

Spring 2006
POLS 101.005 American Government
Tuesday - Thursday 9:25–10:40 316 Maybank Hall

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There is never a *bad* semester to take this course—no matter what, there is always something interesting, significant, and history-altering happening in politics! This semester is no different. Within the week, the House of Representatives will reorganize its majority leadership and at a minimum, select a new Majority Leader to replace Representative Tom Delay (R-TX) who temporarily stepped aside when he was indicted in Texas, but permanently resigned his post last Friday in the face of new allegations tied to the case against lobbyist Jack Abramoff. They also have to return to the Patriot Act reauthorization—an issue they put off by extending provisions for another six months prior to their December recess—decide what to do about failing schools, a skyrocketing budget deficit and trade imbalance, insurgents in Iraq, and tax cuts (and think about the midterm elections looming in November). Meanwhile, the U.S. Senate will finally begin confirmation hearings on Supreme Court nominee Samuel Alito; and the Court itself will look into a number of significant issues throughout the spring—including the legality of the Texas re-districting plan that gave Republicans eight more seats in the U.S. House (potentially more trouble for Delay) and the significant expansion of executive authority relative to the “war on terror.” The President is more visible and vocal on matters related to the war in Iraq, domestic eavesdropping, and the economy; however, an AP poll conducted in the first week of January still finds that 59% of those polled *disapprove* of the way he is handling the presidency. What does that mean for the Republicans in the 06 midterms? What does it mean for the president's remaining 2 years in office and his foreign and domestic policy agendas? Does any of this matter? Will you be affected? Absolutely.

This course provides an introduction to American government and politics. In addition to the underlying foundations, the structures and processes of American government, we will be particularly attentive to the role that politics plays in decision-making and policymaking. Additionally, there is a strong focus on how citizens interact with politics and government. Throughout the semester, I hope you will come to appreciate the vital role that civic participation plays in the American system and acquire the knowledge and skills to facilitate your own effective political participation. We will work on developing the ability to converse intelligently and critically on a variety of political issues and perennial problems. Specifically, we will critically discuss America's struggle with equality, balancing national security with the protection of individual liberties, and issues surrounding recent and upcoming elections. You will also have the chance to investigate a public policy controversy of your choice more thoroughly.

Significant political events will unfold daily, so an important part of this course is regular consumption of reliable news media. At a minimum, you will need to read a daily national newspaper. There is substantial research evidence that if you do not develop the habit of reading a daily newspaper in college, you will not be a regular reader after college. While there is certainly a wide range of sources for news these days, I require that you gain at least part of your knowledge via a national daily newspaper. You can read it online, you can subscribe to the *New York Times*, or you can find the paper for FREE at a number of locations across campus. Subscription details are below. This is not optional—we will talk about the news at the beginning of each class.

Required Course Materials

Keeping the Republic: Power and Citizenship in American Politics (The Essentials edition), Christine Barbour and Gerald C. Wright, CQ Press, 2006 (KTR)

System Under Stress: Homeland Security and American Politics, Donald F. Kettl, CQ Press, 2004

What's the Matter with Kansas? How Conservatives Won the Heart of America, Thomas Frank, 2005

Electronic Reserve Reading (ER) as noted on the syllabus below

New York Times Monday through Friday--subscriptions available through the College of Charleston bookstore (January 17 – April 24, \$ 26, pay at the Bookstore and retrieve your paper from the Bookstore as well. If you live in or near the dorms, you can take advantage of the Readership Program and pick up a copy for free in any dorm lobby. You can also get a copy of the paper for free in the coffee shop at the Library. You can read most of the paper online for free at <http://www.nyt.com>. *The Times* has instituted a subscription price for some articles and opinion pieces and so I encourage you to subscribe to the print version. You are encouraged to sample widely from other national daily newspapers online or in print as well.

Course Goals

Conceptual tools for a lifetime. A basic goal of the course is to provide you with the basic conceptual tools that will allow you to stay informed about American politics for a lifetime. While this entails learning some basic facts about American politics, a more important skill is learning analytical skills that will allow you to interpret and understand standard sources of information on American politics.

