

AMERICAN GOVERNMENT  
POLS 101.007  
SPRING 2007

Class Venue and Meeting Times: MAYBANK 207, Tuesday and Thursday, 12:15-1:30

Instructor: J. David Gillespie      Office: 114 Wentworth St., Room 301

- Office Hours: 1:30-2:30 Tuesday and Thursday

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- Note from your instructor: I recently moved to Charleston following 19 years as a member of the teaching faculty in political science at Presbyterian College and another eight as chief academic officer there. My area of research specialization is American political parties, particularly third parties (those other than the Democrats and Republicans). I am teaching only one class this spring, but am eager to come to know you well and I warmly welcome your contacting me. Although it is most convenient for me to schedule office hours for immediately following our classes on Tuesday and Thursday, do not hesitate to contact me if you need to for a meeting or talk at other times. Right now the way to reach me by phone, other than through the office phone or other phones in the department, is to call my cell number, (864) 923 2793. I will let you know my home listing in Charleston as soon as that act of moving has been accomplished.

Scope and Purpose: The word “politics” is derived from the ancient Greeks, who also originated the systematic study of politics that we know as political science. Aristotle, in fact, declared this to be “the queen of studies.” Although Americans tend not to place politics on such a high plane, there is much to be learned from the Greek embrace of the values of public service and participatory citizenship. Certainly politics is very high-stakes, and we will feel its impact upon us, society, and humankind itself whether we choose to learn and take part or not.

The focus of this political science course will be upon American government and politics, especially at the national level. You will come to understand the U.S. political system as a process of receiving inputs and producing public policy outputs. We will examine the Constitution and the Supreme Court’s interpretation thereof, with respect both to political process and to liberties and rights. Some of our common study will be of the character and condition of the three branches as of early in the 7<sup>th</sup>. year of the George W. Bush administration and the essence of public policy as enacted over these past six years. We will investigate the nature and roles of public opinion, elections, parties, interest groups, and the media, especially as these relate to the formulation and enactment of public policy.

This is an interesting time to be taking American Government. Although all two-term presidents enter a “lame duck” phase late in their second terms, the current President’s problems are exacerbated by low poll ratings, an unpopular and seemingly intractable war in Iraq (even the neo-conservatives, who provided the hopeful vision for that war, have now separated themselves from the administration), corruption within Congress (especially, though not exclusively, in the majority party), and Republican defeat in the November 2006 House and Senate elections. Now the horse race has begun for presidential 2008--an election in which early-primary South Carolina will play a formidable role in the nomination process. “Faux news” personalities (John Stewart of the Daily Show and Charleston’s own Stephen Colbert) are among the most influential media figures in the country, and new technologies attract young people and make the political system more accessible to them. Eighteen to 29 year olds were the most change-oriented voters in 2006; 61% of them voted Democratic for Congress. No other age cohort gave the Democrats more than 54% of its votes.

Required Texts:

Alan R. Gitelson, Robert L. Dudley, and Melvin J. Dubnick, *American Government*, 7<sup>th</sup> edition (2004). Referenced below as Gitelson.

George McKenna and Stanley Feingold (eds.), *Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Political Issues*, 15<sup>th</sup> edition (2007). Referenced below as McKenna and Feingold.

From time to time, I will distribute, or give you information about free online access to, pertinent articles for you to read prior to an upcoming class. Treat these as obligatory reading just as you will the assignments from the two texts.

I strongly encourage you to become (or to remain) a regular reader of one of America’s quality national newspapers. Online versions of the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and the *Washington Post* are available free at these papers’ websites: [www.nyt.com](http://www.nyt.com), [www.wsj.com](http://www.wsj.com), and [www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com). The print edition of the *New York Times* is available on a same-day basis from many vendors in the Charleston area. The *Washington Post* offers an online edition identical to its print edition for \$9.95 a month. *The Wall Street Journal* features a moderately-priced online-and-print offer.

Methods of Instruction, Criteria for Evaluation, and the Importance of Regular Attendance:

Three pre-exam tests will be given on lectures presented and readings assigned. These tests and the final examination will combine the formats of essay, terms identification, and multiple choice.

A research essay, 5-7 pages in length, typed and double-spaced, with in-text notes and a bibliography, is due not later than **Thursday, March 29**. This essay is to offer the range of published perspectives and also your own concluding views about *one* of the following queries:

- 1) Why on November 7, 2006 did the Democrats regain control of both House and Senate for the first time in 12 years?, or
- 2) What was the actual *casus belli* (cause) of the current war in Iraq, and what should America's Iraq War policy be from here on out?

With respect to the pre-final tests and the research essay, you have the following options:

- a) take all three pre-final tests and write and submit the essay, after which the instructor will drop your lowest one of these grades,
- b) take the first pre-final test, write and submit the essay and skip either the second or third pre-final test, or
- c) take all three pre-final tests and skip the essay.

Although American Government is primarily a lecture course, your participation is expected in 1) discussion of issues presented in lecture and in Gitelson and in McKenna and Feingold and 2) role-playing as counsel or justice in the planned simulation, "The Case of the Speluncean Explorers" (details to be provided).

