SYLLABUS

Spring 2012
American Government
POS2041 Section 0011 – Wednesday, 3 credits
Ms. Michaela Fazecas

Office Hrs:	Monday and Wednesday 5:00 pm – 6:00 pm
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WebCt help page	**http://techrangers.cdws.ucf.edu/support/**
Webcourses	**https://my.ucf.edu/**

Required Text:

GOVT: America at Odds, Sidlow, E. and Beth Henschen. (2012)

Course Description:

A study of the dynamics of American national government, including its structure, organization, powers, and procedures.

Course Requirements/Attendance:

You are expected (and it is highly recommended) that you read the assigned chapter prior to each class meeting. Your course schedule below is your guide regarding material that will be covered in class. Do not come to class unprepared and expect me to tell you what the chapter is about. In addition to the required text book, exam questions will also come from class discussions, video clips and/or movies shown in class and other relevant and supplemental sources you will not find in the text book, and which will be lectured on in class. Course attendance is therefore imperative to do well in the class.

I do not post any of my notes on WebCourses, and if you miss class, please get notes from a classmate, do not ask me to send you notes or tell you what we discussed in class.

Course Goals:

1. Provide students with a basic understanding of America's political system and its foundation
2. Teach students how the government's institutions/branches work or do not work together
3. Teach students how to critically evaluate information found in the media (opinion vs. fact)
4. Teach students how policies are made and how political interest groups influence/dictate such policies
5. Help students understand that regardless of party affiliation, voting or not voting, government policies affect every aspect of our lives
6. By the end of this course, students should be able to critically evaluate information gleaned from the media, understand the basic functions of government, and ideally become active participants in the American political system

Evaluation Procedures

Grade Categories	Material covered/requirements	Weight toward final grade
Exam I	Foundation and American Political Culture	20%
Exam II	Structure, Bureaucracy and Balance of Power	20%
Exam III	Elections, the Public and 21st Century Media	20%
Discussion	3 class projects, topics assigned in class*	15%
Quiz	5 in class quizzes**	10%
Short essays	Analyze various topics/issues, 3 papers @ 5 points/each***	15%
	Total:	100%

GRADE	%
A	90 +
B	80 +
C	70 +
D	60 +
F	59 and below

***Discussions:** Class will be split into teams (approximately four students/team) during our first class meeting, and instructions on how to complete this in-class project will be delivered at that time.

I do not take attendance; however, if you miss a group discussion or a quiz, it will affect your grade, so it is important that you come to each class in order to receive full credit for these portions of the course grade. It is your responsibility to make sure your name is on the project before turning it in. If your name is missing, you will not receive credit – do not expect your team mates to take responsibility for this; check the project before you hand it in to me.

****Quizzes and discussions are not announced ahead of time, so it is important to come to class.**

NO MAKE UP FOR QUIZZES OR IN CLASS DISCUSSIONS; NO EXCEPTIONS.

Grade Disputes/questions

I post grades and other relevant course information on WebCourses, and it is your responsibility to keep up with this material and to check for updates regularly. If there is a question or discrepancy regarding a grade/credit for a project, you need to notify me within 3 days after it is posted; I will not adjust a grade (if an adjustment is warranted) if you notify me past this deadline.

Assignments

***Grading Criteria:

Pts 1/each	Locate/identify diverse sources, FIVE minimum; Only TWO online sources	Clearly demonstrate understanding of how topic relates to interest group	Evaluate and integrate information; do not simply list items	APA style; correct use of citations	Grammar and spelling; presentation	5 pts

1. **Information Literacy**

   i. Choose **one** topic from the list of topics below.
   ii. Choose **ONE** interest group from the list below (or find one that interests you)
   iii. How does the topic relate to the interest group?
   iv. Clearly demonstrate your understanding of the position taken by the interest group regarding the topic of your choice – meaning, what political/policy issue is the interest group supporting/opposing and how does that potentially affect policy decisions and/or legislation in Congress?
   v. Example: AARP (interest group), health (topic), health care reform act (policy/issue)

The instructor will require that students utilize a variety of different sources, both online and traditional, in completing the assignment – use the library! You must use a minimum of **FIVE** sources – only **TWO** can be online sources. It is the location, evaluation, and effective use of information from *diverse sources* that this particular assignment is designed to measure. The paper will be no more than 2 pages, double-spaced, type-written, Times New Roman, 12 point font, black ink. USE THE WRITING CENTER!

I. CHOOSE ONE - Topic:

i. Energy (example: coal, oil, gas, wind, solar)
ii. Health care (example: health care reform, MedicAid)
iii. Environment/species conservation (example: climate change, GM foods, pesticides, Superfund bills)

II. Examples of interest groups:

i. Americans for Balanced Energy Choices
ii. Coalition for Affordable and Reliable Energy
iii. Save Our Species
iv. The Business Roundtable
v. U.S. Chamber of Commerce
vi. Defenders of Wildlife
vii. Nature Conservancy
viii. AARP
ix. NAACP
x. NRA

Papers are turned in during class time when due, not via email.

NO LATE PAPERS ACCEPTED, EXCEPT AS PER OFFICIAL UCF POLICY – LISTED IN THIS SYLLABUS.

