

Political Science 110
American Political System
Spring 2013

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Office Hours: M, W and F 10:30 to 11:30 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 extracurricular activities, a doctor's excuse or notification by the Dean of Students Office will allow a student to be excused. All other excuses are subject to the instructor's judgment.

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

Jacob Hacker and Paul Pierson, **Winner-Take-All Politics**, (Simon and Schuster, 2010)

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)

EVALUATION OF THE STUDENTS' WORK

The student's final grade will be based on a 300 point system:

Quizzes (8)	40 points
Take home essay 1	50 points
Take home essay 2	50 points
Take home essay 3	50 points
Research Paper	100 points
Instructor evaluation	10 points

Quizzes

There will be 10 in class quizzes on *the readings for a given day*. Each quiz will be worth 5 points. Each quiz will be unannounced. Students will be able to drop the 2 lowest quiz grades. The quiz format will vary with some being short answer while others will be multiple choice.

Take home essays

Students will complete three of the four take home essays listed below. It will be the student's choice of which three he or she will complete. Essays are to be a minimum of 4 typewritten and should not exceed 8 typewritten pages. The essays will be evaluated on the following criteria:

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

Essay 1- Due date: 9/18

From 8/28 to 9/11, this course focuses on several key values that are important parts of American political culture. These include liberty, equality, community, and individualism. Choose three of these four elements of the course and, with specific reference to readings and in-class materials, describe why they are important elements of American democracy and how they are either manifest or undervalued in the constitutional system.

Essay 2 - Due date 10/16

From 9/13 to 10/4, the course focuses on economic power and the presence of inequality in the U.S. economy, society and political system. With specific reference to readings and in class

materials, students will write an essay describing how such inequalities are manifest in both the experience of **social class** and in the enactment of **public policy** in the United States. Be sure to cite specific policies or types of policy as examples to illustrate whatever general statements are offered.

Essay 3 – Due date 11/1

There has been much criticism about the level of partisanship in the contemporary political system. It can also be said that political parties are essential elements of the political system and that the party system has undergone significant changes over the past 50 years. Explain why parties are so important and describe the major changes associated with the idea on the “new politics” that began in the period after 1960. What have these changes done to lead to an increased role for money and media in our elections?

Essay 4 – Due date – Final exam date

Identify the 3 most important points that you have learned about the U.S. Congress and the 3 most important points that you have learned about the U.S. President that you would want your peers to understand about these institutions. Explain why you consider these points to be so important.

Research paper - Due date

Students will write a 10 to 12 page research paper on a topic relevant to the course. The specific paper topic will be selected by the student after consultation with the instructor. The topics that can be selected include anything that corresponds to the topics listed in the course readings section of the syllabus. Students must submit a proposed topic statement by September 6. The statement should be at least one full paragraph in length, indicate the topic to be researched, and include as much detail as possible as to what the student plans to do with the topic.

Note that the research papers are to expository and not persuasive essays. The purpose of the paper will be to identify and explain the essential elements of the issue being researched. The paper will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- Clarity of organization and exposition
- Use of evidence to support the principal thesis
- The quality of resources used
- Grammar and language used
- Proper citation

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

Listed below are the key topics to be covered in the course. Following the date and subject matter for a given date, the reading assignment to be completed for that class is listed. Following the reading assignment, there are short lists of specific bulleted topics to be covered in class on the date listed. Students should use these lists as a way of organizing their readings and in anticipation of quizzes.