Please note below that 10% of your grade for this course will be based upon participation. *Obviously, it is impossible to participate when you are not present.* Attendance is *required* on the day of the simulation and on all test days (unless you are skipping the test and doing the essay), and *you are strongly encouraged to attend all other class sessions* unless pressing considerations require that you be away.

Evaluation for the course will be based upon the following:

3 pre-final tests *or* test 1, the essay, and one other test: 20% each (60% total)

Participation grade: 10%

The final examination: 30%

Your grade for the course will be determined using the new College of Charleston grading system. If the Department of Political Science has determined the numerical range for each letter grade category, that scale will be used. Otherwise, you should

expect your course grade to be based on the following:

A	93-100
A-	90-92
B+	88-89
B	83-87
B-	80-82
C+	78-79
C	73-77
C-	70-72
D+	68-69
D	63-67
D-	60-62
F	59 and below

Honor Code: You committed yourself to adhere faithfully to the Honor Code when you enrolled at the College of Charleston. Such a code goes far toward providing an atmosphere of civility and trust in the academic environment, and it is the surest protection of the integrity and value of the degree toward which you and your student colleagues are working. In the event of an Honor Code violation in conjunction with this class and fulfillment of the requirements herein, specifications of the Honor System process as set forth in the student handbook would be rigorously followed. Students intentionally violating the Honor Code in conjunction with this class should expect to receive the new institutional grade of XF and to face significant further sanction from the Honor Board.

## **SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS::**

### **JANUARY 9, 11, 16, 18, 23, 25:**

#### (1) Environmental and Constitutional Setting of American Politics

The meaning and significance of politics. Easton's political systems model. Myth and reality in American politics. Creating a new system of government. Principles and provisions of the U.S. Constitution. Character and evolution of American federalism.

Read: Gitelson, Chs. 1-3; examine texts of Declaration of Independence, Constitution, and two essays of *The Federalist*, Gitelson, pp. A1-A20;

McKenna and Feingold, pp. xvii-xxviii and Issues 1, 2, and 8.

**TEST NO. 1: TUESDAY, JANUARY 30**

**FEBRUARY 1, 6, 8:**

(2) Courts, Rights, and Liberties Under the Constitution

The Supreme Court, the court system, and the role of judicial review in interpreting, preserving, and extending the rights of persons under American jurisdiction. Fundamental liberties of the 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment: press, speech, religion, association, assembly and petition. Due process rights in the Bill of Rights and 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment. Remediating racial, ethnic, and gender barriers in civil rights. Rights in a time of war.

Read: Gitelson, Chs. 13, 4.;

McKenna and Feingold, Issues 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 14.

**SIMULATION: “THE CASE OF THE SPELUNCEAN EXPLORERS”:  
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 13**

**FEBRUARY 15, 20:**

(3) Public Opinion and Media in American Politics

Structure and role of public opinion in relation to U.S. politics. Surveying public opinion. The character and role of American mass media. Interpretation and bias. Agenda-setting. American politics in the “media age”: the impact and legacy of media. New technologies and “new media.”

Read: Gitelson, Ch.s 5, 9;

McKenna and Feingold, Issue 4.

**TEST NO. 2: THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 22**

**FEBRUARY 27, MARCH 1, 13, 15:**

(4) Behavioral Links Between People and Government

American political parties: popular opinion, the two-party system, and third-party challenges. State of the parties today. Elections and voting behavior. Media as intercessors between voters and voter choices. Presidential elections and the Electoral College. Interest groups in American politics.

Read: Gitelson, Chs. 6-8;

McKenna and Feingold, Issues 3 and 5.

**MARCH 20, 22, 27:**

(5) Congressional Politics

Congress as intended agent of representative government. Congressional functions and purposes. Reapportionment, redistricting, and the gerrymander. Other reinforcements of the status quo. Congressional-Presidential relations in the "Bush 2" era. Outcome and significance of the 2006 midterm elections. Demographic profile of the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress. Congressional qualifications, remuneration, and privileges. The lawmaking process. Role and significance of staff. The lawmaking process. Role and significance of the parties in Congress.

Read: Gitelson, Ch. 10;

McKenna and Feingold, Issues 6, 15, and 16.

**TEST NO. 3: THURSDAY, MARCH 29**

**APRIL 3, 5, 10, 12:**

(6) Presidential and Executive Politics

The presidency: institutional and personal. Presidential remuneration and privileges. Qualifications and characteristics of American presidents. Presidential character: the Barber typology. Issues of presidential succession and incapacity. Presidential roles and powers. The Executive Office of the President, cabinet departments, and other executive agencies. Bureaucracy and

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the bureaucrats. Impact of 9-11-01 on the presidency. The new Department of Homeland Security. Early attempts at assessing the George W. Bush legacy.

Read: Gitelson, Chs. 11-12:

McKenna and Feingold, Issues 18, 19, 20, and 21.

**APRIL 17, 19:**

(7) Public Policy

Outlines of the policymaking process. Categories and character of policy: domestic, foreign, intermestic. American policy during the administration of George W. Bush.

Read: Gitelson, Chs. 14-15;

McKenna and Feingold, Issues 13 and 17.

**FINAL EXAMINATION: TUESDAY, MAY 1, 12:00**