

Political Science 110
American Political System
Fall 2015

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Office Hours: M, W 1:30 to 2:30; T, Th 9:00 to 10:00 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 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 2015-2016*. 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, 7th edition, (Congressional Quarterly, 2013)

Ken Kollman, The American Political System, 2nd edition, (W.W. Norton, 2014)

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	10 points
Instructor evaluation	10 points

In Focus

Annually, the Moravian College **In Focus** program seeks to engage its entire community in the study of a common set of issues. The theme for this year's program is **Poverty and Inequality**. 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/poverty/schedule.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 be expected to attend three **In Focus** related activities.

One activity will be the **Moravian College Fall 2015 Convocation** to be held on Thursday, September 24, beginning at 10 a.m. in Johnston Hall, Moravian College. Attendance at additional activities will be coordinated during class. The instructor will make suggestions about possibilities but students should feel free to identify opportunities for attending event as well. A second activity will be the presentation of "**Marx in Soho**" - a dramatic consideration of contemporary issues of class and economic inequality. This event will take place on October 7 at 7:30 p.m. in Prosser Auditorium in the HUB. The third event is at the discretion of the student.

After attending each event, students will submit a summary of and reflection on the event to be submitted within one week after attending. Submissions 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.

Take home essays

Students will complete the four take home essays listed below. The length of the essays will vary as indicated below. 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: 9/21

Relevant course dates: 9/2 to 9/18

Length – 3 to 4 pages typewritten

It has been argued in class that the framers of the Constitution had a shared set of philosophical beliefs about the nature of politics and the purposes of government. The class has also considered a set of different models of what constitutes a democracy. In these discussions, the class has been asked to think about such values as liberty, equality, community and individualism. Some would argue that the Constitution and the values it embodies are consistent with the characterization of the United States as a democracy. Others would argue that key elements of democracy that can be found in some of the models are at best neglected or subordinated in the framers work. Based on course reading and in class presentations, and with specific reference to specific models, identify three specific elements that can be found in the models that can be said to be manifest in the constitutional system and three specific elements of the models that were omitted or absent.

Note: In selecting the elements for discussion, students can choose an element from any of the models and those choices need not be restricted to any single model. The key is to identify an element of any of the models that the student can argue is manifest in the Constitution and an element from any of the models which is absent.

Essay 2- Due date: 10/19

Relevant course dates: 9/21 to 10/9

Length – 5 to 7 pages typewritten

The section of course that is relevant for this essay focuses on how economic structures and power are key variables in the outcomes produced by the American political system. In considering these elements of the American political system, it has been argued that inequality (most notably economic inequality) structures political power and public policy. With specific

reference in class material and course readings, students will write an essay reporting how the course materials posed the importance of inequality in the structure and trends in the distribution of income and wealth and the role of organized interests in the enactment of public policy in the United States. The essay should include some discussion of at least two 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: 11/9

Relevant course dates: 10/14 to 10/30

Length – 5 to 7 pages typewritten

Over the past 50 years or so, the United States has witnessed significant changes both in how its electoral and party systems operate and in the positions taken by the political parties. Among the consequences of these changes have been increased levels of partisan conflict and disputes about how well the system provides for **equal representation, policy deliberation and popular control**. With specific reference to readings and in class materials, identify five significant changes in the way that American party politics has changed and discuss why these changes are important in regard the values highlighted immediately above.

Essay 4- Due date: Final exam date

Relevant course dates: 11/2 to 12/2

Length – 5 to 7 pages typewritten

The last section of the course focused on the major institutions of the U.S. national government including the Congress, Presidency, executive branch and the Supreme Court. Each of these institutions enjoys considerable power that impacts the performance of the federal government. With specific reference to readings and in class materials, identify and discuss what you consider to be the most important element or elements of each of these institutions in regard to the institution's performance and its exercise of power within the American political system. The essay should include discussion of at least one element of each institution but is not limited to discussing a single element of each. The discussion should include an explanation of why the element under discussion deserves attention.

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.

8/31 Introduction

9/2 Democratic Theory

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

9/4 Democratic Theory continued

9/7 Individualism and community

Read: Hudson, Ch. 3

9/9 Individualism and community continued

9/11 Collective Action and Principal Agent Problems

Read: Kollman, Ch. 1

9/14 U.S. Constitution

Read: Kollman, pp. 655-664 and Ch. 2

9/16 U.S. Constitution II

9/18 Federalism

Read: Kollman, Ch. 3

9/21 Structure of the economy as a source of power and policy

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

9/23 Social class and structural inequality

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

9/24 Convocation

9/25 Structure and policy: structural change

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

9/28 Public policy as a source of income distribution

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

9/30 Power and the policy process: pluralism and interest groups

Read: Kollman, Ch. 11; Hacker & Pierson, Ch. 4

10/2 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>

10/5 Power and the policy process: Contemporary interest group politics

Read: Hacker & Pierson, Ch. 5 and 6

10/7 Structure and policy I

Read: Kollman, Ch. 15

10/9 Structure and policy II

Read: Greenberg and Page, Ch. 16

10/14 Party functions and organization

Read: Kollman, Ch. 12 Hudson, pp. 175-184

10/16 Voting

Read: Kollman, Ch. 10

10/19 Party history and coalitions I

Read: Hacker and Pierson, Ch. 7 and 8

10/21 Party history and coalitions II

Read: Hacker and Pierson, Ch. 9 and 10

10/23 Elections and campaigns I

Read: Hudson, Ch. 5

10/26 Elections and campaigns II

10/28 Media

Read: Kollman, Ch. 14

10/30 Media and campaigns

11/2 Congress: introduction and functions

Read: Kollman, Ch. 5

11/4 Congressional committees

11/6 Parties in Congress

11/9 The congressional process

11/11 Presidential power

Read: Kollman, Ch. 6

11/13 The Public presidency

11/16 The Executive branch I

Read: Kollman, Ch. 7

11/18 The Executive branch II

11/20 The institutionalized presidency

11/23 The presidency and foreign affairs

11/30 Courts

Read: Kollman, Ch. 8

12/2 Courts

12/4 TBD

12/7 TBD

12/9 TBD

12/11 Closing