

Political Science 110
American Political Systems
Fall 2010

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Office Hours: M, T, W, TH 10:00 to 11:00 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.

1. 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.
2. The course seeks to foster students' attention to public affairs and political events.
3. The course tries introduces 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.
4. 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**, 6th edition, (Congressional Quarterly Press, 2010)

Edward Greenberg and Benjamin Page, **America's Democratic Republic**, 3rd 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.

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|-----------------------|-----------|
| 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:

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|----|------------|
| 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 and the due dates for those questions will be provided in class at least one week before the essay is due.

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 1/26. Over the course of the term, students will find a **minimum** of 5 news stories from print or on line sources. The stories must be found or accessed over the course of the semester. That is, at least one story should be found, accessed and written up every two weeks. Students can be

required to show proof of regular attention to the issue upon request by the instructor. E.G. Students will need to complete the first story summary by 2/9, a second by 2/23 and so forth. No two stories can be from the same calendar week.

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 4/20. 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 or what constitutes commentary, 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

| <u>Date</u> | <u>Topic</u> | <u>Reading</u> |
|--------------------|--|---|
| 1/17 | Introduction | |
| 1/21 | Democratic Theory | Hudson, "Introduction" |
| 1/24 | Democratic Theory | Hudson, Ch.3 |
| 1/26 | The U.S. Constitution | Greenberg and Page, pp. A-22 to A- 32 and Ch. 2 |
| 1/28 | The U.S. Constitution | Hudson, pp. 25-61 |
| 1/31 | Federalism | Greenberg and Page, Ch.3 |
| 2/2 | Federalism | |
| 2/4 | Party functions and the two party system | Greenberg and Page, pp. 250-255, 279-287, 260-264 |
| 2/7 | Voting | Greenberg and Page, pp. 287-296, 311-314 |
| 2/9 | Organization and history | Greenberg and Page, pp. 255-260, 264-274 |
| 2/11 | "New Politics" | Hudson, Ch. 5 |
| 2/14 | Media, marketing and money | Greenberg and Page, pp. 296-310 |
| 2/16 | TBD | |
| 2/18 | American political economy | Charles Lindblom, "The Market as Prison," http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdfplus/2130588.pdf |
| 2/21 | American political economy | Johnston, Ch. 1 and 2 |
| 2/23 | Class and inequality | Hudson, Ch. 7 Johnston, Ch. 26 |
| 2/25 | Class and inequality | Johnston, Ch. 25 |
| 2/28 | The Functions of the State | Hudson, Ch. 6; Greenberg and Page, Ch. 15 |
| 3/2 | 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) |

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| 3/4 | Public policy and power | |
| 3/14 | The Functions of the State | Greenberg and Page, Ch. 16 |
| 3/16 | The Functions of the State | Greenberg and Page, Ch. 17 |
| 3/18 | Interest groups: functions, costs and methods | Greenberg and Page, Ch. 8; Johnston, Ch. 10 |
| 3/21 | Interest groups: incentives and interest group success | |
| 3/23 | TBD | |
| 3/25 | Presidential power and Leadership | Greenberg and Page, Ch. 12 |
| 3/28 | The public presidency | |
| 3/30 | President as Chief Executive | Greenberg and Page, Ch. 13 |
| 4/1 | Institutionalized presidency | |
| 4/4 | President and foreign policy | |
| 4/6 | President and foreign policy | Hudson Ch. 8 |
| 4/8 | Congressional functions and organization | Greenberg and Page, Ch. 12 |
| 4/11 | Congressional representation | |
| 4/13 | Committees in Congress | |
| 4/15 | Parties in Congress | |
| 4/18 | The congressional process | |
| 4/20 | The Supreme Court and judicial review | Greenberg and Page, Ch. 14 |
| 4/27 | Judicial decision making | |
| 4/29 | Closing | |