

**Political Science 201**  
**INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS**  
Spring 2011

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### **Course Description**

This course introduces students to the workings of American Government. We will learn not only about American political institutions, such as the presidency, Congress, and the Supreme Court, but we will also learn about how the average American participates in government by covering topics such as voting, public opinion, and the media. We will explore why Americans seem to have increasing dissatisfaction with their government and attempt to explore the role that you as U.S. citizens and residents can take in improving democracy in America.

This course also fulfills the university's General Education Requirement (GER) and therefore seeks to impart the following objectives for a GER Social Science course: Students should be able to: 1) understand at least one of the following: human behavior, mental processes, organizational processes, or institutional processes; and, 2) understand how social scientific methods may be applied to the study of human behavior, mental processes, organizational processes, or institutional processes; and, 3) use theories or concepts of the social sciences to understand real-world problems, including the underlying origins of such problems.

### **Student Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this course, students should be able to...

- \*1) Explain how individual behaviors and political institutions interact to create political outcomes
  - \*2) Properly use and critically evaluate political science data such as election returns and/or public opinion poll results
  - \*3) Analyze the actions of contemporary political actors (including ordinary citizens) using key course concepts
  - 4) Explain and define the roles that key political actors, e.g., the president, members of Congress, Judges, the voting public, play in American democracy
  - 5) Interpret how America's unique history, Constitutional structure, and political culture contribute to the state of contemporary American democracy
- \*GER outcomes

### **Readings**

*America's New Democracy, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition*, by Morris Fiorina, et al.  
Coursepack available at Sir Speedy (readings from coursepack marked with \*)  
*The New York Times* or *The Washington Post* (both available free on-line)

*America's New Democracy* will serve as the primary text for this course. The class lectures and the text are intended to complement one another. In order to get the most out of the class it is important that you do the assigned reading prior to the appropriate class period. You are required to read the *New York Times* or *Washington Post* on a daily basis in order to be able to apply course concepts to contemporary events in government and politics. **Good performance on exams will require a knowledge of current events.**

### **Requirements and Grading**

- Two Midterm Exams and Non-cumulative Final Exam (20% each)
- Discussion Section (15%)
- Ideological Autobiography (10%)
- Letter to Member of Congress (15%)

Grading will be on the following scale: A = 90-100; B = 80-89; C = 70-79; D = 60-69; F = below 60. + and – will be assigned where appropriate.

### **Discussion Sections**

**Enrollment in a discussion section/lab, PS 201L, is a basic requirement of the course.** This class will be in the format of lectures on Monday and Wednesday and a discussion section led by a teaching assistant on Friday. Participation is expected from all students in the class. At minimum, this means good attendance in discussion sections. In accordance with university policy, a record of student attendance will be kept and count towards your grade in the section. The discussion sections will focus on the readings from the coursepack, current events, and selected topics from lectures to be explored in greater depth. You will be graded on your *active* participation in discussion sections. At their discretion, teaching assistants may also have quizzes in discussion sections to encourage your participation.

### **Exams**

There will be two midterm exam and a non-cumulative final exam. You should be prepared to integrate material you have learned from lectures, readings, and current events into your answers.

### **Assignments**

**Ideological Autobiography.** Outline your personal political beliefs in major areas of government and public opinion. Are you liberal or conservative? Why? What aspects of the larger political environment as well as your personal environment have helped you form these beliefs? Be sure to use concepts you have learned about in this class to explain your ideology. You are responsible for the complete details of the assignment at: <http://www2.chass.ncsu.edu/shgreene/PS201/AboutPaper1.htm>  
**Due in discussion section February 25. 4 pages maximum.**

**Congressional Letter.** Find the U.S. Member of the House of Representative for your Home District. Write him/her a letter expressing your concerns about a matter of *current* policy faced by the U.S. Congress. This should be a persuasive letter as to why the member should support your position. You are also expected to research the member's existing position to tailor the letter to him/her. You are responsible for the complete details of the assignment at:

<http://faculty.chass.ncsu.edu/shgreene/PS201/AboutPaper2.htm>. **Due in discussion section April 9. 4 pages maximum.**

**All papers should be stapled and double-spaced. Only hardcopies will be accepted.** Complete policies regarding all paper assignments can be found at <http://www2.chass.ncsu.edu/shgreene/PS201/PaperGuidelines.htm>. You are expected to read these guidelines before submitting your paper.

