pos2041 - American Government
David Houghton

Course Home

Instructor Contact

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Introduction

Welcome to POS3413 *American Government*, Summer 2012. This course will generally meet four times a week on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. On this website you will find the course schedule, which will tell you what to read for each class (click on 'Schedule'). Video links to materials we watch in class will also be added to the schedule as we go.

Course Description

This semester the course will be taught in two parts or sections. Part I is a 'nuts and bolts' introduction to the basics of American politics - covering topics such as the Constitution, civil rights and liberties, the American presidency, Congress, the

governmental bureaucracy, the courts, and voting behavior - which is designed to provide the groundwork for more advanced upper-level classes in U.S. politics. We will use Barbour and Wright's *Keeping The Republic* for this section. As the publisher's description puts it, "KTR Brief is carefully condensed by Barbour and Wright, giving your students the continuity and consistency of the full version, just in a more concise package ... each chapter's discussion of "who gets what and how" is designed to build students' analytical abilities. By introducing them to the seminal work in the field and showing them how to employ the themes of power and citizenship, this proven text builds confidence in students who want to take an active part in their communities and government".

The second part of the course then examines the issue of leadership, using Greenstein's *The Presidential Difference*. How much difference do leaders - more specifically, American presidents - make? Is getting things done in the American political system more a matter of luck (of 'being in the right place at the right time', if you like), or do individual attributes such a presidential psychology or bargaining skills matter more? Or is it some subtle combination of the two?

Required Texts

The following books have been placed on order and should be available for purchase at the UCF Book Store or via an online seller such as Amazon.com. I *strongly* recommend that you buy your own copies, as you'll be tested in detail on their contents at exam time:

Christine Barber and Gerald Wright, *Keeping the Republic: Power and Citizenship in American Politics*, Brief 4th Edition (Washington D.C.: CQ Press, 2010). There is a link to the Amazon site for this edition here. A companion website for the book can also be foundhere.

Fred Greenstein, *The Presidential Difference: Leadership Style From FDR To Barack Obama*, 3rd Edition (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009). There is a link to the Amazon site for this edition here, and a publisher's website here.

A Word of Warning About Summer Courses

If you haven't taken a Summer class before, you should know that they are intensive and can therefore be fairly gruelling: since there are a lot of class meetings with more reading than there might be in an ordinary class week, you need to organize yourself so that you complete the readings and come to class on time. If you miss a particular class, you may miss a lot! So needless to say, this will require a great deal of self-discipline on your part. Do not take this course unless you are strongly motivated to do all the readings and assignments on time, and are prepared to come to class four times a week.

Rules of Assessment

The final grade will be composed of three elements:

- A Midterm Examination on everything covered so far, taken in class on Thursday 12 July. Consists of 60 multiple choice questions and worth 40%.
- Cumulative Final Examination, taken in class on Thursday 2 August. Consists of 100 multiple choice questions and worth 50%.
- Attendance will count for 10%. You are of course required to attend class and to show up on time. *It is your responsibility to ensure that you sign the attendance sheet each day, as I cannot add you retrospectively*. If you fail to attend on a given day, you must give a *convincing written explanation*, backed up with proper medical or other documentation, as to why you were unable to be there that day.

Makeup examinations will be offered *only in the very rarest of circumstances*. In order to be eligible to take a makeup exam or get an extension, you must again give a *convincing written explanation*, backed up with proper medical or other documentation, as to why you were unable to meet the expectations required of other class members. Only where the instructor is fully satisfied that the student could not be expected to take a particular examination given his or her personal circumstances will any exceptions whatsoever be granted. Note also that any makeup examination *will not necessarily be of the same format as the original exam*.

Finally, please note that ***no extra credit*** will be offered in this course; by continuing with the course, you are agreeing to abide by its rules of assessment and agreeing to accept the marks/grades assigned to your work. All grades are final. The grading scheme will be as follows:

A 90 or above
A- 88-89
B+ 86-87
B 82-85
B- 80-81
C+ 78-79
C 73-77
C- 70-72
D+ 67-69
D 63-66
D- 60-62
F Below 60

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Schedule of Readings
Summer 2012

The following readings may be subject to change as the course proceeds, so you should check back here frequently. Any readings not included in the required texts will be added to the webpage via a link called 'Additional Readings Box'.

Part I: A 'Nuts and Bolts' Introduction

Monday 25 June Introduction To Class

Overview of objectives and methods of assessment, and a bird's eye view of what we'll be covering during the semester. Discussion of two books to be purchased.

Tuesday 26 June Power and Citizenship in American Politics

Read Barbour and Wright, Keeping The Republic, Chapter 1.

Wednesday 27 June The Politics of the American Founding/ Federalism

Barbour and Wright, Chapters 2 and 3.

Thursday 28 June Fundamental American Liberties/ The Struggle for Equal Rights

Barbour and Wright, Chapters 4 and 5. We will watch segments 17 and 18 on civil rights from the PBS documentary LBJ, which you can view here.

Monday 2 July Congress

Barbour and Wright, Chapter 6.

Tuesday 3 July The Presidency

Barbour and Wright, Chapter 7.

Wednesday 4 July No Class Held Independence Day.

Thursday 5 July The Bureaucracy/The Courts

Barbour and Wright, Chapters 8 and 9.

Monday 9 July Public Opinion/Voting, Campaigns, and Elections

Barbour and Wright, Chapters 10 and 12.

Tuesday 10 July Domestic and Foreign Policy

Barbour and Wright, Chapter 14.

Wednesday 11 July Revision Session I

Review of everything covered so far for tomorrow's exam.

Thursday 12 July Midterm Examination

60 Multiple Choice questions. Bring a brown scantron and pencil.

Part II: Leadership and the 'Nature of the Times'

Monday 16 July Do Leaders Make a Difference?

Greenstein, Chapter 1. There is a CSPAN interview with Fred Greenstein about his book here.

Tuesday 17 July FDR

Greenstein, Chapter 2. Video, segment from the PBS documentary 'FDR'. The whole documentary is available here.

Wednesday 18 July Truman/Eisenhower

Greenstein, Chapters 3 and 4; also 'Greenstein' from 'Additional Readings Box'. Video, segment from the PBS documentary 'Eisenhower'. You can view the full documentary here.

Thursday 19 July JFK

Greenstein, Chapter 5; video, segment from the PBS documentary 'The Kennedys'. You can view the entire documentary here.

Monday 23 July LBJ

Greenstein, Chapter 6; video, segment from the PBS documentary 'LBJ'. You can view the whole thing here.

Tuesday 24 July Nixon/Ford

Greenstein, Chapters 7 and 8. Video, segment from the PBS documentary 'Nixon'.The full documentary is available here.

Wednesday 25 July Carter

Greenstein, Chapter 9; video, segment from the A & E documentary 'Jimmy Carter'.

Thursday 26 July Reagan

Greenstein, Chapter 10; video, segment from the PBS documentary 'Reagan'.

Monday 30 July Bush I and II

Greenstein, Chapters 11 and 13. Video, segment from the A & E documentary 'George Bush'.

Tuesday 31 July Clinton

Greenstein, Chapter 12; video, segments from the PBS documentary 'Clinton', available here, and from the movie, 'Primary Colors'.

Wednesday 1 August Revision Session II

Greenstein, Chapter 15. Overview of everything covered in the course in preparation for Final Exam.

Thursday 2 August Final Examination

Comprehensive Final Exam, 100 Multiple Choice questions. Bring a brown scantron and pencil.