

Political Science 222: Introduction to American Government

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Wed 4:00-6:00 pm
or by appointment

Course Description: This course explores the structure and dynamics of American national government, providing a broad-based introduction to the ideas and institutions that shape politics in the contemporary United States. We will focus our analysis on three major areas: the Constitution and the debates of the founding era, the institutions of modern American government, and the political behavior of the American mass public. We will study the strategies, roles, and limitations of both governmental elites and ordinary citizens, with particular emphasis on how they communicate and interact within the constitutional “rules of the game” to promote (or inhibit?) the achievement of public goods. Our analysis will draw heavily both on documents from America’s formative period and on insights from modern political science, allowing us to examine important political phenomena from a variety of perspectives. Ultimately, the goal of this course is to help each member of the class arrive at a deeper, more comprehensive understanding of the forces that shape American government and politics, so that he or she may be both a more discerning student and critic of the system and a more informed and reflective participant in it.

Readings: In this course, we will use a textbook and a collection of readings, supplemented frequently with additional materials from a course pack and from on-line reserves. The books, Cal Jillson’s *American Government: Political Change and Institutional Development* (Fourth Edition) and William Lasser’s *Perspectives on American Politics* (Fifth Edition), and the course pack are all available at the S.M.U. bookstore. Reserve materials will be available on line, linked through the instructor’s web site. The course pack and reserve materials are described individually in the course plan (below).

Timely reading is critical both for achievement as an individual student in this class, and for the success of the course as a whole. The reading load in this course is reasonable—on average, assignments will run less than twenty pages per class session. As a result, students are strongly expected to come to class having read the material carefully, thought about it, and prepared to discuss it in class. Failure to do so will result in lessened comprehension of class lectures, poorer exam performance, and a lower participation grade. Conversely, dutiful attention to the reading will greatly enhance the intellectual experience of the course for the individual student, and enable him or her to contribute meaningfully to the class as a whole.

Course Requirements and Grading: Grades for this course will be determined by a combination of three factors: in-class examinations, independent essays, and class participation and preparedness.

There will be three fifty-minute exams during the course of the semester (including the scheduled final). These exams will consist of multiple choice and identification items, and will cover material from both readings and lectures. They will test both mastery of important concepts

and the ability to integrate ideas discussed in class. Each will cover material from one major section of the course. Together, these exams will comprise 45% of the total course grade.

Students will also be responsible for two independent analytical essays during the course of the semester. Assigned essay topics will be distributed at least two weeks prior to the due date for the papers. Essays should be approximately five or six typed pages (1500-1800 words) in length, and will be expected to incorporate material from the assigned readings. These papers will be graded according to the soundness and intellectual rigor of their argument, their use of relevant class material (both from reading and lecture), and the quality of their written expression. Together, these essays will comprise 40% of the total course grade.

Finally, class participation is a very valuable part of the learning experience in this course. Questions are welcomed, and time will often be set aside for discussion. Students are expected to come to class prepared to share their questions, comments, criticisms, and insights with others. This course will be greatly enriched if people with views across the political spectrum voice their opinions on the important and often controversial issues that we will discuss. Simply showing up for class, while necessary for a good participation grade, is not sufficient. Additionally, to ensure that students are completing assigned readings in a timely manner, there will be *at least* six unannounced reading quizzes during the course of the semester. These should be very easy for those who have read, and very difficult for those who have not. Together, class participation and quizzes will make up the final 15% of the course grade.

Grades will be assigned on the following scale:

98-100	A+	93-97	A	90-92	A-
88-89	B+	83-87	B	80-82	B-
78-79	C+	73-77	C	70-72	C-
68-69	D+	63-67	D	60-62	D-
<60	F				

Attendance: If student participation is a vital component of a successful class, regular attendance is its obvious prerequisite. Therefore, attendance will be taken at every class meeting, and excessive absences will result in an overall course grade penalty. Because unavoidable conflicts sometimes arise, students will be allowed three absences without penalty, and without need to provide an excuse. After that, each absence will result in a penalty of one-half point deducted from the student's final numerical average for the course. This penalty can be waived only under very limited circumstances, such as travel to represent the University, serious documented illness, or a real family emergency. Exceptions to the attendance policy *must* be cleared with the instructor, in advance if possible.

Office Hours: Students are encouraged to take advantage of office hours, noted on the first page of the syllabus. They are an opportunity to discuss issues relating to the course, to review exams or papers, or just to talk politics. In addition, appointments can be made to meet at other times.

Honor Code: The S.M.U. Honor Code governs all student work in this course, both in class and outside of the classroom. The Honor Pledge is as follows: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this work." It should be signed on exam blue books, and included (and signed) on the title page of essays. Honor code violations are punishable not only by a failing grade for the course, but also by referral to the University Honor Council. Any questions about specific applications of the Honor Code should be addressed to the instructor.

