



AMERICAN POLITICS 2009

Political Science 1100, Introduction to American Politics, Fall 2009

Monday and Wednesday, 5:30 – 6:55 pm, Lucas Hall 100

WEB SITE: <http://www.umsl.edu/~poldrobe/011/sy011.html>

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Office Hours: Wednesday 6:55-8:00 pm; Thursday, 9:00-12:00 noon
& other times can easily be arranged

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1. WHAT IS THIS COURSE ABOUT?

We expect a lot out of our government. We count on our government to protect us from criminals and terrorists, to keep the economy running smoothly so that we can have good jobs at good wages, to provide education and other services, and to ensure that we are treated fairly. We expect government officials will listen to us and care about our problems. Government touches our lives much more than we think, and with benefits to us we often take for granted. Yet our government often seems mysterious, distant, clumsy, corrupt, and disappointing. We disagree about *what* problems government should help solve, and *how* government should help solve them.

This course provides a fair-minded and thoughtful description of the way this American government deals with our expectations, the reasons that it works the way it does, and the challenge of governing America in the twenty-first century. We will examine our rights, liberties and Constitution; the way people can influence government through political parties, elections, interest groups and the media; Congress, the presidency, and the courts; and the ways that government had addressed problems ranging from economic prosperity to Social Security to pollution and war. It is especially important to understand our government this semester as President Obama takes office after the most exciting presidential election in years. The president, the U.S. Congress, the courts, and states like Missouri will be tested by a serious recession, a deep budget deficit, ambitious plans to change the nation's health care system, and a series of foreign problems that challenge governments the world over.

Our Contract. By enrolling in this course, you and I have agreed to a contract with each other. I'll work hard to be prepared, enthusiastic, fair and respectful of every student and their opinions. I'll be accessible and try my best to return graded materials after no more than a week. By enrolling in the class, you've agreed to (1) attend every class, (2) to participate by asking questions and joining in class discussions, and (3) reading the assigned material and completing written assignments on time. Of all the consumer purchases you make, don't let your University of Missouri education be the one expensive purchase where you expect *less* for your money.

2. WHAT TEXTS ARE REQUIRED?

- Cal Jillson, *American Government: Political Development and Institutional Change*, **5th** edition (New York: Routledge, 2009) ISBN: 978-0-415-99570-2.
- Bruce Stinebrickner, ed., *Annual Editions: 09/10*, **39th** Edition (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2009) ISBN: 978-0-07-812769-4

3. DO I NEED TO ATTEND CLASS and DISCUSSION SECTIONS?

Yes. Attendance is required in class and discussion sections. **MOST LECTURES DO NOT COVER THE READINGS.** The lectures substantially expand on and interpret the reading materials, and provide opportunities to discuss the lectures and books. The discussion sections give you the opportunity to review and discuss the week's material, to discuss the memo assignment, and to explore topics not covered in class. Each section will provide a review prior to each exam.

About half the material on the exams comes from the lectures. In my experience, if you do not attend class regularly, you will perform very poorly on exams. Outlines of the day's lecture are available before each class. The Powerpoint presentations will only be shown during lecture - they will not be made available.

4. WHAT ABOUT THE EXAMS?

There will be four exams (three in class: **September 16, October 12, November 4**, and the final, **December 14**, all beginning at **5:30 pm sharp**; if you are late, you may be required to take a makeup exam later). Each exam consists of three parts: 50 modified true/false questions worth 1 point each, 15 multiple choice questions worth 2 points each, and 1 short answer question worth 20 points. The first three tests and about 90% of the final are *not* cumulative. Ten to twelve percent of the points on the final are cumulative; they will consist of questions from the previous three exams. Please plan your activities on exam days so that you are in your seat at 5:30 sharp; please do not schedule end of semester travel prior to the final exam. Makeup exams will be given only for dire circumstances (vacations are *not* dire circumstances); makeup exams are 80% essay.

It will be essential to attend lectures and to read the material. Again, about half the material for each exam is drawn from lecture; about half is drawn from readings. Current events -- that is, keeping up with the news -- constitutes about 5% of the points on each exam.

