

POLI 2051 Section 7 – Introduction to American Government		
Spring 2014 MWF 12:30-1:20 112 Tureaud Hall		
Instructor- L. Cassandra Black	Office: 325 Stubbs Hall	Office Hours: MW 10:30am-12:00pm

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The purpose of this course is to introduce you to the fundamentals of the United States government and its politics. In addition, this course will also attempt to sharpen your skills in critically evaluating and considering issues in U.S. politics. The course will be concerned with the foundations of the U.S. government (the constitution and federalism) and the ideals of democracy (civil liberties and civil rights), political institutions (public opinion, the news media, interest groups, parties, elections) and U.S. government institutions (congress, the presidency, the bureaucracy, and the courts).

COURSE OBJECTIVES

General Education courses are required to ensure that...*“LSU graduates will demonstrate an understanding of factors associated with global interdependence, including economic, political, psychological, cultural and linguistic forces.”* This course contributes to this goal by providing students with a basic understanding of American government, from inception through current times. My personal goal, as an instructor, is to provide a safe, productive, and professional environment in which individual thought is able to flourish. By the end of this course, you should have a good understanding of the principles, functions, structures and processes of the American political system, as well as how to critique and analyze these.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

There will be two exams; one midterm and one final. The midterm will survey your knowledge on material covered up to that point. The final exam will survey your knowledge on material covered from the midterm through the last day of classes. Each exam will be worth 100 points and will consist of a combination at multiple choice, short answer and essay. In addition, there will be 6 random quizzes on the reading material throughout the semester, totaling 50 points. The lowest quiz grade will be dropped. You will also be required to write a final paper for the course, worth 50 points. More information on this paper will be provided later. Participation and attendance is required- if you miss more than 5 classes (unexcused) you will automatically receive an “F”.

Your final grade will be determined as follows:

TOTAL of 300 POINTS -Midterm Exam (100) + Final Exam (100) + Quizzes (50) + Final Paper (50):

270 – 300 (90%)	A
240 – 269 (80%)	B
210 – 239 (70%)	C
180 – 209 (60%)	D
Below 179	F

POLICIES

1. If a student engages in any form of academic dishonesty this will be reported to the Dean of Students. LSU’s policy on plagiarism is the following: “Plagiarism is defined to include any use of another’s work and submitting that work as one’s own. This means not only copying passages of writing or direct quotations but also paraphrasing or using structure or ideas without citation.” If you use material from a source (either one assigned from this class or something you’ve retrieved through outside research), you must cite it. Please review the University’s guidelines

on plagiarism and academic integrity at <http://www.lsu.edu/judicialaffairs/> and <http://www.lsu.edu/judicialaffairs/Plagiarism.htm> and on academic dishonesty at [http://appl003.lsu.edu/slas/dos.nsf/\\$Content/Code+of+Conduct?OpenDocument#5.1](http://appl003.lsu.edu/slas/dos.nsf/$Content/Code+of+Conduct?OpenDocument#5.1) or <https://paws002.lsu.edu>

2. The Americans with Disabilities Act requires that reasonable accommodations be provided for students with physical, cognitive, systemic, learning and psychiatric disabilities. Please contact me at the beginning of the semester if you are registered with disability services and need accommodation. You can find more information at <http://appl003.lsu.edu/slas/ods.nsf/index>.
3. Be on time. Do the readings before class. I will assume you have read the assigned materials and are ready to participate. Attendance is expected. We'll cover topics that are not in the book and this material will be fair game on quizzes and exams. It is always in your best interest to attend class and be prepared. Any makeup exams or assignments will be allowed only in the case of university excused absences-documentation must be provided. Please do not engage in disruptive behavior (e.g. cell phones, side conversations etc.) during class.
4. About me: I am currently a fifth year PhD. Candidate in American Political Science. You may call me Cassie if you prefer- I am not a doctor yet. I received my BS in Psychology (concentration: music performance, minor: business) and my MA in Experimental Psychology from Appalachian State University; my research primarily uses psychological theories to explain political behavior. I am only in my office during office hours; however, I am always willing to make an appointment or discuss anything but grades through email... a virtual open door policy, if you will. Keep in mind that I have been and am still a student; be honest and communicate with me if you have any concerns and I will do everything in my power to address them appropriately.

