

Political Science 110  
American Political System  
Fall 2014

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

**Office Hours:** M, T, W, TR 10:30 – 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 the lower level of Monocacy Hall, or by calling 610-861-1401. 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, 7<sup>th</sup> 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 200 point system

Take home essay 1	30 points
Take home essay 2	50 points
Take home essay 3	50 points
Take home essay 4	50 points
In Focus Journal	10 points
Instructor evaluation	10 points

## In Focus Journal

Annually, the Moravian College **In Focus** program seeks to engage its entire community in the study of an important set of issues that challenge humanity today and in the future. The theme for this year's program is **War, Peace Building and the Just Society**. Specifics regarding the events and activities planned for this year's **In Focus** programming can be found at <http://home.moravian.edu/public/infocus/NEW/war/index.html>.

Students in this course are expected to participate in the inquiry and reflection intended by the creation of the program. To do so, students will produce an In Focus journal that will have a minimum of four entries. Students wishing to submit more than four entries can provide additional entries if they so choose.

The first entry will be a three to five paragraph reflection of the presentation made by Nobel Peace Prize winner Jody Williams at the **Moravian College Fall 2014 Convocation** to be held on Thursday, September 11, beginning at 10 a.m. in Johnston Hall, Moravian College.

A second entry will be a similar reflection in response to either another scheduled **In Focus** event (scheduled events can be found by visiting the web address listed above) or some other activity that has been approved by the instructor as acceptable for composing a reflection. If you wish to write in response to a substitute event, please consult with and receive the instructor's approval prior to attending that event.

The requirement for a third and fourth entry can be satisfied either by attending and writing in response to an event comparable to that which is described immediately above or by writing a

reflection on a text available in the media. The latter item can be a news story, editorial/op-ed piece, a blog or some form of popular culture.

For this assignment, entries should be well constructed and conform to the conventions of good writing including appropriate citations of materials referenced in the reflection. The reflections can be written in the first person but concreteness, evidence based exposition of an idea and logical clarity will be included in the assessment of the quality of the entry whenever such qualities are warranted.

Due dates:

- The reflection on the presentation by Jody Williams will be due
- The second entry will be due by
- The third entry will be due by
- The fourth entry will be due by

Students can, if they choose, submit entries in advance of the due dates listed above.

### **Take home essays**

Students will complete the four take home essays listed below. Essays are to be a minimum of 5 typewritten. There is no specific upper limit to the length of the essay but including material that is superfluous, tangential or not demonstrably germane to the essay prompt will be cause for losing points in the evaluation of the essay.

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: 9/17***

From 8/27 to 9/10, this course focuses on several key values that are important parts of the American political systems. These include liberty, equality, community and individualism. ***With specific reference to course readings and in-class materials***, write an essay discussing how three of these concepts are manifest in the U.S. democratic and constitutional systems. In writing this essay, note the following:

- Discussions of democracy in this essay need to incorporate material from the Hudson readings on the models of democracy. I.E. definitions of democracy in this essay need to be based on one or more of the models described by Hudson.
- The U.S. constitutional system varies in the degree to which these values are manifest in

that system. The essay needs to explicitly explain how a particular value is manifest in the constitutional system or is absent from the constitutional system.

### ***Essay 2 - Due date 10/17***

From 9/15 to 10/8, the course focuses on how economic structures and power are key variables in the outcomes produced by the American political system. During this portion of the course, it will focus on how inequality is manifest in the U.S. social system and how that inequality structures political power and public policy. *With specific reference to readings and in class materials including material from Winner-Take-All Politics*, students will write an essay describing how inequalities are manifest in the following:

- the structure and experience of **social class**
- the role of organized interests in the enactment of **public policy** in the United States
- examples of specific policies or types of policies that serve the structure of economic interests and power in the U.S.

### ***Essay 3 – Due date 11/7***

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. *With specific reference to readings and in class materials*, explain why parties are so important, describe the major changes associated with the idea of the “new politics” that began in the period after 1960 and identify at least four significant implications of these changes. In discussing the nature and implications of the changes at hand, the essay should include discussion of the following:

- the historical and institutional conditions that foster partisan conflict
- the role of media in U.S. politics and campaigns
- campaign finance
- the implications of our current electoral systems for the values of equal representation, policy, deliberation and popular control

### ***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.

## **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**

Below are the dates, headings and reading assignments for each scheduled class meeting. Additional reading might be assigned or distributed in class as the instructor deems necessary to address topics in the course.

8/25 Introduction

8/27 Democratic Theory

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

8/29 No class

9/1 Democratic Theory continued

9/3 Individualism and community

**Read:** Hudson, Ch. 3

9/5 Individualism and community continued

9/8 Constitution I

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

9/10 Constitution II

9/11 Convocation

9/12 Federalism

**Read:** Greenberg and Page, Ch.3

9/15 Structure of the economy as a source of power and policy

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

9/17 Social class and structural inequality

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

9/19 Structure and policy: structural change

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

9/22 **Public Policy as a Source of Income Distribution**

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

9/24 **Power and the policy process: Pluralism and interest groups**

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

9/26 **Power and the policy process: privileged position of business**

**Read:** Hudson, Ch. 6; Charles Lindblom, "The Market as Prison,"  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdfplus/2130588.pdf>

9/29 **Power and the policy process: Contemporary interest group politics**

**Read:** Hacker & Pierson, Ch. 5 and 6

10/1 **Structure and policy: capital accumulation**

**Read:** Greenberg and Page, Ch. 15

10/3 **Structure and policy: social policy**

**Read:** Greenberg and Page, Ch. 16

10/6 **No class**

10/8 **Structure and policy: the national security state**

**Read:** Hudson, Ch. 8

10/10 **Party functions and organization**

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

10/15 **Party history and coalitions**

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

10/17 **Voting and current coalitions**

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

10/17 **Voting and current coalitions**

10/20 Primaries, technology and the new politics

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

10/22 Primaries, technology and the new politics

10/24 Media

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

10/27 Media

10/29 Campaign finance

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

10/31 Congress: introduction and functions

**Read:** Greenberg and Page pp. 323-340

11/3 Congressional committees

**Read:** Greenberg and Page pp. 348-351

11/5 Parties in Congress

**Read:** Greenberg and Page pp. 340-348

11/7 Partisanship and the Congressional process

**Read:** Greenberg and Page pp. 351-363

11/10 Congressional process concluded

11/12 The Presidency: Introduction

**Read:** Greenberg and Page pp. 365-384

11/12 The public presidency

**Read:** Greenberg and Page pp. 388-397

11/14 The President as Chief Executive

**Read:** Greenberg and Page, Ch. 13

11/17 Attend simulation

11/19 The institutionalized presidency

**Read:** Greenberg and Page pp. 384-388

11/21 The Presidency and foreign affairs

11/24 The Presidency and foreign affairs

12/1 The Courts

**Read:** Greenberg and Page, Ch. 14

12/3 The Courts

12/5 Closing