

POLITICAL SCIENCE 101-007
American Government

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Hours: M 10-12
W 2 – 4:30
and appt

This is a broad-based overview course designed to acquaint you with the major facts/dimensions of American Government.

It includes a focus on the basic founding principles of our nation; that is, the constitution, federalism, and fundamental civil liberties. The learning expectation from this part of the course is that you will better understand the constitution, especially how it has been adapted to our changing social, political and economic circumstances since it was adopted in 1789. You will also understand the concept of federalism, how our federal system has evolved, and how a fundamental tension present in the system from the outset—the power of states versus the power of the federal government—has shaped politics since the founding. Finally, you will understand how our belief in basic civil rights has influenced our system and how this idea has been significantly expanded since the founding.

The second major section will explore the fundamental political components of our system—how it has been influenced by public opinion, the media, parties and other organized groups, and elections. The learning expectation is that you will know how and why our relatively unique two-party system has evolved and maintained power, the influence of media and public opinion on the system. In particular, the expectation is that you will be able to provide yourself with informed answers to fundamental questions about these basic components. Such questions include, but are not limited to: Does our two-party system adequately provide representation for all? How is shifting media landscape (the internet, the decline of newspapers) shaping or re-shaping our politics? What is the proper role for mass public opinion in influencing political decisions? Note that no particular answer to the questions is expected—rather the expectation is that whatever answer you give, it will be more informed.

The next section focused on the institutions of government—the President, Congress, the Courts, and the Bureaucracy. These are the ‘durable’ parts of the system and though they have evolved in significant ways, they were designed in, more or less, from the start. Here again, the learning expectation is that you will be able to better understand how they operate (or don’t, depending) and, especially, their limitations. Particular emphases will be placed on the ongoing struggle for power between Congress and the President, the growth of the bureaucracy and its basis of power, and the differing views of the role of the courts in the system.

Finally, we will conclude with an examination of where this all matters in the formation of public policy. My operational premise is that you live in one of a very few pe-

riods of potential fundamental change in American Government. It is a period in which fundamental economic policy has already dramatically changed. Large scale changes in social policy (including health care and social security) are likely. And we are in a period of fundamental self-reflection about our role in the world. Whether you agree or disagree with our engagement in the Middle East, there is no argument that these battles have cost enormous amounts of money which, in turn, has affected our ability to deal with domestic issues.

You should note and note well that virtually every topic covered in this course is, in and of itself, an entire advanced political science course (whether it is taught at the College of Charleston or not). Thus, entire courses are devoted to the Courts, Congress, public opinion and the media, federalism, and so on. So, take seriously that this is an overview course that will only touch on some basic issues with respect to these. Part of the reasoning behind this course is that it will help guide you as you (potentially) select other political science courses in American Government for advanced study.

Text:

One text is required for the course. It is American Politics Today by William T. Bianco and David T. Canon (W.W. Norton, 2009). Please note that this is the hardback version. There is a paperback version called the “Core” edition. It is identical to the hardback version through the first three parts—but the hardback contains an additional section: Part IV: Policy. This sections covers four major policy areas—Civil Rights, Social Policy, Economic Policy and Foreign Policy. A major goal of this course is to cover the first three sections with an eye on the fourth—as noted above, it is in the policy arena that politics really matters and all of these policy areas have gained significant national attention in the past couple of years.

Your reading assignments are relatively light—on average over the 15 weeks of the semester you will read less than 50 pages per week.

We will follow the schedule below for lectures/discussions. Please note that in some cases I note that there will be time for you to discuss issues:

1. AUG 26 First Class: Introduction
2. AUG 28 Chapters 1, 2, Also, read the Federalist #10 in the Appendix: Focus will be on defining politics, but primarily the Founding/Constitution. Key points will be on republican form of government with some reference to its evolution since the Founding.
3. AUG 31 Read the Constitution (in Appendix): Founding/Constitution continued.
4. SEP 2 Constitution/Wrap-up. Discussion question: Why we need (or don't need) a new Constitution.
5. SEP 4 Chapter 3: Federalism. Focus will be on the enduring issue of state's rights.
6. SEP 7 Federalism continued. Historical development. Fiscal federalism.