8/26 Introduction

- Culture and ideas as learned

8/28 -8/30 Democratic Theory

Read: Hudson, "Introduction" and pp. 121-125

- Models and implications for government
- Issues: Liberty, Equality, Scope of democracy

9/4 Individualism and community

Read: Hudson, Ch. 3

- Values of individualism
- Interdependence
- Exercise of liberty depends on social infrastructure
- Need for collective action
- Social capital
- Pathologies of rights politics

9/6 -9/9 Constitution

Read: *Federalist 10 and 51*, Greenberg and Page, pp. A-23 to A- 31 and Ch. 2

- Factions
- Reason and science of politics
- Mechanisms: separation of powers, federalism, size of the republic, republican form
- Constitution and democracy: Natural rights and property

9/11 Federalism

Read: Greenberg and Page, Ch.3

- Logic of federalism
- Delegated and reserved powers
- Federal powers: Article I (commerce clause), 14th Amendment, supremacy clause
- State powers: police powers

9/13 Structure of the economy as a source of power and policy

Read: Hudson, pp. 263-272, 296-300

- Means of Production – Physical plant and equipment, technology, raw materials, land, property rights, CAPITAL
- Mode of Production – Historical category describing how the *means of production* are organized
- U.S. mode of production → global, corporate capitalism, “mixed economy”
- Concentration of ownership
- Dynamic process → business cycle, technological change
- Economic power and political equality: Basic inventory
 - Structural power
 - Elections and interest group process
 - Functions of the State and public policy

9/16 Class as basic element of structure/Inequality

Read: Hacker & Pierson, pp. 1-33; Hudson, pp. 272-286

- Define class by relationship to the means of production
- Distribution of income and wealth
- Trickle up economics and the decline of political equality
- Economic security and life chances
- Stagnant or declining individual and intergenerational mobility
- Poverty

9/18 Structure and policy: Changing structure

Read: Hacker & Pierson, pp. 33-40; Hudson, pp. 287-290

- Structural changes in the economy → from industrial to service
- Post WW II economy of consumption
- Globalization and deindustrialization
- Decline of union work
- Service sector → low wage work, fewer employer provided benefits, less job security and more part time employment

- Stagnation of real wages post 1973: Gains due to hours worked, second incomes, women entering workforce, increased debt as a substitute for wage increases
- Financialization of economy: speculation and collapse
- Conventional hypotheses: SBTC (skill based technological change)

9/20 Public Policy as a Source of Income Distribution

Read: Hacker & Pierson, pp. 41-91; Hudson, pp. 290-296

- Conventional hypotheses: SBTC (skill based technological change)
- Basic issue is how might government policy impact distribution of pre-tax income
- Markets are necessarily intertwined with public policy and government
- Govt. writes the rules that structure market outcome before issues of taxation and distribution
- Tax policy
- Drift: Prolonged failure to respond to shifting realities of the dynamic economy
- Structuring rules for distribution of market income before taxes and benefits

9/23 Power and the policy process: Pluralism and interest groups

Read: Greenberg and Page, Ch. 8; Hacker & Pierson, Ch. 4

- Politics as spectacle vs. organized combat
- Pluralist theory
- The importance of organization
- Inside game
- Outside game

9/25 Evolution of Interest Group Structure → Hyperpluralism

Read: Hacker & Pierson, Ch. 5 and 6

- Groups multiply with the expansion of policy benefits (particularly during post WWII period and Great Society)
- “New” groups demanding “new rights” includes both corporate and “public interest group” organizations
- Growth in GOP support from business organizations
- Democrats and “post-materialist” groups
- Emergence of policy communities, think tanks and professional policy advocates

9/27 Group politics: privileged position of business

Read: Hudson, Ch. 6; Charles Lindblom, “The Market as Prison,”

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdfplus/2130588.pdf>

- Functional position: Market as Prison

- Ideological position of property rights
- Nondemocratic corporate decision making processes w/o accountability
- Representational inequalities and organizational incentives: who is organized and active
- Resource inequalities
- Access inequalities
- Incentives

9/30 Structure and policy: capital accumulation

Read: Greenberg and Page, Ch. 15

- Capital accumulation defined
- Functional power
- Capital accumulation institutionalized in law: Employment Act of 1946
- Policy benefits to capital
 - Public goods
 - Externalities and socialization of costs
 - Direct consumption
 - Subsidy (tax expenditures)
 - Reliance on regressive taxation
- Rewards for elected officials who commit to this priority: campaign contributions, social standing, future employment