REQUIRED READING

O'Connor, Sabato and Yanus. (2014). Essentials of American Government: Roots and Reform ISBN- 978-0-205-88399-8 OR 0-205-88399-0. (Called "Essentials" in the syllabus.) This is available in the LSU bookstore.

All other materials will be provided on Moodle. You are required to read the articles/text assigned on a date PRIOR to coming to class and you should be ready to discuss it and/or ask questions.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

THE AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

Week 1- In the beginning...

Wednesday 1/15: Introduction

Friday 1/17: Introduction to American Politics/Research Methods

Chapter 1 Essentials

Week 2- The Constitution and Federalism

Monday 1/20: MLK day- no class

Wednesday 1/22: The Constitution

Friday 1/24: Federalism

Chapter 2 Essentials

Chapter 3 Essentials

Week 3- Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

Monday 1/27: Liberties

Wednesday 1/29: Rights

Friday 1/31: Review and Catch up for first three weeks

Chapter 4 Essentials

Chapter 5 Essentials

GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS

Week 4- Congress

Monday 2/3:

Wednesday 2/5:

Friday 2/7:

Chapter 6 Essentials

TBA

TBA

Week 5- The Presidency

Monday 2/10:

Wednesday 2/12:

Friday 2/14:

Chapter 7 Essentials

TBA

TBA

Week 6- The Executive and Federal Bureaucracy

Monday 2/17:

Wednesday 2/19:

Friday 2/21:

Chapter 8 Essentials

TBA

TBA

Week 7- The Judiciary

Monday 2/24:

Wednesday 2/26:

Friday 2/28: EXAM REVIEW

Chapter 9 Essentials

TBA

TBA

END OF MATERIAL THAT WILL BE ON THE MIDTERM EXAM

POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

Week 8-Midterm Review

Monday 3/3: MARDI GRAS HOLIDAY- NO CLASS

Wednesday 3/5: MARDI GRAS HOLIDAY- NO CLASS

Friday 3/7: Midterm exam review/Catch up

Week 9-Midterm- Public Opinion and the News Media

Monday 3/10: MIDTERM EXAM

Wednesday 3/12: Public Opinion

Friday 3/14: News Media

Chapter 10 Essentials

TBA

Week 10- Political Parties and Interest Groups

Monday 3/17: Parties

Wednesday 3/19: Interest Groups

Friday 3/21: Catch up

Chapter 11 Essentials

TBA

Week 11- Campaigns, Elections, Voting

Monday 3/24:

Wednesday 3/26:

Friday 3/28:

Chapter 12 Essentials

TBA

TBA

POLICY/SELECTED TOPICS

Week 12- Social and Economic Policy

Monday 3/31:

Chapter 13 Essentials

Wednesday 4/2:

TBA

Friday 4/4:

TBA

Week 13- Foreign and Defense Policy

Monday 4/7:

Chapter 14 Essentials

Wednesday 4/9:

TBA

Friday 4/11:

TBA

Week 14- Spring Break

Monday 4/14: SPRING BREAK- NO CLASS

Wednesday 4/16: SPRING BREAK- NO CLASS

Friday 4/18: SPRING BREAK- NO CLASS

Week 15- Mock Debates

Monday 4/21: Library research

Wednesday 4/23: Debate!

Friday 4/25: Discussion of the debates

Monday 4/28: LAST DAY OF CLASS- FINAL PAPERS DUE optional exam review session

FINAL EXAM: THURSDAY MAY 8th 10:00am-12:00pm

*Information on this syllabus is subject to change. Any changes will be announced in class and/or through your LSU email; it is your responsibility to be aware of these changes and turn in work (etc.) at the appropriate time.