Normative vs. positive analysis. A second goal is to understand the difference between "normative" and "positive" analysis of politics. "Normative" analysis means trying to establish what is good; "positive" analysis means trying to understand how things work—whether or not they are good. For example, it may be possible for both liberals and conservatives to agree that voter turnout increases when registration laws are relaxed—although they may disagree strongly on whether lenient voter registration laws are a good idea. Although political scientists inevitably have differing normative perspectives, the discipline is grounded in a shared belief that positive analysis of politics can advance our understanding of politics through logical argument, the statement of testable hypotheses, and careful empirical investigation of those hypotheses. We also hope that the more we understand about politics, the more likely we are to reach normative agreement. For example, the more we understand about the relationship between poverty and crime, the more we may be able to agree on the appropriate policies to follow.

Free and open dialogue. This nation is founded on an ideal of freedom of speech that is often difficult to implement and practice. This course should provide you with the experience of having a free and open dialogue on constitutional, political, and policy issues. One of the premises of democratic government is that it is possible to have such a debate, even involving people with diametrically opposed views, without rancor or harmful emotional attacks. This ideal is sometimes more difficult to carry out in times when the nation is engaged in military action, as it has been since September 11. The College has a special responsibility to demonstrate the possibility and power of free and democratic discourse, in which individuals are respected and encouraged to present their opinions. The only ground rule for debate in our class is respect for other people and their point of view, no matter how different from your own. You should feel that your views are challenged this semester, but you should never feel personally threatened or belittled.

Course Orientation

Class sessions will involve some lectures, but mostly discussion arising from the assigned readings. Most of the time, I will facilitate these discussions, although students may be called upon occasionally to do so. Most classes will begin with a short lecture presentation that frames the day's discussion and suggests issues and questions to be discussed. Participants in this course should consider themselves members of a learning community. As such, they have certain rights and responsibilities in relation to the work we will be doing and to one another. The first of these is to come to class prepared and to expect your classmates to do the same.

Student Responsibilities

Regular class attendance, on-time arrival, and careful preparation for each class are required. I will not always take formal attendance, but you will be held accountable for your choices. While I would rather you come late than not at all if rare circumstances conspire against you, chronic tardiness is not acceptable. If you attend class and do the readings, but still have difficulty, I will do everything I can to help you understand the material. Don't expect much sympathy though if you are not holding up your end of the deal by reading, completing the class assignments and coming to class. If a crisis arises, get into see me immediately--don't wait, thinking it will go away. Students are expected to participate in discussions of the material and to

conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the Classroom Code of Conduct.

Special Circumstances

If you have any kind of special circumstances that I should be aware of, please let me know right away. If you have SNAP accommodations of any kind, please make the appropriate notifications and arrangements with the Center for Students with Disabilities within the first week of class. Alternatively, if you have any sort of undiagnosed learning disability, a physical impairment of any kind that will require special arrangements for exams or papers, if you are an athlete or member of any club or organization that will travel, let me know. I will keep the information you share with me strictly confidential, but in order to create the best environment for your academic success, I need to know if there are circumstances that may interfere with your performance in the course

Office Hours and Ways to Contact Me

I have posted office hours every week. You can find these at the top of this syllabus (Monday and Wednesday from 10-12). During these hours I make a Herculean effort to be in my office as promised. On the rare occasions that I will not be available during office hours, I will do my best to let you know that in advance. That said, you should feel free to simply stop by during my office hours—no appointment necessary. If my posted hours do not fit your schedule, I will be more than happy to make an appointment with you or you can simply stop by at another time—I will usually be in my office (or nearby) between 8:30a-5:00p aside from meetings, classes and other forms of College business. I am very accessible by email for quick questions or by phone. Please take the initiative to contact me or come see me if you have questions, problems, or special circumstances arise. I would also encourage you to use my office hours to come in and introduce yourself. I have given you my office phone number at the top of the syllabus and my home number is 723-6910. You should feel free to call me at home if an emergency arises or you have questions that cannot wait until the next day. Please call between 8:30 and 10pm if at all possible and only when you have a question or emergency that cannot wait until the next day. Both of my phone numbers have Voice Mail. When you leave a message be sure to speak slowly, clearly and leave your full name and a phone number so that I can return your call. I don't always have the folder with your contact info with me, so please make sure to leave your phone number as well as your first and last name!