10/2 Structure and policy: Social control

Read: Greenberg and Page, Ch. 16

- Maintain social order, social control and stable environment for investment in the face of the normal disruptions associated with the dynamic nature of capitalism.
- Socialization and perception that system is legitimate: Public education, prevailing narratives (e.g. elections) and public ritual
- Social welfare and safety net
 - Ideological framing of welfare
 - Limitations and levels of poverty
 - Alienation and anti-social behavior
- Coercive force: Police

10/4 Structure and policy: Global hegemony and national security state

Read: Hudson, Ch. 8

- Permanent mobilization
- Military Keynesianism
- Garrison state
- Secrecy

- Centralization
- Repression
- Distortion

10/9 Party functions and organization

Read: Greenberg and Page, pp. 247-256, 261-266, 277-285; Hudson, pp. 175-184

- Functions of political parties
- Fragmentation and the centrifugal forces of the constitutional system: separation of powers and federalism
- The legal structure of the two party system
- Responsible party model
- Electoral competition model
- Electoral punishment and reward system
- Parties as networks, as candidate centered organizations

10/11 Party history and coalitions

Read: Greenberg and Page, pp. 257-260; Hacker and Pierson, Ch. 7

- Theory of critical elections
- "Old Politics"
- Progressive Era and the New Deal
- The New Deal coalition
- Realignment

10/16 Primaries, technology and the new politics

Read: Greenberg and Page, pp. 295-306; Hudson, pp. 206-219

- Shift to primaries
- "New politics": money, media and marketing
- Candidate centered politics, technologies and professional services: methods of shaping campaigns
- Consequences of the "New Politics"
 - **Recruitment**: Leadership loss of control of nomination; increases potential pool of candidates
 - **Participation and representation**: Unequal representation of the electorate
 - **Participation and representation**: Disproportionate influences for the early contests, early contests as unrepresentative
 - **Deliberation**: Prompts potential polarization and greater ideological opposition from other party
 - **Deliberation**: Reliance on media favors dramatic narratives over policy debate
 - **Deliberation**: Winnowing process as problematic for public attention cycle

- **Accountability**: Focus on the candidate centered politics rather than the party; Increasing role of technology alongside or replacing party organization
- **Accountability**: Rise of professional campaign managers working for candidates rather than parties and not publically known
- **Costs**: Campaign process has gotten much more expensive
- **Costs**: unequal opportunities for some candidates
- **Time**: Campaign process has gotten much longer
- **Time**: Early contest disproportionately important: frontloading

10/18-10/21 Voting and current coalitions

Read: Greenberg and Page, pp. 267-275, 285-295, 312-318; Hacker and Pierson, Ch. 8, 9 and 10

- Vote as counterweight to other resources
- Voting cues: Issues, Candidate image and Party
- Contemporary Democratic and Republican coalitions
- Turnout
- Voter suppression

10/23 Media

Read: Greenberg and Page, Ch. 7; Hudson pp. 194-205

- Role of media in a democracy
- Media structure:
 - Private, profit seeking corporations
 - Concentration
 - Increased competition
- Implications for news gathering
- Ideological bias
- Structural bias and infotainment
- Institutional bias
- New media: cable, internet, mobile communications
- Management of the media: Campaigns

10/25 Campaign finance

Read: Greenberg and Page pp. 306-312; Hudson, pp. 184-193

- Electoral politics have gotten more expensive
- Efforts to regulate contributions and expenditures
 - Campaign Finance and the First Amendment
 - Hard money (regulated)
 - Soft money
 - Independent expenditures

- 527 and 501 (c) organizations
- Citizens United
- Super PACS
- Congressional campaign committees, Leadership PACS
- Consequences
 - Incumbent advantage
 - Partisan advantage
 - Eliminates candidates who are not well financed → the “hidden primary”
 - Favors wealthier candidates as a function of self-selection
 - Encourages cynicism as politics appears to be a rich person’s game

