Syllabus POS2041

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Howard Phillips Hall 305A (enter through Rm.302) Hours: 12:30 – 2:00 WF and 12:45 – 3:00 M
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This course is designed to familiarize the student with the basic political processes in the United States. We will be exploring the meaning of democracy and the workings of our institutions of government as they were designed and as they exist today. We will also focus our attention on the concept of "power" - what it means, who has it, who doesn't and what its implications are.

I. Course Objectives:

1. To provide an historical and substantive understanding of the American political system.
2. To teach students how to separate fact from opinion, how to evaluate opinions (some are more valid than others), and how to differentiate between what was, what is, and what ought to be.
3. To provide assistance in teaching students **HOW- NOT WHAT**- to think and question.
4. To help students understand the competing interests and diversity in our society in order to enable them to participate in a more aware and rational manner in future decision making.

As members of our society and a global community in the midst of tremendous change, this course is designed to assist the student to become a critical thinker, to respect and understand diversity, and to understand the importance of becoming a life-long learner and a citizen of the society in which you live.

Please read and be familiar with all that is contained in the syllabus and other handouts. I am always available to help or answer questions, but please don't contact me for answers to questions that are already covered in these documents. If you do, I will only refer you to the syllabus or other print-outs you already have.

II. Policies

A.

I expect you to be familiar with the text coverage of all topics **before** we meet. My class lectures and discussions augment what is in the text - they do NOT just repeat what is covered in your book, nor do I merely methodically cover lists of dates and people. If you do not have decent note-taking skills (by hand –no computers are allowed in class) or expect to be taught "for the test", this class is **not** be for you. I do not share my notes or post them on the Internet. It is not my job to merely tell you what to know to pass a test and I expect students to be able to read and understand text material on their own (this is a university class). Learning means understanding and it is my task to help you "learn to learn", help you to improve your ability to think for yourself and better separate fact from opinion.

B.

This is a university course, you are **adults**, and I will treat you as such. Test reviews are the day before a test and consist of my answering your questions – I will not tell you what you "need to know" for the test or go over potential questions at any time. If my style, rules and requirements are not of your liking, find another course. This syllabus is a **contract** – letting you know what to expect from me and what I expect from you. Read it thoroughly and don't loose it during the semester. Please consider all course expectations before the end of Add/Drop. My teaching style and requirements are not for everyone.

III. Course Requirements: Be sure to be aware of the following elements!

A. As previously stated, students will be expected to read all text assignments **prior** to class and to "keep up" on current events. Attendance is not mandatory, but **you** are responsible for **all** class lecture material and for any **changes** made in the syllabus, assignments, test dates etc. It is highly recommended that you read **all** the chapters for each test within the first **two** weeks of each section!

B. There will be three objective tests given during the term, each counting 25% of your final grade. An optional comprehensive final can replace a low test score or serve as the make-up test for any of the first 3 tests. There will be **NO** individual make-up tests given - no exceptions except in cases of university approved religious practice or observance or sanctioned University events. You will need a #2 pencil and a **smooth scantron (#2052)** for each quiz and test. There is an option for you to earn up to 3 points of extra credit towards your final grade that will be distributed in class..

*20% of your grade will be based on 3 quizzes (only the 2 highest will count) which are discussed later in the syllabus. If you miss a quiz, the other two will count for your grade. I do not offer make-up quizzes.

*5% of your grade will be based on a writing assignment that will be discussed later.

* Correct grammar and composition are required for all written assignments.

C. Responsibility for all due dates, being here for tests, all class lectures or changes in any course requirements is **yours**. Everything for this class is subject to changes I may make. **Please exchange** phone numbers, email address etc. with at least **two** other students ASAP for finding out what you missed, class notes etc. There's no excuse for not knowing anyone from whom you can get missed information! After you have the notes you missed, I will be happy to offer any clarification or further elaboration you may need during my office hours, but please don't ask me for my notes or send me a "what did I miss in class?" email.

*****It is important to be on time since all announcements will be made at the beginning of the class. Check with your classmates for announcements if you arrive late or miss a class before contacting me.

IV. Class "Rules"

- The schedule for the university clearly states holidays and final exam times for the term Please don't ask to take tests early or late because you've scheduled a flight for a holiday or vacation on a day when class is scheduled to meet. There will be no exceptions to the previously stated test policy.
- When you arrive in class, do not sit in the back row until all other seats are taken!!!!
- Students are also asked to keep up with current events in local, state, national and international arenas by reading newspapers and magazines, listening to radio, surfing the web, or watching T.V. news. You will be encouraged to talk about current issues at the beginning of each class meeting.
- Be on time for class! Having students arrive late or leave early creates disruption and you may miss announcements for which **you** are responsible. On test days, once the first completed exam is turned in, no one who arrives **Late** will be allowed to take the test. You will have 50 minutes to take the test, but if arrive late, I will not give you additional time.

