg and Page, pp. 296-310
10/1	American political economy	Charles Lindblom, "The Market as Prison," <a href="http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdfplus/2130588.pdf">http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdfplus/2130588.pdf</a>
10/4	American political economy	Johnston, Ch. 1 and 2
10/6	Class and inequality	Hudson, Ch. 7 Johnston, Ch. 26
10/8	Class and inequality	Johnston, Ch. 25
10/13	The Functions of the State	Hudson, Ch. 6; Greenberg and Page, Ch. 15
10/15	Public policy and power	Johnston, Ch. 15 and selected chapters assigned in class: either (Ch. 3, 5, 7, 9, 14, 17-19) or (CH. 4 , 6, 8, 12, 21-23)

10/18	Public policy and power	
10/20	The Functions of the State	Greenberg and Page, Ch. 16
10/22	The Functions of the State	Greenberg and Page, Ch. 17
10/25	Interest groups: functions, costs and methods	Greenberg and Page, Ch. 8; Johnston, Ch. 10
10/27	Interest groups: incentives and interest group success	
10/29	Presidential power and Leadership	Greenberg and Page, Ch. 12
11/1	The public presidency	
11/ 3	President as Chief Executive	Greenberg and Page, Ch. 13
11/5	The 2010 elections	
11/8	Institutionalized presidency	
11/10	President and foreign policy	
11/12	President and foreign policy	Hudson Ch. 8
11/15	Congressional functions and organization	Greenberg and Page, Ch. 12
11/17	Congressional representation	
11/19	Committees in Congress	
11/22	Parties in Congress	
11/29	The congressional process	
12/1	The Supreme Court and judicial review	Greenberg and Page, Ch. 14
12/3	Judicial decision making	
12/6	TBD	
12/8	Closing	