Electronic Reserves

This course will may occasionally make use of the library's electronic reserves. Access this service from <http://ereserve.cofc.edu> or from the library's homepage. To access our course material, choose my name from the Instructor pull-down menu, then POLS 101. The password is "Vote" with a Cap V.

Exams and Course Assignments

Examinations There will be one in-class exam and a final exam given during the scheduled exam period. The two exams will each be a combination of multiple choice, short answer and essay questions and you will receive a study guide one week prior to each exam. The major essay question will appear on the study guide so that you can prepare your thoughts in advance. No notes of any kind will be allowed on the day of the exam. Each exam is worth 20% of your final course grade.

Writing Assignments Each of you will one fairly short paper tied to the CONVOCATION of MAJORS on February 16, 2006. Attendance at the Convocation is mandatory as is a visit to the Halsey Gallery to see the associated exhibit. This assignment is described on the pages at the end of this syllabus. The paper is due on February 21, 2006. The other paper you will write involves a choice. You will each write a critical analysis paper on the issues taken up in one of the two supplementary books I've assigned (*What's the Matter with Kansas* and *System Under Stress*). We will use each of these books as "case studies" of two important issues facing the nation: ideological differences throughout the U.S. electorate and the country's ability (or inability) to deal with national security threats. In addition to the books, there will be additional reading in each section placed on Electronic Reserve (ER). I will provide a separate handout detailing the requirements for these assignments. If you write on the electorate, this paper is due on March 16, 2006. If you choose to deal with the system in its entirety, your paper is due on April 18, 2006.

Getting Involved Assignment This exercise, worth 20% of your final grade, is designed to introduce you to the community, to local and state politics, and to one another--face to face. The assignment requires that you engage in a political activity--some more involved than others--and then write me a paper explaining what you did and reflecting on what it meant to you. There are lots of options to choose from--see the assignment sheet at the end of the syllabus for details.

Participation Essays (2 @ 5% each) In order to help assess the quality of your participation in the seminar and in other aspects of our work this semester, you will write two essays detailing and assessing your own participation in and outside of class. This exercise is described in more detail on the assignment sheet at the end of the syllabus.

Scheduling Policy and Due Dates

You must take each exam on the scheduled date unless you can provide an excuse acceptable within College guidelines. With an acceptable excuse, a make-up will be scheduled within one week of the regular examination date. It is your responsibility to see me immediately upon missing an exam (I prefer you call or email before the exam if at all possible). If you do not contact me within 24 hours of the exam, or miss the scheduled make-up, you fail that exam. The assigned papers are due at the start of class on the date noted on the syllabus or paper assignment sheet. For each day an assignment is late, 5% will be deducted from the final grade. This applies to everyone, no exceptions. No work of any kind will be accepted after the start of the regularly scheduled final exam.

Important Dates

Examination #1: Tuesday, February 7--in class (20%) a change in date

POLITICAL SCIENCE CONVOCATION OF MAJORS: February 16, 2006 @ 7:00p PHYS AUD

Convocation Essay: Due on Tuesday, February 21, 2006 (10%)

Participation Essay #1: Due at the start of class on March 2, 2006 (5%)

Getting Involved Exercise: Due at the start of class on April 4, 2006 (20%)

Case Analysis Paper on the Electorate: Due in class on March 16, 2006 (20%) ~OR~

Case Analysis Paper on the System and Terror: Due in class on April 18, 2006 (20%)

Participation Essay #2: Due at the start of class on April 20, 2006 (5%)

Final Examination: Saturday, April 29 @ 8-11am (20%)

Grades

Grades are based on a straight scale 90-100 A; 80-89 B; 70-79 C; 60-69 D; 50-59 F. Final course grades are calculated to allow for a B+ (88, 89) and a C+ (78,79).

Academic Dishonesty

This subject is very important! When you enrolled in the College of Charleston, you signed an Honor Code. I expect you to abide by that code and it is the only way for you to maintain the integrity and value of your degree. If you are found to have cheated on an exam or plagiarized any portion of your paper, you will fail my course and I will turn the case over to the Honor Board and vigorously pursue further disciplinary action. If you have any questions or are unsure what constitutes cheating or plagiarism--ask. Ignorance is not a valid defense.