-**Cell phones, computers** and all electronic devices **must** be turned off. For the first ring of your phone, you will receive a warning and will stand up to apologize to the class, the second will result in your being required to lead the class in singing "Row, Row, Row Your Boat" or to answer your phone and quack like a duck (my choice) and then turn it off.

- All written elements must be typed (double spaced) and multiple pages stapled together or points will be lost. All are due **in class** on their due date. **No email papers will be accepted.**

- **All students are "special" please do not ask to be treated in a different manner than your classmates.** (i.e. – give you an extra assignment to raise your grade or be granted an option not given to everyone else etc.)

V. Email

My email is cbenson@mail.ucf.edu. Please be sure to **always put you class # and time on the subject line (**I have more than one section of 2041 and another class as well) and remember to put your name on the message– I don't have you listed anywhere by email address. I do not open emails with no subject!!!!!

E-mail does not mean I am available for "office hours" 24-7! I check at least once a day and once on weekends, but please don't e-mail me at 11 PM Friday and expect a response before Monday. I'm a lousy typist, so talking with me is best if you have a complex question.

VI. Text: GOVT second Edition by Sidlow and Henschen – No other addition will work for the class this Spring.

VII. Reading Assignments and tentative schedule

(Helpful suggestion : Try to stay ahead in your reading. I suggest you read all the chapters for each test in the fist two weeks of each test section. The material is

organized by topics and I will often refer material in other chapters during class lecture. For example, I will refer to something from Ch. 4 (Civil Liberties) while specifically covering the Constitution (Ch. 2) You will "understand the lectures even better if you do this, but I don't require you to read all the chapters at once. Students who do this have overwhelmingly given positive feedback on it – it can of tremendous help during lectures and discussions, especially for those with little background in this subject. If you choose not to do so, for many of you, my lectures will be harder to understand.

Test #1 - Introductory class lectures (material not in your text), Ch.1-3 (2& 3 together), the Constitution (in the back of your text), and Ch.4 and 5 (this first section will take several weeks to cover in class since I discuss things not in the book)

Test #2 - Ch.6&7, **10**, then 8 & 9 together (this section will not take as long in class time as the first or third)

Test #3 - Ch.11, 12&13 together, 14-16

Test dates for the first two tests will be announced in class at least one week before they are given. Test 3 will be given on the day of your last regular class meeting, Dec.1, 2011.

The optional comprehensive **final** exam for this class is listed on the online "MYUCF" site.. Finals are given in the same room as used for regular class meetings. It is a 50 question multiple choice test (like all others) that will cover material from the entire semester. It should take you no longer than 50 minutes to complete. Be there at the beginning of the scheduled final time since you will have 50 minutes in which to take it.

Late Policy- tests and quizes: If you arrive late on a quiz or test day, if no one has turned in a completed scantron, you may take it, but you will not be given extra time to do so. If someone has turned in a completed scantron, you will not be allowed to take the quiz or test. = Be on time!

VII. Quizzes

20% of your grade will be composed of your scores on two of three quizzes given during the semester. I will announce the dates they will be given in class (another good reason <u>not</u> to miss class!) You will need scantrons (#2052) and #2 pencils.

VIII. Grade Calculation:

I do not use plus/minus grading, nor do I automatically "round up" grades. There has to be a cut-off somewhere and mine is stated below. I must be fair and use the same standards for all students, so please don't ask for exceptions.

Grade Scale

90-100	A (**not 89.9!)**
80-89	B
70-79	C
60-69	D
below 60	F

The top three test scores are averaged, divided by 3, then multiplied by .75 (75% of your grade). Quiz points (20%) are then added along with the score from your writing assignment. Any extra credit points are then added to your total points for the required elements and the result is the grade for the class.

!!! IX Keep track of your own grades!!!!!!!!!

It is **critical** for you to keep track of your own grades in this course during the semester. Your grades will by listed on "MYUCF" under the heading MyUCFGrades (do not use the link that may appear under the web course heading!) as soon as they are calculated. I calculate final grades only once at the end of the semester.

X. Correction Limitations

If you find an error or have a question about a posted grade, you **must** notify me within **five (5)** working days of the posting of that grade. If you wait longer, **no** corrections will be made – no exceptions! I have no sympathy for students who wait until the last week or two to realize they don't know what their grade is until the end of the semester.

F.Y.I. (For your information):

*On any written assignments, proper grammar and composition count!

***Plagarism** of any kind will result in an "F" grade for the class. **Please do your own work!!** I'd hate for you to fail you for the course, but if I catch it, I will take the stated action.

*If class attendance is particularly low on a given, I may pass around an attendance sheet and give a bit of extra credit to those who came. Attendance is NOT mandatory, but to do well, you really need to be there as much as possible. (you will not lose points if you aren't there.)

Disclaimer:

Once again, the test dates, class assignments, and the rest of this syllabus are all subject to change by the instructor at any time and you are responsible for knowing about it if it should be done.

Final Note:

Be sure to read and be familiar with all the requirements, rules, policies and expectations for this class written on this syllabus before the end of Add/Drop.