5. HOW ARE GRADES ASSIGNED?

There are 500 total points in the course. Each exam counts for 100 points, or 1/5 of the final grade. The policy decision memo, **due November 16**, counts for 100 points. You will not be allowed to drop any of your exam grades. Essay make-up exams will be scheduled only if you have a **very serious** problem attending a scheduled test. **This table will let you determine your grade in the course at any time.**

RANGE OF POINTS FOR ASSIGNING GRADES

Grade	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F
Points Needed for Each Exam & the Memo	93-100	90-92	87-89	83-86	80-82	77-79	73-76	70-72	67-69	63-66	60-62	59 or less
Points Needed for the Final Course Grade	463-500	450-464	433-449	413-432	400-412	383-399	363-382	350-362	333-349	313-332	300-312	299 or less

NOTE: Students are NOT competing with each other for grades. There is NO CURVE for the course overall. Each student can get an A; each can get a D or an F. It's up to you. On the first exam **only**, if the average for the class falls below 75, all the exams in the class will receive the additional points necessary to bring the class average to 75 (Example: Class average on exam 1 is 73; all those taking the exam receive 2 points).

☞ **All** your exams will count in the final grade. In one of two cases, I will drop the lowest grade on the first 3 exams. First, I will drop the lowest grade if one exam score from the first three exams is two full grades below all the rest (that is, 3 As and 1 C). Second, I will drop the worst exam of the first 3 exams if the exams show steady progress of two grades from the first exam to the third and fourth exams (for example, a pattern of D, C, B, A or C, B, A, A). The **final exam cannot be dropped.**

Note that a paragraph about your policy decision memo topic is due **March 2**. The policy decision memo is due **April 20**. Information about the memo is detailed on later in this syllabus. Late Papers lose one point per day (that is, every day that ends in a “y”) - no exceptions. You should submit a paper copy of the memo; memos submitted electronically have not been submitted until the instructor acknowledges receipt. Memos will be graded and returned to students with comments before the last class. Students may revise the memo and resubmit it for a grade adjustment at the final exam.

6. WHEN IS THE READING DUE?

Your reading assignments are listed on the attached class schedule. I expect you to have read the material before coming to class, and that you will be prepared to discuss it.

7. HOW DO I KEEP UP WITH CURRENT EVENTS?

UMSL students can get a free copy of three daily papers on campus: *New York Times*, *USA Today*, and the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. Students in this course should read the national news section of one of these papers each day. The *New York Times* has most inclusive coverage; leaders of both major political parties, and of all ideologies, read the Times. In addition, daily analysis is available in newspapers online such as the *Washington Post*, the *Chicago Tribune*, and the *Wall Street Journal*. The *St. Louis Beacon* is an online newspaper that features some of the best reporters in our region. We are very fortunate to have KWMU, the National Public Radio affiliate for St. Louis, located on the UM-St. Louis campus. The *Newshour* shown at 6 PM weeknights on Channel 9 provides in depth coverage and interviews with notable political leaders and analysts. C-SPAN provides live coverage of the U.S. House of Representatives, and C-SPAN II provides live coverage of the U.S. Senate; the C-Span website offers streaming videos of both, and also much other coverage of hearings, major speeches, press conferences, rallies, and historical sites. Two weekly publications provide incomparable coverage of American politics and policy from the inside: Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report and the National Journal.

The on-line version of this syllabus has links to all these sources and many more. See the on-line syllabus for direct links to many government and politics sites.

8. WHAT ELSE SHOULD I REMEMBER?

I welcome and strongly urge you to ask questions about the material or American government in general. Please ask questions. Please turn off electronic devices (cell phones, pagers, games, metal detectors, etc.) during class. You may take notes on a laptop, and you are allowed to tape record the lecture. When I return your exam, please check to make sure that I have computed your grade correctly. Please be in your seat by the time class begins, and do not hold conversations during class. If you do not understand lecture, if you have further questions about lecture, please don't hesitate to interrupt and ask your question. If I begin to speak too quickly, please tell me to slow down.