7. SEP 9 Federalism: A brief look at state and local government.
8. SEP 11 Chapter 4: Civil liberties. Focus will be on expansion of civil liberties.
9. SEP 14 Civil liberties: Discussion: Gun control and protecting liberties in the age of the Internet.
10. SEP 16 Chapter 5: Public Opinion. Focus/discussion on the role it should play in political decision-making.
11. SEP 18 Public Opinion: Measuring and the polarization of the American electorate.
12. SEP 21 Chapter 6: The Media. The news is what is new.
- SEP 23 No class.
13. SEP 25 The Media: Followers or creators of opinion?
14. SEP 28 First in-class exam
15. SEP 30 Chapter 7: Political Parties. Historical evolution
16. OCT 2 Parties: Continued. Discussion. Do we need a new political party.
17. OCT 5 Chapter 8: Elections—Nuts and bolts.
18. OCT 7 Chapter 9: Interest groups. The intelligence of democracy and interest group liberalism
19. OCT 9 Interest groups: Lobbying and iron triangles
- OCT 12 Fall Break
20. OCT 14 Chapter 10: Congress. Role in the system
21. OCT 16 Congress: Structure/processes.
22. OCT 19 Congress: Discussion. Is it broke?
23. OCT 21 Chapter 11: The Presidency. Presidential power.
24. OCT 23 The Presidency: Formal roles and functions. Executive orders.
25. OCT 26 Chapter 12: The bureaucracy: History and evolution of the Administrative State.
26. OCT 28 The bureaucracy: Understanding bureaucratic power. Legal-rational systems.
27. OCT 30 The bureaucracy: Controlling it. Administrative Procedures Act and other Institutions.
28. NOV 2 Chapter 13: The courts. Significant cases and expansions of power.
29. NOV 4 The courts: Contemporary role(s) and politics.
30. NOV 6 In-class exam #2.
31. NOV 9 Public Policy: Intro lecture—the policy process.
32. NOV 11 Chapter 14: Civil rights. Who's affected?
33. NOV 13 Civil rights: Discussion: Can it be legislated? Has government helped?
34. NOV 16 Chapter 15: Economic policy. The growing importance of the economy in political decision-making.
35. NOV 18 Economic policy: Fiscal federalism revisited. Impacts of redistributive/distributive and regulatory policy.

- 36. NOV 20 Economic policy: Fiscal and monetary policy and the role of the Fed.
- 37. NOV 23 Chapter 17: Social policy—history. Considerations of governmental legitimacy.
- NOV 25 Thanksgiving Break
- NOVE 27 Thanksgiving Break
- 38. NOV 30 Social policy: The future of social security
- 39. DEC 2 Social policy: Health care.
- 40. DEC 4 Chapter 17: Foreign policy—historical role of US
- 41. DEC 7 Foreign policy: A brief look at contemporary issues.

Examinations: Three exams will be given. They are scheduled for September 28th and November 6th. A final exam will be given during the designed time slot for the class. Exams will not be cumulative. Exams will consist of short answer/identification of key terms covered in the course and a short essay—you will have a choice between at least two essay questions. During the semester, 10 quizzes will be administered. These will be based on the readings and very easy to pass if you have done the readings.

Note: If you need special arrangements for taking the exams, please let me know as soon as possible so I can make accommodations.

Note: If there is sufficient interest, I will offer review sessions in an evening session, a day or two before the exam. I will not come to the session with a preparation, but rather will expect to respond to questions.

Grades will be distributed as follows:

Quiz scores:	10%
Exam #1	30%
Exam #2	30%
Exam #3 (Final)	30%

I reserve up to three total points on your final grade to reward class participation. In short, participation can mean the difference between what your average is and the next higher grade. No penalties will be factored in this consideration.

Mid-term and Final Grades will be calculated as follows:

93-100	A	90-92	A-
87-89	B+	83-86	B
80-82	B-	77-79	C+
73-76	C	70-72	C-
67-69	D+	63-66	D
60-62	D-	59 and below	F

Attendance: Class attendance is a powerful predictor of your final grade—if you attend class, your grade trends up and if you do not, it goes down. I expect for you to attend class and a sign-in sheet will be passed for each class held. You will be permitted up to three unexcused absences during the term with no penalty. Failure to attend beyond three classes will result in the following penalties:

Class 4 and 5 missed: -.5 point from your final grade for each class missed.
More than 5 missed: -1.0 point for each class beyond 5.

Please note re absences: If you have a documentable reason for being absent to include personal, health, and emergency situations, the Dean of Students will issue you an Absence Memo. Either go to 67 George Street (white house near Stern Center) and fill out a request or do so online at http://www.cofc.edu/studentaffairs/general_info/absence

Classes for which you have been excused will result in no penalty.