

Introduction to American Government

Florida State University
Department of Political Science

Course information:

POS 1041.2

Spring 2013

HCB, Monday and Wednesday 3:35 - 4:50

Course Website: Blackboard

Contact Information for Instructor:

Instructor: Ms. Jaclyn Bunch

Office: Bellamy 216

Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday 2:30 - 3:30 or by appointment

Email: jbunch@fsu.edu (Best form of contact)

Department Phone: 850-644-5721

Course Objective:

This course seeks to foster a broad and basic understanding of American government and politics. Together, we will explore the foundations of American government through the changes our nation and constitution have endured and conclude with the contemporary roles of the citizen, political parties, and the media. On a basic level, this course aims to teach the rudimentary functions and mechanics of the American governmental process. By the end of the course students will be able to explain the political process from citizen engagement to the functions of all branches of government. By developing a firm understanding of American government and politics, it is my hope that students will be able to evaluate and think critically about the politicized world around them.

Required Text:

We will primarily be utilizing the Fiorina, Peterson, Bertram and Mayer (called Fiorina) text. There will be additional materials which will either be posted on the Blackboard site or are available through the library.

Text: Fiorina, Morris P., Paul E. Peterson, Bertram Johnson, and William G. Mayer.
America's New Democracy, 6th ed. Longman-Pearson Publishers.

Assignments and Grading:

Components:

Exams: 60%

Attendance and Participation: 10%

Final Exam: 30%

Grading Scale:

Letter	Range
A	94.0-100
A-	90.0-93
B+	87.0-89
B	84.0-86
B-	80.0-83
C+	77.0-79
C	74.0-76
C-	70.0-73
D+	67.0-69
D	64.0-66
D-	61.0-63
F	0-60

*Note that there will be no rounding. The grade earned is the grade received.

Exams:

There will be four unit exams and one cumulative final exam throughout the course. The unit exams total 60% of the grade (20% for each) and are multiple choice format. This means that the lowest test grade will be dropped (not including the cumulative exam). For each of these exams you must bring a *number two pencil* (answers in pen do not show up on the scantron machine and will be marked wrong).

Each unit exam is written to cover approximately four chapters worth of readings and lecture material and is designed to test your mastery of topic terminology, concepts, and contemporary issues in government. They will be held on **Monday February 11th**, **Monday March 4th**, **Monday March 25th**, and **Monday April 15th**. The format and dates are subject to change at my discretion.

The Cumulative Final Exam will be held During Finals Week.

It consists of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. It is designed to test your mastery of topic terminology, concepts, and contemporary issues in government covered throughout the entire course. It is worth 30% of your final grade.

Participation and Attendance:

All students are expected to be present and engaged in course discussion. Participation accounts for 10% of your total grade, 5% of which is attendance. Attendance may be taken at random at any point. The other 5% is engagement. To earn full credit the student is expected to be attentive during lectures, answer question prompts accordingly, and contribute to or initiate academic discussions.

Tentative Class and Assignment Schedule:

Week 1: An Introduction

January 7 th	Introduction
January 9 th	Due: Chapter 1 <i>Overview</i> Due: Rational Choice: An overview (pp 1-9, As supplied on Blackboard)

Week 2: Foundations

January 14 th	Due: Chapter 2 <i>The U.S Constitution</i>
January 16 th	Due: Chapter 14 <i>Civil Liberties</i>

Week 3: A Concern for Freedom, Equality, and Liberty

January 21 st	NO CLASS
January 23 th	Due: Chapter 15 <i>Civil Rights</i>

Week 4: Civil Rights Continued and Federalism

January 28 th	Due: Civil Rights Articles: 1. Cameron, Charles, David Epstein, and Sharon O’Halloran. 1996. “Do Majority-Minority Districts Maximize Substantive Black Representation in Congress?” <i>American Political Science Review</i> 90: 794-812. 2. Sanbonmatsu, Kira. 2003 "Gender-Related Political Knowledge and the Descriptive Representation of Women." <i>Political Behavior</i> 25(4): 367-88
January 30 th	Due: Chapter 3 <i>Federalism</i>

Week 5: Federalism (Cont.)

February 4 th	Due: <i>Federalism Articles</i> 1. Volden, Craig. 2004. Origin, Operation and Significance: The Federalism of William H. Riker. <i>Publius: The Journal of Federalism</i> 34: 89-107.
February 6 th	Due: Federalism continued and Review

Week 6: Exam 1 and The Institutions: Congress

February 11 th	Unit 1 Exam Chapters 1-3, 14, 15, and Supplemental Reading
February 13 th	Due: Chapter 10 <i>Congress (pp 235-253)</i>

Week 7: The Institutions: Congress (Cont.) and The Presidency

February 18 th	Due: Chapter 10 <i>The Congress Continued (pp253-261)</i>
February 20 th	Due: Chapter 11 <i>The Presidency</i>

Week 8: The Institutions: Judiciary and Bureaucracy

February 25 th	Due: Chapter 12 <i>The Bureaucracy</i>
February 27 st	Due: Chapter 13: <i>The Judiciary</i>

Week 9: Exam 2 and Sub-Institutions

March 4 th	Exam: Unit 2 Exam: Chapters 10-13
March 6 th	Due: Chapter 9 (pp208-218) <i>Political Parties</i>

Week 10: Spring Break

March 11 th	Spring Break
March 13 th	Spring Break

Week 11: Sub-Institutions and Elections

March 18 th	Due: Chapter 9 (pp 218-231) <i>Interest Groups</i>
March 20 th	Due: Chapter 8 <i>Campaigns and Elections</i>

Week 12: Exam Three and Public Opinion

March 25 th	Exam: Unit 3 Exam Chapters 8-9
March 27 st	Due: Chapter 5 <i>Public Opinion</i>

Week 13: Public Opinion (Cont.)