Daily Assignments

August 24 (Monday): How do American Values affect American Government?
 READ: Jillson, pages 1-20

August 26 (Wednesday): What Were the Founders Thinking?
 READ: Jillson, pages 22-48
Annual Editions, Numbers 4, 10, pages 18-19, 33-35
 (Take a look at the U.S. Constitution, Annual Editions, Number 2)

August 31 (Monday): Federalism:
 What Government Should Tackle Public Problems?
 READ: Jillson, pages 51-72
Annual Editions, Number 50, pages 174-179

September 2 (Wednesday): Civil Rights When Should Government Protect Fairness?
 READ: Jillson, pages 364-376
Annual Editions, Number 12, pages 41-43

September 7 (Monday): **Labor Day**; Class does not meet

September 9 (Wednesday): Civil Liberties and Tolerance: When Should Government Leave Us Alone?
 READ: Jillson, pages 376-394, 478-479
Annual Editions, Number 14, pages 46-47

September 14 (Monday): Public Opinion: How do Americans View Government and Politics?
 READ: Jillson, pages 75-99
Annual Editions, Numbers 5, 46, pages 20-21, 152-153

☞ **September 16 (Wednesday): -- EXAM 1 --**

September 21 (Monday): How do Americans Participate in Politics and Government?

READ: Jillson, 147-157

Annual Editions, Numbers 37, 45, pages 128-129, 150-151

September 23 (Wednesday): How do Americans Vote and Why?

READ: Jillson, 192-208

Annual Editions, Numbers 9, 32, 34, pages 31-32, 112-113, 116-117

September 28 (Monday): What Difference do Political Parties Make?

READ: Jillson, pages 162-191

Annual Editions, Numbers 30-31, 41 pages 107-113, 147-149

September 30 (Wednesday): Presidential Election: 2008

READ: Jillson, 208-225

Annual Editions, Numbers 18, 41-43, pages 64, 141-146

October 5 (Monday): How Do Interest Groups Affect American Politics?

POLICY DECISION MEMO TOPIC PARAGRAPH DUE

(2-4 sentences + 4 references on the policy issue of your choice)

READ: Jillson, pages 130-147, 158-159

Annual Editions, Numbers 36, 38, pages 126-127, 130-132

October 7 (Wednesday): How does the Media Affect American Politics?

READ: Jillson, pages 101-129

Annual Editions, Numbers 39-40, pages 133-140

☞ **October 12 (Monday): --- EXAM 2 ---**

October 14 (Wednesday): What do Members of Congress Do, and Why?

READ: Jillson, pages 228-237

Annual Editions, Numbers 23-24, 33, pages 80-87, 114-115

October 19 (Monday): How Does Congress Work?

READ: Jillson, pages 237-260

Annual Editions, Numbers 21-22, pages 72-79

October 21 (Wednesday): The Human President

READ: Jillson, pages 262-273

Annual Editions, Numbers 16-17, 19, pages 54-63, 65-66

October 26 (Monday): How does the Presidency Work?

READ: Jillson, pages 273-297

Annual Editions, Numbers 15, 20, pages 51-53, 67-71

October 28 (Wednesday): How Powerful is Bureaucracy, and How does it Work?

READ: Jillson, pages 299-329

Annual Editions, Numbers 28-29, pages 94-103

November 2 (Monday): What does Watergate tell us about the way American Politics Works?

☞ **November 4 (Wednesday): --- EXAM 3 ---**

November 9 (Monday): Why are American Courts So Powerful?

READ: Jillson, pages 332-362

Annual Editions, Numbers 13, 25-27, pages 44-45, 88-93

November 11 (Wednesday): How does the Government try to Manage American Prosperity?

READ: Jillson, 397-406

Annual Editions Numbers 6, 8, 51, pages 22-25, 29-30, 180-184

November 16 (Monday): Why is the Federal Budget so Important?

POLICY DECISION MEMO DUE

READ: Jillson, 406-415, 421-430

Annual Editions, Numbers 54, pages 157-163

November 18 (Wednesday): Social Welfare: How Does the Government Provide Protection for our Income?

READ: Jillson, pages 415-420

Annual Editions, Numbers 7, 48-49, pages 26-28, 164-173

November 23 & 25 **Thanksgiving**; class does not meet

November 30 (Monday): Foreign Policy

READ: Jillson, pages 432-461

December 2 (Wednesday): Foreign Policy: How does the Government deal with Other Countries

READ: Annual Editions, Numbers 52-53, pages 185-192

December 7 (Monday): Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan

READ: Annual Editions, Numbers 54, pages 193-197

December 9 (Wednesday): Conclusion

READ: Annual Editions, Number 11, pages 36-40

☞ **December 14 (Monday): --- FINAL EXAM --- / 5:30 - 7:30 pm**

Exam Format and Sample Questions

The exam consists of three sections: 50 modified true/false statements, 15 multiple choice questions, and 1 short answer question.