### **Late Policy**

It is expected that exams will be taken and assignments turned in when they are scheduled on the syllabus. If you unable to take an exam or turn in an assignment at the assigned time for a valid reason, you **must** let the instructor know in advance in order to take a make-up exam. Failure to do so will result in a 0. Assignments will be downgraded a letter grade for each day they are late. ***Do not approach me about make-up exams unless you have let me know beforehand or were facing a genuine medical or family emergency at the time of the exam. Seriously.***

### **Class Website**

The class website at <http://faculty.chass.ncsu.edu/shgreene/PS201> is an additional resource designed to assist you in the class. It will contain important announcements and archived lecture outlines as well as basic course information.

### **Class Email list**

On occasion, announcements will be made through email messages. The University has an official email address on file for each of you. It is your responsibility to see to it that you receive email from this account.

### **Academic Integrity**

Students are expected to complete their assignments with due regard to academic integrity. In order to do so they should familiarize themselves with the relevant sections of the student code of conduct (Sections 7-13). By signing all work submitted on paper, or by identifying themselves in work submitted electronically, students affirm that they neither gave nor received unauthorized aid. Collaboration on assignments among students may only occur when explicitly authorized by an instructor.

In particular the Department of Political Science takes plagiarism very seriously. Plagiarism is "the representation of another's works or ideas as one's own; it includes the unacknowledged word for word use and/or paraphrasing of another person's work, and/or the inappropriate unacknowledged use of another person's ideas." Students found guilty of academic misconduct will at a minimum receive a 0 for the assignment and have their conduct reported to the office of

student affairs. Depending on the severity of the infraction, it is possible that you will automatically fail the course.

### **Disability**

Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with verifiable disabilities. In order to take advantage of available accommodations, students must register with Disability Services for Students at 1900 Student Health Center, Campus Box 7509, 515-7653

### **Research Requirement**

All PS201 students are required to become familiar with the procedures of political science research, either by participating in the *Political Science Research Subject Pool* (PSRSP) or by writing a short (3 page) paper. Either activity should require the same amount of time. (Students repeating PS201 do not have to complete the requirement a second time.) Students that fail to satisfy the research requirement will receive a grade of incomplete for the course.

#### *Participation in Political Science Research*

Students choosing the PSRSP will satisfy the requirement by participating as a subject in studies totaling 4 credits. A study lasting less than 30 minutes earns one credit; one that lasts 30-60 minutes earns two credits, and so forth. Early in the semester, you will be sent a registration link to sign up for the studies and to be included you must provide your name and university provided e-mail address. Once studies begin, you will be contacted (via e-mail, probably through SurveyMonkey, an on-line survey software firm that we often use) by researchers seeking subjects for a study. You will receive a brief description of the study and session locations/times and may choose to accept or decline participation. Usually 8 or 9 studies are offered each semester. The studies will insure student anonymity or confidentiality and follow the guidelines of the NCSU Institutional Review Board. You may at any time withdraw from a study you find objectionable without loss of participation credit. Please report any such incident to Dr. Cobb (513-3709). At the conclusion of participation the investigator will explain the study and answer any questions.

