

PS1100: Introduction to American Government

Fall 2008

MW 5:30-6:45pm 100 Lucas Hall

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Office hours: Monday 1-4pm and by appointment in 800 Tower

This course is designed to introduce you to the structure and operation of the American system of government, which includes not only the institutions of government that we are familiar with such as Congress and the Presidency, but also the roles that average citizens hold. As such, we will spend time considering not only how government addresses voter concerns, but also how individuals approach the political sphere.

OBJECTIVES

Whether you're taking the class because you are a Political Science major or because Advanced Bowling was full when you registered, this class should be a fun and informative way to think a little more critically about the political world around us. How well do citizens fulfill their roles in a democracy? How do government institutions translate public preferences into policy outcomes? And how well do our government institutions do in producing the outcomes we would like to see? The course should also give you a taste of what political "scientists" actually do.

GATEWAY IS YOUR FRIEND

I will regularly update class information on the website for the class on MyGateway (<http://mygateway.usml.edu>).

READING MATERIAL

Class readings will be drawn from three sources:

1. The introductory American government text:
Thomas A. Patterson. *We the People – A Concise Introduction to American Politics* (7th Edition). New York: McGraw-Hill.
2. Assorted academic Political Science articles:
Some of these readings are assigned material, while other readings are supplemental pieces. All of these readings will be available on MyGateway.
3. Newspaper articles:
You will read 3 or 4 newspaper articles a week whose links will be posted on MyGateway.

REQUIREMENTS

It is important to keep up with class readings and you should generally aim to complete the weekly readings after the first class meeting in any given week. In addition to the readings, you will also be responsible for the following:

1. Two midterm exams: (each midterm is worth 25% of your final grade)
2. Final exam: (worth 25% of your final grade)
3. Quizzes: (worth 25% of your final grade)
Quizzes will come from assigned academic and newspaper articles

All exams are non-comprehensive and only cover the book chapters from each section.

ATTENDANCE

While you are not required to attend, you also are not required to do well. Attendance and participation can only help your grade. Students that perform well in this endeavor can receive a 1/3 letter grade "bump" of their final grade.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Week of 8/18: Course Startup

Week of 8/25: American Political Culture and Tradition
Readings: Patterson Ch. 1

Week of 9/1: Establishing a Constitutional Democracy
Readings: Patterson Ch. 2 & Constitution
NO CLASS – Monday 9/1 – Labor Day
Quiz on Newspaper Articles: Wednesday 9/3

Week of 9/8: Federalism
Readings: Patterson Ch. 3

Week of 9/15: Civil Liberties & Equal Rights
Readings: Patterson Ch. 4 & 5
Quiz on Newspaper Articles: Wednesday 9/17

Week of 9/22: Public Opinion
Readings: Patterson Ch. 6
Midterm 1 (Ch. 1-5): Wednesday 9/24
Monday 9/22 Partial Review Day

Week of 9/29: Political Participation
Readings: Patterson Ch. 7

Week of 10/6: Political Parties, Elections & Voting
Readings: Patterson Ch. 8
Assigned Articles

Week of 10/13: Interest Groups & News Media

Readings: Patterson Ch. 9 & 10

Assigned Articles

Quiz on Assigned Articles & Newspaper Articles: Wednesday 10/15

Week of 10/20: Congress

Readings: Patterson Ch. 11

Assigned Articles

Week of 10/27: Presidency

Readings: Patterson Ch. 12

Assigned Articles

Midterm 2 (Ch. 6-11): Wednesday 10/29

Monday 10/27 Partial Review Day

Week of 11/3: Supreme Court & Bureaucracy

Readings: Patterson Ch. 13 & 14

Week of 11/10: Economic and Environmental Policy

Readings: Patterson Ch. 15

Week of 11/17: Welfare & Education Policy

Readings: Patterson Ch. 16

Quiz on Newspaper Articles: Monday 11/19

Week of 11/24: No Class – Thanksgiving Break

Week of 12/1: Foreign & Defense Policy

Readings: Patterson Ch. 17

Final: Monday 12/8, 5:30-7:30pm