Section 1: This section consists of 50 true/false questions. Mark the answer to each question on your machine readable answer sheet. For each question, there are only two possible answers. If the answer is true, darken in the space under A on the answer sheet. If the answer is false, darken in the B on the answer sheet. The remaining letters (C,D,E) are irrelevant for this section of the test. Try to spend no more than 20 minutes on this section. Each correct answer is worth 1 point.

Before the Constitutional Convention of 1787, the United States was experiencing a number of serious problems. Which of the following are true?

1. The states were interfering with each others' trade, and some were taxing imports from other states.
2. Under the Articles of Confederation, there was no U.S. Supreme Court.
3. Under the Articles of Confederation, the U.S. had a king with the power of a dictator.

(On the machine-readable answer sheet, you would answer "A" (true) for question 1, "A" (true) for question 2, and "B" (false) for question 3).

Section 2: This section consists of 15 multiple choice questions. For each answer, there is only one correct answer. Select the letter, A, B, C, or D, that best answers the question and mark that answer on your machine readable answer sheet. Try to spend no more than 10 minutes on this section. Each correct answer is worth 2 points.

51. Political _____ refers to our willingness to apply constitutional rights to all members of society.
- a. Faith and credit.
 - b. Gerrymandering.
 - c. Tolerance.
 - d. Participation.

(On the machine-readable answer sheet, you would fill in "C" as the answer for number 51).

Section 3. This section consists of a short answer in response to one of the following questions. The best answers will be clear, concise, and they will use specific examples. Only one question will appear on the exam. This section is worth a maximum of 20 points.

In Federalist 51 (*Annual Editions* # 4) Madison claims that “ambition must be made to counteract ambition.” What does he mean by this, and why does he say it? Explain how this idea explains the separation of powers in the U.S. government

(On the exam itself, you would write a few specific sentences answering this question).

The Policy Memo Assignment

☞ Topic paragraph due **October 5**; Memo due **November 16**; **late memos lose 1 point a day.**

You work for a company that gives policy advice to government officials. Your firm has a contract with the Obama administration to provide a number of five-page memos to help the new administration make decisions about critical national policy issues. Your firm wants you to choose one specific policy decision that is critical for the United States national government in the next several years. You are required to write an OBJECTIVE memo, that is, you are supposed to ADDRESS BOTH SIDES OF THE QUESTION WITHOUT TAKING SIDES YOURSELF. You need to explain (1) why the issue is so important, (2) what the alternative choices are, (3) who supports and opposes each alternative, and (4) what are the benefits and costs of each alternative. You must write a fair, objective memo that addresses all sides of the issue.

First, choose a question about a **national** public policy decision. Turn in a 2-4 sentence paragraph about the issue, why it is critically important, and describe the chief alternatives. Include 4 specific references. Turn this paragraph into me on **October 5**. We have to approve your topic. We will return your topic statement to you with comments.

*I urge you to consult the “**CQ Researcher**” on the UMSL library site under “**Electronic Databases.**” Students who have gotten excellent grades on memos like this have used the CQ Researcher to choose a topic and to do basic research on it. See also Public Agenda at <http://www.publicagenda.org/> or The Almanac of Policy Issues at <http://www.policyalmanac.org/>*

Then, write a five-page policy decision memo. The memo should explain:

- **Why is this a critically important policy decision for the United States government?**
How many people does this affect? Who are they? Why should the government be involved in this? Be specific.
- **How have we gotten to the point where this is a critical decision?** What has happened in the past and the present to make it so important to make a choice about this issue now?
- **What are the chief alternatives we can choose?**
- **Who supports and opposes these alternatives?** Do the political parties take clear stands on this choice? What interest groups support and oppose these alternatives? How does the public feel about this choice?. Be sure to use public opinion polls if possible.
- **Recommended choice:** In the final paragraph, you can indicate how this choice should be made and explain your reasoning. Be clear, logical and precise.