#### *Report on a Research Article*

As an alternative to participating in the PSRSP you may write a paper discussing a recent article from a political science journal. You are expected to gain and demonstrate some familiarity with the methods of political science research. Select an article from the list found at <http://faculty.chass.ncsu.edu/boettcher/articles.html>. Give the full reference for the article: name of author(s), year, title of the article, title of the journal, volume, page numbers. Then summarize the hypotheses/goals of the researcher(s), method(s) used to test the hypotheses, results of the study, and political significance/relevance of the results. The paper should be typed, double-spaced, in a 10 or 12 point font, at least three pages long, and include you name and social security number. Papers must be turned in by the 14<sup>th</sup> week of the semester. All papers are graded pass/fail. If a paper is unacceptable you will be given the reasons for its rejection and asked to make necessary revisions.

## Schedule of Lecture Topics and Assigned Readings (Spring 2011)

<b>January 10</b>	<b>Course Introduction</b>
<b>January 12</b>	<b>The Constitution</b> Fiorina, chapter 2 Sabato, "It's Time to Reshape the Constitution"* Allen, "Our Godless Constitution"*
<b>January 17</b>	<b>No Class: Martin Luther King Holiday</b>
<b>January 19</b>	<b>Federalism</b> Fiorina, chapter 3 Levinson, "It is Time to Repair the Constitution's Flaws"*
<b>January 24</b>	<b>Political Culture</b> Fiorina, chapter 4 Mahbunani, "Can America Fail?">*
<b>January 26 – 31</b>	<b>Mass Media</b> Fiorina, chapter 6 Moyers, "Journalism and Democracy"* Folkenflik, "The Media's True Ideology: Avoiding One"* Folkenflik, "From London: A Case Study in Opinionated Press"*
<b>February 2-9</b>	<b>Public Opinion</b> Fiorina, chapter 5 Sunstein, "The Polarization of Extremes"* Moore, "Manufacturing Public Opinion", chapter 2*
<b>February 14</b>	<b>Political Participation</b> Fiorina, chapter 7 Pastor, "America Observed"* Hayward, "Vote or Else"*
<b>February 16</b>	<b>Midterm Exam I</b>
<b>February 21-23</b>	<b>Political Parties</b> Fiorina, chapter 9 (Political Parties section) Pew political typology quiz at: <a href="http://typology.people-press.org/">http://typology.people-press.org/</a> Murphy, "Who Should Redistrict?*" <i>Paper #1 due in discussion on February 25</i>

<b>February 28, Mar 2,14</b>	<b>Campaigns &amp; Elections</b> Fiorina, chapter 8 Eilperin, "Running for their Lives"* <i>New York Times</i> , "Flunking the Electoral College"* Lind, "Alice Doesn't Vote Here Anymore"*
<b>March 7 – 11</b>	<b>Spring Break</b>
<b>March 16</b>	<b>Congress</b> Fiorina, chapter 10 Packer, "The Empty Chamber"* (New Yorker)
<b>March 21-23</b>	<b>Presidency</b> Fiorina, chapter 11 Purdum, "Washington, We Have a Problem"*
<b>March 28</b>	<b>Midterm Exam II</b>
<b>March 30</b>	<b>The Judiciary</b> Fiorina, chapter 13 Rosenthal, "Fair to Meddling"* Taylor, "Is Judicial Review Obsolete?"*
<b>April 4-6</b>	<b>Bureaucracy and Interest Groups</b> Fiorina, chapters 12 & 9 (Interest Groups section) Schlosser, Chapter 9 from <i>Fast Food Nation</i> * Casey, "Why they lobby"* <i>Paper #2 due in discussion on April 8</i>
<b>April 11-18</b>	<b>Civil Liberties and Civil Rights</b> Fiorina, chapters 14 & 15 Monk, "Should Race be a Consideration in College Admissions"* Schmidt, "Reports cite Alternatives to Race-Based Admissions"* Ponnuru, "Option Four: A Compromise on Gay Marriage"*
<b>April 20-27</b>	<b>Public Policy</b> Fiorina, chapter 16 Lowenstein, "The Immigration Equation"* Klein, "The Health of Nations"* Gann, "Trial by Fire"* <i>No discussion section April 22</i>
<b>May 9, 10:00am</b>	<b>FINAL EXAM (10:00am-11:00am)</b>