

Fall 2009
Dr. Caress

INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN GOVERNMENT - POLS 1101

Syllabus

This course provides a basic overview of the political system, institutions, and policies of the American national government. Included in this overview is a detailed study of American political behavior as it relates to political participation and voting. This course is divided into four separate but related sections. The first section will focus on the informal institutions of American government. This section will examine the role of political socialization, public opinion, and political parties in American politics.

The second section will examine interest groups, the media, campaigns, social movements, and the Constitutions. The third section will focus on the formal (Constitutional) institutions of American government. This section will provide an in depth examination of the American Presidency, and the U.S. Congress. Also, a discussion about the governmental bureaucracy will be included in this section to illustrate the workings of these institutions. The last section focuses on the American court system, civil liberties and civil rights. This section will conclude with a consideration of foreign policy, social welfare policy, and state and local government.

LEARNING OUTCOMES: This course is designed as an introduction to the subject but it will also enable students with a more intense interest to cultivate their intellectual curiosity. Students will demonstrate that they have developed: An understanding of the basic values of American civic culture; An understanding of the constitutional, institutional, political, and legal processes of the U.S. and Georgia; An understanding of the interrelationship between American Governmental institutions; An understanding of the basic terminology of political science & U.S. politics; An understanding of how American culture, values, and political institutions compare with those of other types of government

TEXTS (REQUIRED)

INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN GOVERNMENT 4th Edition by Stephenson et al.
DYNAMICS OF AMERICAN POLITICS by S. M. Caress (*on library reserve*)

CLASS ASSIGNMENTS & REQUIREMENTS

There will be four exams - three midterms and a final. They will be multiple-choice. Also, one written paper (8 - 10 typed pages) will be required. The midterms will each be worth 20% of the total grade. The final is also worth 25%, and the short paper is worth 10%. The remaining 5% is based on class participation. Voluntary class debates will be held the last week of the semester. The written paper will be only 4-5 pages for students who participate in the debates. Class attendance is expected and excessive absences will result in a student being terminated from the course.

OFFICE HOURS: Office is Pafford 128. Regularly scheduled office hours will be given in

class. You can contact Dr. Caress by phone 678 839-4989 or by email at scaress@westga.edu.

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READING AND EXAM SCHEDULE

All readings are in the Stephenson et al. text unless otherwise noted. The Caress text will be used primarily for the written assignment:

Week I. Stephenson - Introduction

Week II. Chap. 5 (Beliefs and Socialization)

Week III. Chap. 4 (Ideology)

Week IV. Chap. 7 (Parties) 215-232

FIRST MIDTERM EXAM - Friday September 11

Week V. Chap. 6 (Media)

Week VI. Chap. 7 (Interest Groups) 199-215

Week VII. Chap. 8 (Campaigns) pages 247-265

Week VIII. Chap. 1 (Constitution)

SECOND MIDTERM EXAM - October 9

Week IX. Chap. 9 (Congress)

Week X. Chap. 10 (Presidency)

Week XI. Chap. 11 (Bureaucracy)

THIRD MIDTERM EXAM - November 4

Week XII Chap. 12 (Judiciary) & Chap 3 (Civil Liberties)

Week XIII Chap 13-15 (Domestic Policy)

Week XIV Chap. 16 (Foreign Policy)

Week XV Chap. 2 (Federalism)

Paper Due - November 23

FINAL EXAM - December 7 - 11:00 AM

