Syllabus POS2041

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Office Hours: 8-10AM. MWF , 8-8:45 TR

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.
5.

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.

You MUST make at least 2 contacts with other students in the class so you can get missed lecture notes and important announcements

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 critical thinking 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 lose 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. The course is divided into 3 parts. It is highly recommended that you read **all** the chapters for each section within the first **two** weeks of each of them. You need not make outlines or go into much depth the first time you read them. However, you need to read each more carefully when we get to it during class discussions and lecture.

B. There will be three objective tests given during the term, each counting 30% 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.

*10% of your grade will be based on one of two M/C and short answer quizzes (only the highest score will count) which are discussed later in the syllabus. If you miss a quiz, the other will count for your grade. I do not offer make-up quizzes.

* 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. As mentioned previously, **YOU MUST 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 quiz and 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 be required to lead the class in singing "Row, Row, Row Your Boat" (or another song of my choosing) in rounds. If you don't know the song, learn it now. I may ask you to so or sing something else –one never knows, but from then on, I doubt you'll ever forgat to turn all electronics off before class!

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. CRITICAL: Please be sure to **always put you class # and time on the subject line (**I have 3 sections 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 Fourth Edition by Sidlow and Henschen – No other addition will work for the class.

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 first 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. I don't require homework or any other reading requirements so please READ the text as asked.

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. We will have discussions or cover current events when relevant, so exact advance test dates don't work for this class. Test 3 will be given on the day of your last regular class meeting.

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. Again, this will be your make-up test if you missed one, or be used to replace a lower grade on a previous test. Taking it is up to you.

Late Policy- tests and quizzes: 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

10% of your grade will be composed of the higher score on the two quizzes given during the semester. I will announce the dates they will be given in class at least one week in advance (another good reason <u>not</u> to miss class!) You will need a #2 pencil and a scantron unless I tell you otherwise. I'll let you know if the quiz is M/C or written.

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 .90 (90% of your grade). Quiz points (10%) are then added. Do **not** use the % columns shown on the Canvas gradebook to determine your grade in the class. Since not all scores count, the listed % numbers are **wrong! I am unable to hide or delete those columns, so please just ignore them**

!!! 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 so keep all scantrons and quizzes. 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 grade, you **must** notify me within **five (5)** working days. 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 and discover they are in trouble. You may not do anything else to bring up your score!

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.

*****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.

For those receiving financial aid!!:

You must respond to the question on canvass (I'll explain further in class). This is a new University requirement for all students in all classes