

**American Politics**  
**Political Science 101 (Fall 2007)**  
(Section A, Course # 41548)  
Class Meeting: MWF 2:30PM - 3:20PM  
Mahar, Room 108

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Office Hours: Mon Wed 3:30-4:30 and by appt.

### **Course Description**

This course offers an introduction to American politics and citizenship. In the first part, we explore the philosophical, cultural and ideological foundations of American democracy. In the second part, we examine the workings of the essential institutions of national government: the presidency, Congress, judiciary and bureaucracy. Lastly, we focus on how citizens influence and engage in politics through the media, political parties, interest groups, elections and social movements.

The course emphasizes the following major themes: the ongoing struggle to support values of liberty and equality; how concerns about public order and national security shape this struggle; the enduring influence of the constitutional framework to resolve political issues; the patterns of conflict and cooperation among political institutions that share power; the evolving role of mediating institutions such as political parties, interest groups, and mass media in connecting citizens and leaders; and the scope and breadth of citizen participation in American politics.

### **Grading**

- Quizzes (10%): includes taking online quizzes about readings at the SPARK (5%) and one quiz on the U.S. Constitution in class (5%)
- Midterm examination (25%)
- 2-page opinion essay (10%)
- 5-6 page strategy paper (20%)
- Final examination (30%)
- Class participation (5%) which includes participation with PRS during lecture

Late assignments will be penalized one grade level for each day late (thus, an “A” paper becomes an “A-” if it is turned in within a day of the deadline; it becomes a “B+” if turned in within 2 days of the deadline). If you have a problem meeting the deadline, you must discuss this with your TA well before the deadline (at least a week or more) or provide documentation of the problem afterwards. Plagiarism and cheating will be punished with an “F” – possibly for the entire course – and will be reported to the University’s Academic Honesty Board. See the *University Undergraduate Rights and*

*Responsibilities* handbook for further details. Students with special needs should contact me to discuss accommodations for this class.

## Readings and Materials for Course:

1. **SPARK:** this is the website for course information, schedules, assignments, grades and supplementary materials. You should view this site frequently for the latest information about course additions and changes. Your TA may choose to use the SPARK for mail, discussion & chat groups. Use your OIT account name and password to access the site at: <https://spark.oit.umass.edu/>
2. **Textbook:** O'Connor and Sabato, *Essentials of American Government*, available at the UMass Textbook Annex and Jeffrey Amherst College Store. The publisher of the textbook provides supplementary materials that might help you in the course, including quizzes, simulations, essential definitions, etc. This feature is optional. Available at <http://www.coursecompass.com/>. When you purchase the textbook, it contains information to register and login. You may use older editions of the textbook as well.
3. **Reader:** *Choices: An American Government Reader*, available at the Textbook Annex and The Jeffrey Amherst College Store.
4. **e-reserve:** selected readings available online through the DuBois library, available at <http://ereserves.library.umass.edu/>. The password to retrieve readings is "citizen"
5. **Personal Response System (PRS).** We will use this device to poll class opinion and respond to questions posed during lecture. You should bring the PRS to *every* class because your responses with this device during lecture will affect your participation grade. It may seem expensive, but you can use this in other courses or sell it back to the Annex.
6. **Newspapers:** Read national political news, before every class, from one or more of the following: *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Boston Globe* or *Wall Street Journal*. I occasionally post timely articles at the SPARK that are germane to the course. These are required readings (i.e., some material might appear on a quiz or exam).

## Course Outline

### Wed Sep 5 **Overview of Course**

Assignments: (1) visit and browse the SPARK site for course (2) register your PRS# through SPARK, and (3) take the *Politics Survey* at SPARK under the "quizzes."

## **Part I. Foundations of American Government**

### Fri Sept 7 **Democracy and American Political Thought**

Textbook: Ch 1 and Jefferson, *Declaration of Independence* (see Appendix)

Reader: Henry, *Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death*; Locke, *State of Nature, State of War*.

Mon Sept 10 **American Political Culture and Identity**

Reader: Putnam, *Bowling Alone*; Lipset, *American Exceptionalism*  
e-reserve: Tocqueville, selection from *Democracy in America*.