Course Schedule and Reading Assignments

January

10 Introductions, Expectations, and Course Overview

I. Foundations of American Government: Assumptions, Values and Structures

12 Who Are We? What do we care about? How does that shape our Politics?
Reading: Chapters 1 and 2, *Keeping the Republic* (KTR)

“Letter from Birmingham Jail,” Electronic Reserves (ER) **PRINT and BRING**

- 17 An Emerging Philosophy of Government: the first constitution
Reading: The Declaration of Independence, Appendix 2, KTR
Articles of Confederation, Appendix 1, KTR
- 19 - 24 The US Constitution—why so complicated? why so exclusionary?
Reading: Chapter 3, KTR
United States Constitution (entire document, read it carefully), Appendix 3
- 26 -31 Mechanisms of a Compound Republic: Separation of Powers and Federalism
Separation of Powers Reading: *Federalist Papers* 47, 48, 51 (ER)
Federalism Reading: Chapter 4, KTR

February

- 7 Examination #1—in class**
- 9 Meet in the Halsey Gallery—ground floor of the Simons Fine Arts Building
This is your chance to see the Simon Norfolk Exhibit and meet Mark Sloan, curator of
the Halsey Gallery. He will introduce the show @ 9:25a**

II. Government’s Limits and Obligations: Civil Liberties and Civil Rights

- 14 – 16 The Bill of Rights Challenged: Civil Liberties
Reading: Chapter 5, KTR; other reading and discussion as assigned in ER
- The Bill of Rights Extended: Civil Rights
Reading: Chapter 6, KTR

February 16-- POLITICAL SCIENCE CONVOCATION OF MAJORS—Attendance Required Simon Norfolk--7:00pm in Physicians Auditorium

Photographer Simon Norfolk’s large format photographs examine the landscape of war in Normandy, Liberia, Bosnia, Israel, Palestine, Afghanistan, and Iraq. Norfolk depicts landscapes that may have been idyllic settings at one time, however their circumstances do not allow this today. All of these photographs were taken since 9/11, depicting the “making of a new global empire” ... and “the brutality necessary for its construction,” the artist states. All of these pictured countries have deep histories, filled with rich cultural traditions and ancient buildings, inevitably mixed with characteristics of modern day. Norfolk further explains, “Anybody interested in the effects of war quickly becomes an expert in ruins ... The ruins in these artworks were/are philosophical metaphors about the foolishness of pride; about awe and the Sublime; about the power of God; and, most importantly to me, the vanity of Empire.” This illustrated talk is in support of the department’s 2005-2006 theme, “Understanding War and Conflict.” Norfolk’s work will hang in Halsey Gallery beginning January 13, 2006. You will each write a paper based on his talk and a visit to the Halsey Gallery to see his work.

III. Politics in American Life: Engaging Citizens in Making Choices

- 21 Public Opinion—does it matter what the public thinks and wants?
Reading: Chapter 11, KTR

CONVOCATION Essay Due in class on February 21, 2006

February 21 is the last day to withdraw from a class with a ‘W’

- 23 – 28 Political Parties and Interest Groups
Reading: Chapters 12 and 13, KTR

March

- 2: Voting, Campaigns, and Elections—Has anything changed since 2000?
Reading: Chapter 14, KTR

March 2: Political Participation Essay #1 Due in class

Spring Break: March 5-12

- 14 – 16 The Case of the Electorate: RED states vs BLUE states?
Reading: *What's the Matter with Kansas?* entire
other reading as assigned on Electronic Reserve; discussion questions posted on ER

- 21 Money in Campaigns and in Congress
Reading: “Campaign Finance: Funding the Presidential and Congressional Elections” ER
Guest Lecturer: Dr. Marian Currinder

IV. Political Institutions and Institutional Behavior

- 23 - 28 Congress
Reading: Chapter 7, KTR

April

- 30 – 4 The Presidency and the Bureaucracy
Reading: Chapters 8 and 9, KTR

Getting Involved Exercise Due in Class on April 4, 2006

- 6 – 11 Law and the Judiciary
Reading: Chapter 10 KTR

- 13 – 18 The Case of the System—Evaluating the Strength of the US Government under Threat
Reading: *System under Stress: Homeland Security and American Politics*
(entire)

other reading as assigned on Electronic Reserve; discussion questions posted on ER

- 20: Conclusions and Next Steps

April 20--Participation Essay #2 Due at the Start of Class

Final Examination: Saturday, April 29, 8-11am