Course Plan

Section I: The Constitution and the Founding Era

Context and Overview: American Political Culture (01/21-01/29)

- 01/21: No Assigned Reading
- 01/23: The Declaration of Independence (Jillson, 444-446)
King's "I Have a Dream" Speech (On-line)
- 01/26: Excerpt: De Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* (Lasser, 139-147)
- 01/28: Excerpt: Lipset's *American Exceptionalism* (On-line)
- 01/29: Jillson, Chapter 1 (1-19)

The Constitution: Origins and Structure (01/30-02/16)

- 01/30: Jillson, Chapter 2 (20-46)
- 02/02: Original Text of the Constitution—Articles I-II (Jillson, 453-457)
- 02/04: Original Text of the Constitution—Articles III-VII (Jillson, 457-459)
- 02/06: Address of the Pennsylvania Minority (Lasser, 18-24)
Jefferson's letter to Madison (Course Pack #1)
- 02/09: *The Federalist* Nos. 47, 48, 51 (Lasser, 9-18)
- 02/11: Excerpt: Wood's *The Creation of the American Republic* (Course Pack #2)
- 02/13: The Bill of Rights (Jillson, 459-460)
- 02/16: Other Amendments to the Constitution (Jillson, 460-464)

The Bill of Rights and Contemporary Issues (02/18-02/25)

- 02/18: Supreme Court Opinion: *Texas v. Johnson* (Course Pack #3)
- 02/20: Rauch's "In Defense of Prejudice" (Course Pack #4)
- 02/23: Supreme Court Opinion: *Wallace v. Jaffree* (Course Pack #5)
Supreme Court Opinion: *Lynch v. Donnelly* (Course Pack #6)
- 02/25: Supreme Court Opinion: *Rosenberger v. University of Virginia* (Course Pack #7)

*** Exam #1 *** Friday, February 27th

Section II: Structure and Institutions of American Government

The Congress (03/02-03/18)

03/02: Jillson, Chapter 9—part 1 (217-225)

03/04: Jillson, Chapter 9—part 2 (225-249)

03/06: Miller and Stokes' "Constituency Influence in Congress" (Course Pack #8)

SPRING BREAK: NO CLASS MEETINGS 03/09-03/13

03/16: Excerpt: Mayhew's *Congress: The Electoral Connection* (Course Pack #9)

03/18: Excerpt: Quirk and Binder's "Congress and American Democracy" (Lasser, 271-280)

*** Paper #1 *** Due Friday, March 20th

The Presidency (03/20-03/25)

03/20: Jillson, Chapter 10—part 1 (250-265)

03/23: Jillson, Chapter 10—part 2 (265-284)

03/25: *The Federalist* No. 70 (Lasser, 297-300)

Excerpt: Neustadt's *Presidential Power* (Lasser, 300-302)

The Judiciary (03/27-04/01)

03/27: Jillson, Chapter 12—part 1 (317-326)

03/30: Jillson, Chapter 12—part 2 (327-347)

04/01: *The Federalist* No. 78 (Lasser, 351-356)

Supreme Court Opinion: *Marbury v. Madison* (Lasser, 356-359)

*** Exam #2 *** Friday, April 3rd

Section III: American Electoral Politics

The American Voter (04/06-04/13)

- 04/06: Jillson, Chapter 4—part 1 (72-79)
- 04/08: Jillson, Chapter 4—part 2 (80-96)

GOOD FRIDAY: NO CLASS MEETING 04/10

04/13: Jillson, Chapter 8 (183-216)

04/15: Waldman and Green's "The Twelve Tribes of American Politics" (Lasser, 156-161)

Political Parties (04/17-04/22)

- 04/17: Jillson, Chapter 7 (154-182)
- 04/20: Excerpt: Hershey and Beck's *Party Politics in America* (Course Pack #10)
- 04/22: Key's "A Theory of Critical Elections" (On-line)
Key's "Secular Realignment and the Party System" (On-line)

Interest Groups (04/24-04/29)

- 04/24: *The Federalist* No. 10 (Lasser, 4-9)
- 04/27: Excerpt: Schattschneider's *The Semisovereign People* (Lasser, 176-182)
- 04/29: Salisbury's "An Exchange Theory of Interest Groups" (On-line)

The Media (05/01-05/04)

- 05/01: Jillson, Chapter 5 (97-123)
- 05/04: Lichten-Gans exchange (Course Pack #11)

*** Paper #2 *** Due Monday, May 4th

*** Final Exam *** Saturday, May 9th (11:30 am)