

POLS 1101: American National Government

Fall, 2009
Section 14
MWF: 10-10:50
Pafford 206

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Office Hours: MW: 2-5
 R: 10-12
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Course Description

This course is intended to introduce students from a wide variety of academic disciplines and backgrounds to the operation and importance of American national government. We will cover in depth national institutions, as the course title suggests, but also devote our attention to such topics as politics of the American founding, the constitution and how it has evolved over time, the changing nature of conceptions of rights in American society, elections and the importance of the media and interest groups, and we will even devote a few weeks to areas of public policy and politics in Georgia. As the preceding demonstrates, we will survey a vast array of topics fundamental to improving your understanding of American politics.

Course Objectives

Relating to the description of the course, the instructor will consider this course a success if students walk away from the course at the end of the semester with a fundamental understanding of how American government works, but more importantly, how the government operations and outcomes effect our lives as citizens of this nation on a daily basis. It is the instructor's intent not to convince you of any partisan dispositions or policy objectives, but rather to attempt to foster the student's understanding of American politics while stressing the importance of civic involvement among citizens.

Required Texts:

Ginsberg, Benjamin, Theodore Lowi, and Margaret Weir. 2009. *We the People: An Introduction to American Politics*. 7th Essential Georgia Edition. W.W. Norton.

*Note: There is also an online reader that accompanies this text. Students will be expected to read these materials where they are assigned.

Course Evaluation

Exams: There will be three exams throughout the course of the semester. Exams will be multiple choice in their entirety (50 questions) and will count as 20% of the student's final grade each.

Final Exam: There will be a fourth, cumulative final examination held during finals week in the allotted time provided by the University. It will consist of 100 multiple choice questions, with

80 coming from the earlier portions of the course and 20 coming from the material covered after exam III. The exam will be worth 30% of your grade in the course.

Participation: The remaining 10% of the course grade will be based on the student's participation in class. Students are expected to come to class having done the assigned readings and be prepared to participate fully in discussions we will be having in class. Students who consistently miss class, without documented proof of emergency circumstances, will be shown no mercy in this course. Participation will not only be worth ten percent of the final grade, but also will be the basis on which borderline grades are determined at the end of the semester.

Related Expectations: Students will also be expected to adhere to the following related expectations.

- 1) When engaging in class discussion, students will be respectful of the opinions of others and will treat each other professionally. Foul or harmful language directed at any other individual in the room will result in your removal from the course and you will not be welcome back.
- 2) Students are not to use their cell phones or other electronic devices during class. If you are caught using your cell phones during class, you will be asked to leave, not welcomed back, and you will get a zero for participation in this course.
- 3) Do assigned readings prior to coming to class. You will need to do so in order to effectively participate in the discussion or follow the lecture.
- 4) Get to class on time.

Grading Procedures:

Students will be evaluated by their individual performance on the four exams and their class participation. Students will be assigned one of the following letter grades based on their points earned out of the total possible points:

A: 90-100%

B: 80-89%

C: 70-79%

D: 60-69%

F: 0-59%

Academic Dishonesty:

I take academic dishonesty very seriously, as does the University. As such, any cheating or suspicion of cheating on any assignment for this course will not be tolerated and will be prosecuted to the fullest extent, including those authorities above me. Cheating will result in a failing grade for the course, no exceptions.

Make up assignments:

Students are expected to take exams in class at the time they are scheduled. Students will only be allowed to make up or reschedule examinations or any other assigned aspect of the course in the most extreme circumstances and providing full documentation where applicable.

Students with disabilities:

Any student with a disability who requires any accommodation should notify me as early in the semester as possible and the instructor certainly will work with you to the greatest extent of his abilities.

Social Justice Policy:

The instructor and the University take social justice very seriously. To that end, no students will be discriminated against in this class for any reason, including race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, or height, weight, age or appearance for that matter by the instructor or any of the students. Students who make insensitive, inappropriate, or offensive comments in class relating to any of these criteria will face disciplinary action. Students are encouraged to participate fully but professionally in class discussions, and no student should be made to feel too uncomfortable to do so.

Course Schedule

Reading Assignments will be denoted in bold.

Week 1: (August 14) Introduction

- Students will receive the syllabus and expectations will be discussed in class.

Week 2: (August 17-21) The Citizen and the Government

- **Read Chapter 1**
- **Harold Laswell in Chapter 1 of online reader.**

Week 3: (August 24-28) The Founding and the Constitution

- **Read Chapter 2**
- **Read Georgia Supplement, Sections 2, 3, and 7.**
- **Federalist 10, 51 in Chapter 2 of online reader.**

Week 4: (August 31-September 4)-Federalism

- **Read Chapter 3**
- **Read Georgia Supplement, Section 1.**
- **Federalist 47, McCulloch vs. MD. in Chapter 3 of online reader.**

Week 5: (September 9-11) Civil Rights and Liberties

- **Read Chapter 4**
- **Federalist 84, Plessy vs. Ferguson in Chapter 4 of online reader.**
- No class September 7 in observation of Labor Day.

Week 6: (September 14-18) Civil Rights and Liberties (continued)/Exam I

- **Read Georgia Supplement, Section 6.**
- Wednesday, September 16 we will finish this section and have a review for Exam I.
- **Exam I: September 18 in class.**

Week 7: (September 21-25) Public Opinion

- **Read Chapter 5**

Week 8: (September 28-October 2) The Media

- **Read Chapter 6**
- **Near vs. Minnesota, NYT vs. Sullivan in Chapter 13 of online reader.**

Week 9: (October 5-9) Political Parties and Elections

- **Read Chapter 7**
- **Read Georgia Supplement, Section 5.**

Week 10: (October 12-14) Interest Groups

- **Read Chapter 8**
- No class October 16, Fall Break.

Week 11: (October 19-23) Exam II/Congress

- Monday, October 19 we will finish this section and have a review for Exam II.
- **Exam II: Wednesday, October 21 in class.**
- **Read first half of Chapter 9 for Friday.**

Week 12: (October 26-30) Congress/Bureaucracy

- **Read remainder of Chapter 9**
- **Mayhew in Chapter 5 of online reader.**
- **Read Chapter 11**
- **Read Georgia Supplement, section 4 (Introduction and section on Georgia Assembly)**

Week 13: (November 2-6) Presidency

- **Read Chapter 10**
- **Federalist 70 in Chapter 6 of online reader.**
- **Read Georgia Supplement, section 4 (section on Executive branch)**

Week 14: (November 9-13) Courts

- **Read Chapter 12**
- **Marbury vs. Madison, Dred Scott vs. Sandford in Chapter 8 of online reader.**
- **Read Georgia Supplement, section 4 (Judicial Branch and Local Government)**
- No class November 13 due to GPSA annual meeting.

Week 15: (November 16-20) Exam III/Public Policy

- Monday and Wednesday we will finish this section and have a review for Exam III.
- **Exam III: Friday, November 20 in class.**

Week 16: (November 23) Public Policy

- **Monday, November 23 will be an introduction to public policy, lecture only, no readings. Note, this information is not in your text, so do not miss the lecture.**
- No class November 25-27 in observance of Thanksgiving holiday.

Week 17: (November 30-December 4) Domestic and Foreign Policy

- **Read Chapters 13-14**

Cumulative Final Examination (Exam IV): Wednesday, December 9; 8:00-10:00am Pafford 206