

Political Science 110
American Political System
Fall 2012

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

Office Hours: M, W and F 10:00 to 11:00 and by appointment

Course Objectives

This course is an introduction to the institutions, processes and policies of the American political system. This introduction has the following objectives:

1. To understand the nature of democracy in American and to examine the achievements of the political system in comparison to the ideals of democracy.
2. To develop the students' basic understanding of the fundamental characteristics of American political institutions and processes.
3. To develop an understanding of the conditions of power, particularly economic power, in America.
4. To understand how the conditions of power shape both the priorities of American government and American public policy.
5. To foster students' attention to and participation in public affairs and political events as a necessary requirement of a healthy democracy.

Attendance

Students are expected to attend all classes. Absences due to participation in legitimate Moravian College extracurricular activities, a doctor's excuse or notification by the Dean of Students Office will allow a student to be excused from class. All other excuses are subject to the instructor's discretion.

Academic Honesty

All students should be aware of their obligations under the Academic Honesty Policy published in the *Moravian College Student Handbook 2011-2012*. A copy of that document can be found at <http://www.moravian.edu/studentLife/handbook/academic/academic2.html>.

Learning Disability accommodations

Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Elaine Mara, assistant director of learning services for academic and disability support at 1307 Main Street, or by calling 610-861-1510. Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the Academic Support Center.

Books

William E. Hudson, **American Democracy in Peril**, 7th edition, (Congressional Quarterly Press, 2012)

Edward Greenberg and Benjamin Page, **America's Democratic Republic**, 4th Edition, (Pearson, 2011)

John Stuart Mill, **On Liberty**, (Pearson, 2007)

EVALUATION OF THE STUDENTS' WORK

The student's final grade will be based on a 200 point system:

Take home essay 1	40 points
Take home essay 2	60 points
Final exam	50 points
Policy issue report	40 points
Instructor evaluation	10 points

Take home essays

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

- Does the essay directly respond to the prompt?
- Is there clear and effective use of concepts and/or empirical information developed in the course?
- Does the essay incorporate course readings into the essay?
- Is the essay clearly and logically organized?
- Are there clear arguments and effective use of evidence to support observations?
- Are course materials and any outside sources used in the essay appropriately cited?

Essay 1

Using ideas and concepts from the **course readings** and in class materials, student will write an essay contrasting the values of individualism, community and democracy. The essay should identify which model or models of democracy are most consistent with the perspectives of John Stuart Mill on liberty and which are most consistent with the ideas of William Hudson on community. The essay should include a summary of the relevant model of democracy and an clear explanation why that model or models was chosen as reflective of the ideas or Mill and of Hudson. This essay should be at least five typewritten pages and use proper citation. **Due date 9/19.**

Essay 2

From 9/17 to 10/15, the course focuses on the questions of economic power and the presence of inequality in the economy, society and political system. Students will write an essay describing how such inequalities are manifest in both the experience of social class in America and the exercise of political power in U.S. elections and public policy. This essay should be at least five typewritten pages and use proper citation. **Due date 10/29.**

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 **9/5**. 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.* 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 **11/28**. 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 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, participation in class discussions and activities, and other evidence of engagement in class including out of class communications.

Course Outline and Reading Assignments

Readings are to be completed by the date listed for the class with which they are listed. Additional readings might be distributed in class. Periodically, study questions will also be distributed in class.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Reading</u>
8/27	Introduction	
8/29	Democratic Theory	Hudson, "Introduction"
8/31	Democratic Theory	Hudson, pp. 121-125
9/5	Individual and Community	Mill, <u>On Liberty</u> , Ch. 1-4
9/7	Individual and Community	Hudson, Ch. 3
9/10	The U.S. Constitution	Greenberg and Page, pp. A-22 to A- 32 and Ch. 2
9/12	The U.S. Constitution	Hudson, Ch. 1
9/14	Federalism	Greenberg and Page, Ch.3
9/17	American political economy	Charles Lindblom, "The Market as Prison," http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdfplus/2130588.pdf
9/19	American political economy	
9/21-9/24	Class and inequality	Hudson, Ch. 7

9/26	The Functions of the State and power	Hudson, Ch. 6
9/28-10/1	The Functions of the State: Capital accumulation	Greenberg and Page, Ch. 15
10/3	The Functions of the State: Legitimation and social welfare	Greenberg and Page, Ch. 16
10/5	The Functions of the State: Legitimation and foreign policy	Greenberg and Page, Ch. 17
10/10	Interest groups: functions, costs and methods	Greenberg and Page, Ch. 8;
10/12	Incentives and interest group success	
10/15	TBD	
10/17	Party functions and the two party system	Greenberg and Page, Ch. 9
10/19	Voting	Greenberg and Page, Ch. 10
10/22	Organization and history	Greenberg and Page, Ch. 9
10/24-10/26	The “new Politics”	Hudson, Ch. 5
10/29	Media	Greenberg and Page, Ch. 7
10/31	Presidential power	Greenberg and Page, Ch. 1
11/2	The public presidency	
11/5	President as Chief Executive	Greenberg and Page, Ch. 13
11/7	Institutionalized presidency	
11/9	President and foreign policy	
11/12	President and foreign policy	Hudson Ch. 8
11/14	Congressional functions and organization	Greenberg and Page, Ch. 12
11/16	Congressional representation	

11/19	Committees in Congress	
11/26	Parties in Congress	
11/28	The congressional process	
11/30	Judicial power	Greenberg and Page, Ch. 14
12/3	Judicial decision making	
12/5	Closing	