Political Science 201

INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS
Summer 2004

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Office Hours: Monday and Tuesday: 3:15-4:15; and by appointment

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
New American Democracy (NAD) (Alternate 3rd Edition) by Morris Fiorina and Paul Peterson
The New York Times or The Washington Post (both available free on-line)
Coursepak, available from Sir Speedy (readings from coursepak marked with *)
New American Democracy will serve as the primary text for this course. The class sessions 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

- Midterm Exams (25% each)
- Final Exam (25%)
- Class Participation (10%)
- Ideological Autobiography (10%)
- Congressional Letter (5%)

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.

Class Participation

Regular attendance of this class is essential for you to do well. This is especially true in the compressed summer session when missing a single class can set you considerably behind. Classroom attendance will be taken periodically throughout the semester on randomly determined dates. Students are also expected to be attentive during lectures and to ask questions and contribute comments to class discussions. At the beginning of every class period, we will discuss current events, especially as they relates to current course material. Both the New York Times and The Washington Post are available on-line and provide extensive coverage of political matters. Your participation grade will be based upon both attendance as well as active participation in class, with each counting 50% of your overall participation grade.

Exams

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

Assignments

All papers should be stapled and double-spaced. Only hardcopies will be accepted.

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 June 9. 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. Use facts to support your position. Turn in to me a double-spaced paper with references. You will also need to cc me on an email version of your letter sent to your member of Congress. You are responsible for the complete details of the assignment at: http://www2.chass.ncsu.edu/shgreene/ps201/AboutPaper2.htm. Due June 18. 2 pages maximum.

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 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.

Class Website
The class website at http://www2.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
Schedule of Topics and Assigned Readings (Summer 2004)

May 24                Course Introduction

May 25-26            The Constitution and Federalism  
                      *NAD, chapters 2 & 3  
                      Brands, “Founders Chic”*

May 26-27            Political Culture  
                      *NAD, chapter 4  
                      Starobin, “The Angry American”*

May 28, June 1       Public Opinion  
                      *NAD, chapter 5  
                      Saad, “Abortion Divides Public”*

June 2-3             Mass Media  
                      *NAD, chapter 9  
                      Taibbi, “Chasing Kerry”*

June 4               Midterm Exam I

June 7               Political Participation  
                      *NAD, chapter 6

June 7-8             Campaigns and Elections  
                      *NAD, chapter 10-11  
                      Economist, “A College Education”  
                      Judis, “Below the Beltway”*

June 9-10            Political Parties  
                      *NAD, chapter 8  
                      Halstead, “The Chieftans and the Church”*
                      Assignment #1 due June 9

June 11-14           Congress  
                      *NAD, chapter 12  
                      Toobin, “The Great Election Grab”*

June 15              Midterm Exam II

June 16-17           Presidency  
                      *NAD, chapter 13  
                      Chait, “Sunny Side Up”*
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<th>Additional Info</th>
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<tr>
<td>June 17-18</td>
<td>The Judiciary</td>
<td><em>NAD</em>, chapter 15</td>
<td>Assignment #2 due June 18</td>
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<td>June 21-22</td>
<td>Bureaucracy and Interest Groups</td>
<td><em>NAD</em>, chapters 14 &amp; 7</td>
<td>Schlosser, Chapter 9 from <em>Fast Food Nation</em></td>
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<td>June 22-24</td>
<td>Civil Liberties and Civil Rights</td>
<td><em>NAD</em>, chapters 16-17</td>
<td>Bacon, “And the winner is…Affirmative Action”*</td>
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<td>June 24-25</td>
<td>Civil Liberties and Civil Rights Case Study:</td>
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<td>Video: <em>Murder on a Sunday Morning</em></td>
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<td>June 29, 1:00pm</td>
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