10/28 Congress: Functions

Read: Greenberg and Page pp. 323-340

- Representation (responsiveness, accountability) vs. Legislation (deliberation, public policy)
- Representational roles, constituency, accountability and autonomy
- Congressional elections
- Composition of Congress
- Incumbency
- Organization of work: centralization vs. decentralization

10/30 Congress: Committee system

Read: Greenberg and Page pp. 348-351

- Organizing the work of Congress
- Functional division of labor
- Types of committees
- Policy subsystems and autonomy
- Leadership and seniority
- Decline and partisan control

11/1 Congress: Partisanship: constitutional and historical factors

- Constitutional system: remedy for fragmentation
- Separation of powers, presidential ascension and *Divided government*
- Federalism, localism and re-election; Senate
- Realignment and intraparty coherence
- Redistricting, gerrymandering and homogeneity of districts
- Primaries
- Permanent campaign
- Home style” and social relations

11/4 Congress: Partisanship and the congressional process I

Read: Greenberg and Page pp. 340-348

- Party functions in Congress
- Increase in intraparty homogeneity, interparty conflict
- Party voting
- Incentives to strengthen party leadership
- Nature of party leadership
- House
- Senate
- Committees

11/6 Congress: Partisanship and the congressional process II

Read: Greenberg and Page pp. 351-363

- Bicameral process
- Multiple minority rule
- Length, multiple majorities and procedural obstacles: favors those who would defeat legislation
- Basic process
- Authorization vs. appropriations process
- Major process variables - House
- Major process variables – Senate
- Conference

11/8 Presidential Power

Read: Greenberg and Page pp. 365-384

- Growth of executive branch as a response to historical developments: Expectations of presidential leadership
- Paradox of presidential leadership: power and constraint; limits to command
- “Washington Elite” → actors with agendas that could diverge from President’s and resources to resist “command”
- Constitutional factors: Separation of powers and federalism
- Weak parties and electoral separation
- Market economy: private power and “market as prison”
- Historical circumstances: the residue and legacy of previous presidents
- Media
- International community
- Leadership as persuasion, bargaining and negotiations

11/11 Congress and the public presidency

Read: Greenberg and Page pp. 388-398

- Formal powers and the legislative process
- Informal powers
- Relationship to public opinion
- Public expectations and agenda setting
- The “public presidency”: media, marketing and the permanent campaign

11/13 The nature of the Federal Executive

Read: Greenberg and Page, Ch. 13

- Delegation of authority, discretion and accountability
- Functional division of labor and mission
- Formulation and expertise
- Implementation and rule making/regulation
- Constituency
- Career service
- Congressional relations

11/15 – 11/18 The Institutionalized Presidency and Executive Powers

Read: Greenberg and Page pp. 384-388

- Executive powers: Appointments, Executive orders, Budgetary control and Reorganization
- Executive Office of the President and the White House Staff
- Strengths
 - Facilitate achievement of presidential policy and political goals
 - Facilitate “top down” democracy and establish clear lines of presidential authority
- Weaknesses
 - Politicization of staff → loss of neutral competence in management vs. permanent campaign
 - Increased conflict with the executive branch
 - Decline in collegial decision making/Cabinet
 - Isolation and insulation from significant information
 - Palace guard government: secrecy, sycophancy, ambition and arrogance

11/22 – 12/2 President and Foreign policy

Read: To be announced

- The “Two Presidencies”

- Institutional advantages
- Article II powers
 1. Diplomatic recognition – Art. II, Sec. 3 “shall receive ambassadors”
 2. Appointments
 3. Treaties and executive agreements
- Inherent powers doctrine and its limits
- War powers
 1. Constitutional division of labor
 2. Theory of defensive war
 3. Historical precedent
 4. Congressional reassertion of power and the War Powers Act
- Emergency powers
- Bush and Obama presidencies

12/ 4 The Courts

Read: Greenberg and Page, Ch. 14