Creative topics are encouraged. *Some of the **topics** you might choose include, but are **not** limited to:*

Should the U.S. require employers to provide health insurance to all workers? / - Should Congress pass the credit cardholders "bill of rights"? / Should the U.S. create a "cap-and-trade" system for limiting carbon emissions that are associated with climate change? / Should the Employee Free Choice Act (making it easier to unionize) be passed? / How should the CIA be reformed? / Should the U.S. ban food imports from China? / Should the U.S. greatly increase the number of troops in Afghanistan? / What should the U.S. do about Darfur? / Should the U.S. government make President Bush's tax cuts permanent? / Should the No Child Left Behind Act be repealed? / Should the U.S. expand funding for stem cell research? / Should the U.S. dramatically increase funding to combat AIDs in Africa? / Should there be a Constitutional amendment banning the death penalty? / Should there be a Constitutional amendment that allows the states to ban abortion? / Should the U.S. allow oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge? / Should the minimum wage be increased? / Should the U.S. treat terrorist suspects under the same rules it applies to domestic criminals? / What is the one best policy step the U.S. can take to reduce illegal immigration? / Should we privatize Social Security? Should racial profiling be illegal? / Should the U.S. government limit tuition increases at colleges and universities?

ALL PAPERS SHOULD USE NO LESS THAN 6 REFERENCES. Do not use Wikipedia or other online encyclopedia. Sources must be indicated in the body of the paper -- for example, (Patterson, 2009: 56) -- and listed in a bibliography at the end.

ALL Here is the appropriate citation style for these papers:

In the text of the memo, if you want to cite a book or article, cite it in parentheses, with author, date, and page number (Jillson, 2009: 56). Then add a bibliography at the end.

The bibliography should list each book, alphabetical by author, with the authors, date of publication, title, place of publication, and publisher listed. Here are examples of a book, an article and a website. You should arrange the items in the bibliography in alphabetical order.

References:

Glazer, Sarah. 2006. "Video games." *CQ Researcher*, November 10, 937-960. Retrieved March 1, 2007, from CQ Researcher Online, <http://library.cqpress.com/cqresearcher/cqresrre2006111001..>

Jillson, Cal. 2009. *American Government*, **5th** edition. New York: Routledge.

Taylor, Stuart. 2005. "Coercive Interrogation: Can Anyone Straighten Out This Mess?" *National Journal Buzz Column* (December 16, 2005), <<http://nationaljournal.com/taylor.htm>>, accessed January 2, 2006.

Due date: November 16

Penalty for late memos – 1 point per day (weekends included), no exceptions

The Memo Assignment is worth 100 points.

Rewrites: Must be turned in by the time of the final exam.

Here are the Criteria for grading the memos:

Thought & Effort (20%)

- *It is obvious that you put time, effort, and thought into this assignment?*

Utility (20%)

- *Is this memo useful to the candidate?*
- *Is your tone fair-minded, serious, and logical? Have you been fair to both sides?*
- *Is your information up-to-date?*

Content (40%)

- *Did you answer all the questions clearly and specifically?*
- *Do you use clear evidence to support your assertions?*
- *Do you have a clear train of thought?*

Structure & Style (20%)

- *Did you cite your evidence? Is your bibliography appropriate?*
- *Do you have an introductory paragraph that states what your paper is about and does, and a conclusion? (The introduction is the last part of the paper you should write)*
- *Did you use appropriate grammar and correct spelling and punctuation?*

Criteria not used for grading:

The political content of the concluding paragraph of the memos - these can be liberal, conservative, independent, partisan, non-partisan, or your own unique perspective. The political views expressed in the paper have no effect on the grade.

Plagiarism

☞ *Plagiarism* means taking the written ideas of someone else and presenting them in your writing as if they were your ideas, without giving the author credit. Plagiarism (a word which comes from the Latin word for kidnapping) is deceitful and dishonest. Violations that have occurred frequently in the past include not using quotation marks for direct quotes and not giving citations when using someone else's ideas; using long strings of quotations, even when properly attributed, does not constitute a paper of your own. Plagiarism in written work for this class is unacceptable. The University's Student Conduct Code classifies plagiarism as a form of academic dishonesty. Depending on the severity of the plagiarism, punishment can include receiving no credit for the assignment, failing the course and referral for university disciplinary action.