April 1 st	Due: Public Opinion Continued Zaller: <i>The Nature and Origins of Mass Public Opinion (Chapter 1 as supplied on BlackBoard)</i>
April 3 rd	Due: Chapter 7 <i>Public Participation</i>

Week 14: Media and the Masses

April 8 th	Due: Chapter 6 <i>The Media and Political Information</i>
April 10 th	<p>Due: The Media Continued</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Nyhan, Brendan, and Jason Reifler. 2010. "When Corrections Fail: The Persistence of Political Misperceptions." <i>Political Behavior</i> 32 (June): 303-30. 2. Stroud, Natalie Jomini. 2008. "Media Use and Political Predispositions: Revisiting the Concept of Selective Exposure." <i>Political Behavior</i> 30: 341-66. 3. Turner, Joel. 2007. "The Messenger Overwhelming the Message:

	Ideological Cues and Perceptions of Bias in Television News.” <i>Political Behavior</i> 29: 441-64.
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Week 15: Exam Four and Review

April 15 th	Exam: Unit 4 Exam: Chapters 5-7 and Supplemental Material
April 17 th	Review of Material from Exams 1 and 2

Week 16: Review and Class Synopsis

April 22 nd	Review of Material from Exams 3 and 4
April 24 th	Class Synopsis

Finals Week

April 29 th	Final Exam Week: Cumulative Final Exam
May 1 st	

Absences and Tardiness

Attendance is required and expected of all students. Attendance may be taken at random at any point throughout the semester and during the class period. Any missed classes without documented excuse or prior acceptable arrangements with me will count against your final grade. Excessive tardiness will result in a reduction in your final grade as it is considered disruptive and disrespectful of your peers and myself (for further clarification see classroom decorum).

Classroom Decorum

All students are expected to hold themselves to the utmost degree of decorum in the classroom. This means that each student is expected to be respectful and tolerant of other students and the professor. Any behavior that results in a loss of mutual respect, as determined by me, will result in a reduction of the student’s final course grade. Some examples of unacceptable forms of behavior are: not respecting the speaker and causing noisy interruptions such as entering the classroom late or speaking in a non-productive manner. The use of any **cellular device**, for any form of communication including texting is **prohibited**. Permission to use a laptop for the purpose of note taking must be obtained from me. If at any time the student is found or suspected of utilizing the laptop for any purposes other than note-taking the permission will be revoked and may result in the **reduction of one’s final course grade**.

Extra-Credit Work

Under no circumstances will extra credit work be permitted.

Late Work

All assignments are to be turned in on the announced due date. Late assignments will not be accepted without legitimate or documented excuses. I retain the right to determine legitimate excuses.

Missed Exams

All students are expected to be present and take an exam at the time it has been scheduled. There will not be make-up exams provided for any student who has not supplied me with a documented excuse, which I deem as acceptable, at least 24 hours prior to the exam. Failure to be present for an exam, without making the proper arrangements with me, will result in an **F** for that unit exam. Note that the lowest unit exam will be dropped, this may be used in the case of an absence. I reserve the right to allow make-up exams in special circumstances.

Liberal Studies Requirement Notice

*The Liberal Studies Program at Florida State University has been designed to provide a perspective on the qualities, accomplishments, and aspirations of human beings, the past and present civilizations we have created, and the natural and technological world we inhabit. This course has been approved as meeting the requirements for **Liberal Studies Area III, History and Social Science**, and in combination with your other Liberal Studies courses, provides an important foundation for your lifelong quest for knowledge.*

Breach of the Academic Honor Code

Every student is expected to educate themselves in regards to the Academic Honor Code, published in the *Florida State University Bulletin* and *The Graduate Handbook*. Any and all suspected violations of this code, including but not limited to plagiarism, cheating, and academic misrepresentation, may be reported to the Graduate Director for university sanctions and the **offending student will receive an F** for the course.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should:

(1) Register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center; and (2) bring a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done during the first week of class. This syllabus and other class materials are available in alternative format upon request. For more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities, contact:

Student Disability Resource Center

97 Woodward Avenue, South
108 Student Services Building
Florida State University
Tallahassee, FL 32306-4167
(850) 644-9566 (voice)
(850) 644-8504 (TDD)
sdrc@admin.fsu.edu

Syllabus Change Policy

The syllabus provided should be considered a guideline for the course and is subject to change at any time, for any reason, as deemed necessary by the instructor.