
AMERICAN POLITICS

L32 Pol Sci 101B

Instructor: Ian Turner

Course Day/time: Monday-Friday 9AM-12PM

Course website: access course documents through Blackboard

Course location: Seigle Hall 206

Office: Seigle Hall 254

Office Hours: TBD

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course surveys contemporary American politics. In addition to the basics of the three branches of the federal government and how they interact with one another in making policy, the course will also cover federalism, civil liberties, civil rights, public opinion, elections, political parties, interest groups, and the media. This is a lecture-based course. Attendance at all lectures is a natural expectation of the course.

COURSE MATERIALS

The book for the course is *American Government: Power and Purpose*, Full 13th Edition (with policy chapters) by Lowi, Ginsberg, Shepsle, & Ansolabehere. I recommend buying this online from Norton: <http://books.wwnorton.com/books/American-Government/>

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The grading will be done according to the following rubric:

| | |
|---------------------|---------------------------|
| Class participation | 15% |
| 3 Memos | 10% (each) or 30% (total) |
| Midterm | 25% |
| Final exam | 30% |

Assignments **will not be accepted late**. Each component of the grading rubric above is described in more detail below. Additionally the course is graded based on the following 10-point scale:

| Score | Grade | Score | Grade | Score | Grade | Score | Grade |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| ≥ 94 | A | ≥ 83 | B | ≥ 73 | C | ≥ 63 | D |
| ≥ 90 | A- | ≥ 80 | B- | ≥ 70 | C- | ≥ 60 | D- |
| ≥ 87 | B+ | ≥ 77 | C+ | ≥ 67 | D+ | < 60 | F |

Table 1: Grading scale.

CLASS PARTICIPATION

The format for the majority of the class sessions will typically consist of a mix of lecture and class discussion. The purpose of the lecture portion is to clarify, review, and supplement the material assigned from the textbook (or material provided by me) for that session so that all students have a working knowledge of the facts and concepts relevant to the session topic. Class discussion will be interjected throughout the lecture based on student interest.

Overall expectations for class participation include:

1. You will *prepare* for class by reading the text and any other reading material provided by me with a focus on making note of anything that you find unclear and/or particularly interesting.
2. You will *participate* in the class discussions because the benefit from these discussions is much greater when more students actively participate.

In addition, class sessions may be conducted in other formats, including debates, small group discussions, and short student presentations (of memos, discussed below) as the instructor sees fit.

MEMOS

There will be 3 memos, weighted equally. These assignments are not meant to be “tough” in any way. Rather, they are meant to help provide a venue for students to engage in the readings and discussions based on their own interest(s). There will be a memo due each Friday during the course. The memos should be to me (through email or hard copy) no later than 5 PM the day they are due. For the final week I would prefer memos to be turned in prior to taking the final exam as that will be easier for all involved.

MIDTERM EXAMS

There is on midterm that will be an in-class exam. This will simply serve as a benchmark for the first portion of the course. These should be viewed as an opportunity for students to showcase what they have learned in the course. The format and expectations for the exams will be discussed further in class. The midterm will take place in class on Tuesday May 27th.

FINAL EXAM

The final exam will be the same format as the two midterm exams but will include a bit more comprehensive questioning. The bulk of the final exam will *not* be cumulative, however, the instructor may include a few questions that pertain to material from previous parts of the course. As the course builds on itself as we develop understanding of the American political system, my expectation is that this will not be onerous for any student who has been engaged in the material throughout the course. The specific format and material to be covered will be discussed prior to the final exam in class. This exam will take place on the final day of the course: Friday, June 6th.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Plagiarism or academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. You can find an outline and discussion of the details of Washington University's academic integrity policies at the following web address: http://provost.wustl.edu/undergraduate_student_academic_integrity.

COURSE OUTLINE

The following outlines the general structure of the course in terms of topics to be covered. Note that the instructor may change this structure to reflect student interests, evolution of class discussion, or simply easier and tougher topics. In general, however, we will try to stick as close to this structure as possible.

1. (May 19) Introduction to the course, Articles of Confederation, the Constitution
 - Chapter 1 LGSA,
 - Chapter 2 pp. 32–70,
 - The U.S. Constitution, Articles I and II.
2. (May 20) Federalism, Separation of Powers, Civil Liberties: Origins and Evolution
 - The U.S. Constitution, Article IV and Amendments I–X,
 - Chapter 3, pp. 72–102 LGSA,
 - Chapter 4, pp. 104–114 LGSA.
3. (May 21) Modern Civil Liberties, Civil Rights: Historical Evolution, Civil Rights: Modern Issues & Affirmative Action
 - Chapter 4, pp. 115–144 LGSA,
 - Chapter 5, pp. 146–167 LGSA,

- U.S. Constitution, Amendments XIII, XIV, XV,
4. (May 22) Civil rights (finishing up)
 - Bring any questions for Constitution, Civil Liberties, Civil Rights Midterm Exam
 - Chapter 5, pp. 167–184 LGSA.
 5. (May 23) **First memo due**, Congress
 6. Chapter 6, pp. 186–245 LGSA.
 7. (May 26) *No Class — Memorial Day*
 8. (May 27) **Midterm Exam # 1: Constitution, Civil Liberties, Civil Rights & Congress.**
 9. (May 28) The Presidency
 - Chapter 7, pp. 248–300 LGSA.
 10. (May 29) Administration & Bureaucracy
 - Chapter 8, pp. 302–339 LGSA.
 11. (May 30) **Second memo due**, The Judiciary
 - Chapter 9, pp. 342–390 LGSA.
 12. (June 2) Public Opinion
 - Chapter 10, pp. 392–444 LGSA.
 13. (June 3) Elections: Institutions, Voter Decision-Making, Campaign Finance
 - Chapter 11, pp. 446–510 LGSA.
 14. (June 4) Parties: Basics, Modern Structure, Historical Evolution
 - Chapter 12, pp. 512–557 LGSA.
 15. (June 5) **Good idea to turn in final memo BEFORE exam**, Interest Groups, & Media
 - Bring any questions for Final Exam.
 - Chapter 13, pp. 558–596 LGSA,
 - Chapter 14, pp. 598–630.
 16. (June 6) **Final memo due before Final Exam, Final Exam**