

Political Science 110
American Political System
Spring 2016

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

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 the Academic Support Center, located in the lower level of Monocacy Hall, or by calling [610-861-1401](tel: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	40 points
Take home essay 2	50 points
Take home essay 3	60 points
Take home essay 4	30 points
Instructor evaluation	20 points

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: 2/8

Relevant course dates: 1/20 to 2/5

Length – 4 to 5 pages typewritten

It has been argued in class that the framers of the Constitution shared a 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 elements of 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 that, once an element of a model is selected, the student must argue why the selected element is either manifest in or absent from the Constitution as it would be understood within the model.

Essay 2- Due date: 3/16

Relevant course dates: 2/8 to 3/2

Length – 5 to 7 pages typewritten

For this essay, students will focus on course materials concerned with how economic structures and power are key variables in the outcomes produced by the American political system. The course presents the argument that inequality (particularly 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 pose the following:

- How the organization of the economy structures political power.
- Trends in the distribution of income and wealth and the reasons for those trends.
- The role of organized interests in the enactment of public policy in the United States.
- How economic power predicts public policy.

Essay 3- Due date: 4/6

Relevant course dates: 3/4 to 3/28

Length – 5 to 7 pages typewritten

The U.S. has undergone significant changes over the past 50 years in its system of parties and elections. These changes have included developments regarding party coalitions, the nomination process, use of technology and the role of money. Explain the nature of these changes and, referencing course materials, identify at least one significant implication for each change. (i.e. what difference has the change made?)

Essay 4- Due date: Final exam date

Relevant course dates: 3/30 to 4/27

Length – 4 to 5 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.

1/18 Introduction

1/20 Democratic Theory

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

1/22 **NO CLASS**

1/25 Democratic Theory continued

1/27 Individualism and community

Read: Hudson, Ch. 3

1/29 Collective Action and Principal Agent Problems

Read: Kollman, Ch. 1

2/1 U.S. Constitution

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

2/3 U.S. Constitution II

2/5 Federalism

Read: Kollman, Ch. 3

2/8 Structure of the economy as a source of power and policy

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

2/10 Social class and structural inequality

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

2/12 Structure and policy: structural change

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

2/15 Public policy as a source of income distribution

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

2/17 Power and the policy process: pluralism and interest groups

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

2/19 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>

2/22 Power and the policy process: Contemporary interest group politics

Read: Hacker & Pierson, Ch. 5 and 6

2/24 Structure and policy I

Read: Kollman, Ch. 15

2/26 **NO CLASS**

2/29 Structure and policy II

Read: Greenberg and Page, Ch. 16

3/2 TBD

3/4 Party functions and organization

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

3/14 Party history and coalitions I

Read: Hacker and Pierson, Ch. 7 and 8

3/16 Party history and coalitions II

Read: Hacker and Pierson, Ch. 9 and 10

3/18 **NO CLASS**

3/21 Elections and campaigns I

Read: Hudson, Ch. 5

3/23 Elections and campaigns II

3/25 Media

Read: Kollman, Ch. 14

3/28 Media and campaigns

3/30 Congress: introduction and functions

Read: Kollman, Ch. 5

4/1 Congressional committees

4/4 **NO CLASS**

4/6 Parties in Congress

4/8 The congressional process

4/11 Presidential power

Read: Kollman, Ch. 6

4/13 The Public presidency

4/15 The Executive branch I

Read: Kollman, Ch. 7

4/18 The Executive branch II: The institutionalized presidency

4/20 The presidency and foreign affairs

4/22 War powers

4/25 Courts

Read: Kollman, Ch. 8

4/27 Courts

4/29 Closing