GRADING CRITERIA FOR CRITICAL THINKING PAPERS:

Pts 1/each	Locate/identify a current event in a news article – no Fox News, CNN, MSNBC, Huffington Post, or blogs	Clearly demonstrate understanding of how news/event relates to government policy/issues	Evaluate and integrate information; do not simply narrate the news article	APA style; correct use of citations	Grammar and spelling; presentation	5 pts

2. **Critical Thinking (2 papers)**

   i. Your paper is to be **two to three** pages, typed (double spaced, Times New Roman, black ink, 12 point font, standard margins);
   ii. You are required to write a review of a current news article related to material discussed in class and/or government policy/issues in general – this is your opportunity to choose a topic that interests you, as long as you follow the instructions herein.

- **Your first paper is to be on a domestic (US) news event.**
- **Your second paper is to be on an international news event.**
  - **Students are encouraged to use foreign news sources (English speaking).**

The review must have the article stapled to the paper.

<u>Activity Process: "How do I do the assignment?"</u>

1. Choose a news article and make sure you provide source citation
2. Include copy of article and link **(*if you do not attach copy of article, you will lose points*)**
3. Describe what the article is about
4. How does the article and its content relate to class discussion/lecture and/or American gov't material (example: if you choose an article regarding the death penalty, provide examples from class discussions/chapters that relate to the content of the article)
5. What is your opinion on the subject/topic discussed in the article and why?
6. Handwritten, incomplete, stained, unstapled, unprofessional or late reviews will not be accepted

Make sure you put your full name, course and section name at the top of the page.

Papers are turned in during class time when due, not via email. **CHECK SCHEDULE BELOW FOR DUE DATES!**

This exercise teaches students to evaluate news information and think about it in a critical way.

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Week	Dates	ASSIGNMENTS/READING
1	1/11	**Introduction** Political Ideology/Political Landscape and The Constitution
2	1/18	Federalism
3	1/25	Civil Liberties
4	2/1	Civil Rights
5	2/8	**EXAM I** Paper 1 DUE in class
6	2/15	Congress
7	2/22	The Presidency
8	2/29	The Executive Branch and The Federal Bureaucracy
9	3/7	**SPRING BREAK** **MARCH 5 – 10, 2012**
10	3/14	The Judiciary
11	3/21	**EXAM 2** Paper 2 DUE in class
12	3/28	Political Parties and Interest Groups
13	4/4	Voting, Elections and Campaigns
14	4/11	Public Opinion and the News Media Paper 3 DUE in class
15	4/18	**Review**
16	4/24 to 4/30	**Exam 3 - FINAL EXAM** **TBA**

Classroom and Course Policies

Email

Please use: POS 2041 – YOUR LAST NAME and section number in the subject line when you send me email.

While I am very happy to answer any questions and offer clarification on course material, it is your responsibility to read and understand the instructions in this syllabus. If you email me with a question that is already answered in the syllabus, I will refer you back to read the syllabus.

WebCourses

Syllabus and Assignment instructions are all available to download as pdf documents online on your MyUCF WebCourses. I do not post my powerpoint or notes online. Please make sure you pay attention to the schedule and assigned reading section of the syllabus – it is your responsibility to keep up with the reading and to know when to turn in projects.

Laptop Usage

You may use your laptop for notes; however, if laptop is used for other purposes, I will ask you to turn it off. Or, if it becomes a disruptive habit, I will ask you to leave the classroom.

Other communication devices

NO CELL PHONES/BLACKBERRY ETC. – MUST BE TURNED OFF DURING CLASS AND MAY NOT BE USED OR VISIBLE IN ANY WAY DURING EXAM

Grading and evaluation

SEE ABOVE

Attendance and participation

Attendance is important if you want to do well in the course, as exam questions will come from lecture notes, news articles that we may discuss in class, movies/documentaries and other class discussions, in addition to your textbook.

Late and make-up work

No make-ups will be given to students who are out of town on personal business/vacation.
Acceptable reasons for leaving town are the following: participating in an official UCF event (e.g. sport's events, field trips); National Guard or Reserve duty, or a funeral of a close friend or relative, as well as hospitalization. Illness that does not require hospitalization must still be documented; students can use the on-campus health center. Be sure to notify me in advance, when possible, and provide appropriate documentation. **No make-up exam without proper documentation.**

Documentation for absence/illness or other as stated above must be **provided at the time you request a make-up exam.** No make-up exam will be scheduled without proper documentation.

Academic integrity

Plagiarism and Cheating of any kind on an examination, quiz, or assignment will result at least in an "F" for that assignment (and may lead to an "F" for the entire course) and may be subject to appropriate referral to the Office of Student Conduct for further action. See the UCF Golden Rule for further information.

Use of any electronics during exam time is strictly prohibited and could result in an "F" on the exam.

Accommodations for students with disabilities (alternate testing opportunities, support for signers, etc.)

Students who need accommodations must be registered with Student Disability Services, Student Resource Center Room 132, phone (407) 823-2371, TTY/TDD only phone (407) 823-2116, before requesting accommodations from the professor.