Oxford College of Emory University

POLS 100: National Politics

Spring 2008
Seney 310
1:00 - 2:15 TU & TH
Prerequisite: POLS 101

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Course Objective
The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the study of politics in the American system. To begin, we focus on the fundamental principles underlying American politics and her culture. As such, we examine the derivation of the term politics as applied to our system to understand better why power is distributed the way it is. Part of that distribution is founded in her Constitutional framework explicitly and some is not. A deeper exploration of this framework leads us to the causes of political stability and instability through a closer examination of public opinion, political participation, and campaigns and elections. We spend the remainder of the course assessing political institutions and processes from a policymaking perspective; we view policy as a malleable process, a process having changed with our culture and institutional interactions. We spend some time examining why some policy remains stagnant and why some policy shifts. A case study of U.S. environmental policy concludes this course to thread together our understanding of American culture, opinion, participation, institutions and political change.

Text
Wilson and Dilulio, Jr., American Government, 10th Edition
Weekly New York Times (front and national pages); online is permissible but make sure you are reading first editions each day!

Grades

2 non-cumulative exams (February 14th and March 20th) EACH worth 25% of a student’s final grade.

5 out of 7 pop quizzes which include questions from the Times totaling 25% of your grade

1 final cumulative exam (May 1, 2008 from 2-5 pm)
Students are responsible for all assigned readings whether or not those readings are covered in the lectures. Reading assignments should be completed before class lectures.

If you have questions, ask. I cannot address questions or concerns I am not aware of! I check my email several times daily. I am usually in my office on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays except during lectures. I will gladly schedule individual meetings with students.

I typically have review sessions and hand out review sheets before the exams; a learnlink conference has been established. Check it regularly to make sure you are keeping up with the course and any important announcement I may have. I check the conference regularly.

Course Outline

PART I: The American System

January 17      Introduction
                Politics: What we mean by the term?
                Why should we care?
                Power, politics and legitimacy
                Democracy: US Application (pp.1-12)

January 22      Democratic Theory
                Defining Political Power, Distribution of Power,
                and Political Change (pp. 1-16)

January 24      American Political Culture
                Attitudinal Foundations of American Politics
                Defining Political Culture in general and in the
                American Context (pp. 75-97)

January 29      Introduction to the U.S. Constitution.
                Creation, Debates, Compromises and
                Intentions (pp. 16-30)

January 31      Constitutional Framework
                Individual Liberty v. Democracy
                Constitutional Guarantees and Equality
                Constitutional Reform (pp. 30-45)

February 5      Federalism
                Debate and Meaning
Nullification, Dual Federalism and State Sovereignty
Federal-State Relations & State rivalry (pp. 48-66)

February 7  
**Federalism Continued**  
Federal Aid = Federal Control?  
Devolution: Block Grants...what is driving devolution?  
Congress and Federalism (pp. 66-75)

February 12  
Review/Catch-up etc.

February 14  
**EXAM 1**

**PART II: Opinions, Interests and Organizations**

February 19  
**Public Opinion Introduced**  
Political Socialization (pp. 153-162)

February 21  
**Public Opinion Continued**  
Cleavages  
Political Ideology (measurement and meaning)  
Political Elites and Opinion Leaders (pp. 162-176)

February 26  
**Understanding Political Participation**  
(pp. 177-197)

February 28  
**The American Party System**  
(pp. 197-229)

March 4  
**Elections and Campaigns**  
Presidential v. Congressional  
Primary v. General (pp. 230-244)

March 6  
**Money and Elections**  
What decides the elections and what about policy? (pp. 244-263)

March 10-14  
**OFF SPRING BREAK**
March 18  
**Interest Groups**  
Proliferation, Growth, Categorization  
Social Movements (pp. 264-290)

**MARCH 20**  
**EXAM II**

PART III: Political Institutions and Public Policy

March 25  
**Congress Introduced**  
Members, Constituents, Representation,  
Relationships and Ideology (pp. 315-341)

March 27  
**Congress Continued:**  
Organization, Committees  
Enacting Legislation and Gridlock  
Polarization and Leadership  
The Creation of law (pp. 341-366)

April 1  
**The American Presidency**  
Evolution of the Office  
Electoral College (pp. 367-377)

April 3  
PROFESSOR OUT

April 8  
**Powers of the President**  
Cabinet and Staff  
Character and Persuasion and Veto Powers  
Transitions (pp. 379-408)

April 10  
**Bureaucracy Introduced**  
Bureaucratic Growth  
(pp. 409-427)

April 15  
**Bureaucracies Continued:**  
Bureaucratic Procedure  
Agency Alliance  
Oversight and Reform (pp. 427-436)
April 17  The Judiciary
   Structure of Federal Courts
   Jurisdiction
   Getting to Court
   The Supreme Court in Action
   The Power of Federal Courts
   Checks on Power  (pp. 446-467)

April 22  Public Policymaking Process Introduced
   Agenda Setting and Decision-Making
   (pp. 468-478)

April 24  Policymaking Continued
   Theories of Policy Making Explored
   (pp. 468-490)

April 29  Environmental Policy  (pp. 559-575)

May 1    FINAL EXAM 2-5 PM