Wed Sept 12 **The Constitution: Formation**

Textbook: Ch 2 and read the text of the *U.S. Constitution* and *Federalist No. 10, 51* (in Appendix and available at SPARK)

Fri Sept 14 The Constitution: Formation (continued)

**QUIZ on the U.S. Constitution at START of CLASS**

Mon Sept 17 **The Constitution: Federalism and the Growth of National Power**

*American Government*, Ch 3

Reader: Storing, *What the Antifederalists Were For*

**\*\*Monday, Sept 17 is the Last Day to Add or Drop course with no record**

Wed Sept 19 **State and Local Government**

Fri Sept 21 **Guest Lecturer**

Mon Sept 24 **The Constitution: Developments in Liberty**

Textbook: Ch 4

Reader: U.S. Supreme Court; *Miller v. California*; Carpenter, *Protecting Liberty in a Permanent War*; Levy, *The USA Patriot Act: We Deserve Better*

Wed Sept 26 **Liberty** (continued)

Fri Sept 28 In-class debates on liberty:

- Speech Codes on Campus
- Police searches in the War on Terrorism

Mon Oct 1 **The Constitution: Developments in Equality**

Textbook: Ch 5

SPARK: Martin Luther King, Jr. *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*;

Reader: U.S. Supreme Court, *Brown v. Board of Education*.

Wed Oct 3 **Equality** (continued)

Fri Oct 6 **Equality**

- In-class debates on equality:
- Women and Black Colleges
  - Affirmative Action

## **Part II. The Institutions of American Government**

- Mon Oct 8      Holiday – Columbus Day (class rescheduled for Tuesday)
- Tue Oct 9      **The Presidency**  
Textbook: Ch 7  
Reader: Neustadt, *Presidential Power*; Schlesinger, *The Imperial Presidency*
- Wed Oct 10    **The Presidency (continued)**
- Fri Oct 12     **The Presidency and the Making of Foreign Policy**
- Mon Oct 15    **MIDTERM**
- Wed Oct 17    **Congress**  
Textbook: Ch 6  
Reader: Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection*; John F. Kennedy, *The Legislator as Trustee*
- Fri Oct 19     **Congress (continued)**
- Mon Oct 22    **Congress (continued)**
- Wed Oct 24    **Bureaucracy**  
Textbook: Ch 8  
Reader: Goodsell, *The Case for Bureaucracy*
- Fri Oct 26     **The Judiciary**  
Textbook: Ch 9  
Reader: Thayer, *The Doctrine of Judicial Review*; Bork, *The Tempting of America*; Marshall, *Reflections on the Bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution*
- Mon Oct 29    **The Judiciary (continued)**
- DUE at START OF CLASS: Two-page, double-spaced Op-Ed**
- \*\* October 29 is the Mid-Semester Date and last day to drop with 'W'
- Wed Oct 31    **The Judiciary (continued)**

Fri Nov 2 To Be Announced

**Part III. Influencing American Government**

Mon Nov 5 **Political Parties**  
Textbook: Ch 11 (on parties)  
Reader: Ladd, *An End to Politics as Usual*.

Wed Nov 7 **Political Parties** (continued)  
  
\*\*Registration begins for Spring 2008

Fri Nov 9 TBA

Mon Nov 12 Holiday – Veterans Day –

Wed Nov 14 **Interest Groups**  
Textbook: Ch 11 (on interest groups) Reader: Schattschneider, *The Scope and Bias of the Pressure System*; Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action*; Birnbaum, *Washington's Power 25*.

Fri Nov 16 **Social Movements**  
TBA

Mon Nov 19 **Public Opinion & News Media**  
Textbook: Ch 10  
Readings: Elshstain, *Poll Positions: Leaders' Over-Dependence on Public Opinion*.

Wed Nov 21 **Public Opinion & News Media (continued)**  
Reader: Cook, *The News Media as a Political Institution*

Fri Nov 23 Holiday -- Thanksgiving

Mon Nov 26 **Voting and Elections: Presidential**  
Textbook: Ch 12 Reader: O'Bierne, *It's the Zip Code, Stupid*; Kimberling, *Strengths and Weaknesses of the Electoral College*;

Wed Nov 28 **Voting and Elections: Presidential (continued)**

Fri Nov 30 Film

**DUE at START OF CLASS: Papers (5-6 pages, double-spaced)**

Mon Dec 3 **Voting and Elections: Congressional**

- Wed Dec 5     **Voting and Elections: Who are the Voters?**  
Reader: Teixeira, *Voter Turnout in America: 10 Myths*; e-reserve: Ranney,  
*Nonvoting is Not a Social Disease*; Lijphart, *Compulsory Voting is the  
Best Way to Keep Democracy Strong*.
- Fri Dec 7     **Voting and Elections** (continued)
- Mon Dec 10    **Electoral Reform**  
Voter registration, voter choice, redistricting, and campaign finance.
- Wed Dec 12    **How Democratic is the United States?**  
Reader: Verba et al. *The Big Tilt: Participatory Inequality in America*.  
Putnam, *Bowling Together*,
- Fri Dec 14     **Summary of Course Topics and Themes**  
Reader: Wilson, *Politics and Public Policy*.

**FINAL EXAM (Date TBA)**