

**POLITICAL SCIENCE 2051
AMERICAN GOVERNMENT
Spring 2014**

Kristy McKearn
POLS 2051
THURS 6:00 –8:50pm
220 Stubbs

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Office Hours:

by Appointment (flexible): 225-763-2142 (office)

Course Description:

This course is designed to introduce students to the principals, institutions and processes of American politics. This course is designed to provide a foundation that should enable students to understand and critically evaluate the American political system and its form of government. POLI 2051 classes are designed to address the following General Education outcomes:

- A familiarity with the nature and function of the social sciences
- An appreciation of the methods of critical inquiry

The course is divided into three sections. The first section introduces students to the fundamental of policymaking, explores the constitutional context of politics, and examines political participation. The second section of the course explores components of the political system (elections, interest groups) and institutions of government (executive, legislative, and judicial branches) that create and implement public policies. The third part of the course examines the policymaking process in the specific areas such as the economy, social welfare, civil liberties and national security. The preponderance of our time will be spent on national-level politics, but aspects of state and local governments will be incorporated throughout the semester.

Required Texts:

Two texts are required for this course:

Karen O'Connor, Larry J. Sabato, & Alixandra B. Yanus, *American Government: Roots & Reform*, 2012 Election Edition, New York: Pearson

David T. Cannon, John J. Coleman, Kenneth R. Mayer, *The Enduring Debate: Classic and Contemporary readings in American Politics*, 7th Edition, Norton & Company

Student Evaluation and Policies:

Grades for the course are based on a student's performance on two in-term exams and a final exam, and one (1) small group presentation and written summary. Letter grades are determined on the following scale:

A	90% - 100%	(400 to 360 points)
B	80% - 89%	(359 to 320 points)
C	70% - 79%	(319 to 280 points)
D	60% - 69%	(279 to 240 points)
F	0 - 59%	(Below 239 points)

Small Group Presentation and written summary:

Each student will be responsible for selecting chapter required readings from *The Enduring Debate* text and presenting the information as a group along with submitting a written summary of the entire required chapter readings. The small group presentation and written summary will total 100 points. **You must notify the instructor of your selected readings by January 30th, 2014 via email.**

Exams:

Two exams and one final consisting of 100 points each will be given. The final exam will focus on the last section of material covered; however, material covered earlier in the semester may be drawn upon as well. Please note that any reading not covered in class will still be on the exams. It is the student's responsibility to complete all reading and be prepared to answer any questions about them on the exam.

Makeup exams are only provided for students who can produce a valid excuse (serious illness, family crisis, etc). For problems that can be anticipated, students must let me know in advance of the problem. For problems that crop up at the last minute, students should contact me as soon as it is reasonably possible. *Students who do not meet these conditions will earn a 0 on the exam.* Note that it is the student's responsibility to make arrangements with me about makeup exams. Makeups are generally scheduled for the Friday following the date of the missed exam and are *written essay tests*.

For students who have special needs or who require accommodations through Disability Services, please advise me of your situation. For accommodations involving the exams, please contact me about the necessary arrangements well in advance of the testing date.

Assignment Schedule:

First Exam	100 Points	March 13th
Second Exam	100 Points	April 10th
Final Exam	100 Points	May 8th
<i>Enduring Debate</i> Presentation & written summary	100 Points	Weekly

Classroom Policy:

Please be considerate of those around you who are trying to listen and take notes. Keep in mind that class will begin promptly at 6:00. Please be on time and seated prior to the beginning of class each day and leave early only for emergencies. Most importantly, do not talk during class. Use of a cell phone or blackberry device including texting is prohibited during class- turn off all cell phones and blackberry devices prior to the beginning of class. Disruptive students will be asked to leave immediately.

Course Schedule

January 16th

Introduction to Course

January 23th

American Government: Roots, Context, and Culture

American Government: Roots and Reform, Chapter 1

Debating the Issue: “What Does it mean to Be an American?”

The Enduring Debate: pp. 27-52

January 30st

The Constitution

American Government: Roots and Reform, Chapter 2

“The Nature of American Constitutionalism” pp. 53-61 & *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* pp. 67-72

The Enduring Debate: pp. 53-61 & 67-72

February 6th

The Federal System

American Government: Roots and Reform, Chapter 3

The Price of Federalism pp. 103-111 & **“Jumping Frogs, Endangered Toads, and California’s Medical- Marijuana Law”** pp. 112- 121

The Enduring Debate: pp. 103-111 & 112-121

February 13th

Congress

American Government: Roots and Reform, Chapter 6

Congress: The Electoral Connection pp.175-178 & **“U.S. House Members in Their Constituencies: An Exploration”** pp.179-191 & **“Too Much of a Good Thing: More Representative is Not Necessarily Better”** pp. 192-198

The Enduring Debate: pp. 175-198

February 20th

No class meeting

February 27th

The Presidency

American Government: Roots and Reform, Chapter 7

“*The Power to Persuade*” pp. 212-221 & “*Perspectives on the Presidency*” pp. 222- 228

The Enduring Debate: pp. 212-228

The Executive Branch & The Federal Bureaucracy

American Government: Roots and Reform, Chapter 8

“*The Study of Administration*” pp. 239-247 & *Bureaucracy:*

What Government Agencies Do and Why they Do It pp. 248-256

The Enduring Debate: pp. 239-256

March 6th

The Judiciary

American Government: Roots and Reform, Chapter 9

“*The Court and American Life*” pp. 280-286 & “*The Hollow Hope: Can Courts Bring About Social Change?*” pp. 287-292

The Enduring Debate: pp. 280-292

March 13th

EXAM 1

March 20th

Public Opinion & Political Socialization

American Government: Roots and Reform, Chapter 10

“*Polling the Public*” pp. 317- 324 & “*Choice Words: If I Can’t Understand Our Poll Questions, Then How Can We Understand Your Answers?*” pp. 325-329

The Enduring Debate: pp. 317-329

Political Parties

American Government: Roots and Reform, Chapter 11

“*The Decline of Collective Responsibility in American Politics*” pp. 393-403 & “*Be Careful What you Wish For: The Rise of Responsible Parties in American National Politics*” pp. 404-414

The Enduring Debate: pp. 393-414

March 27st

Elections and Voting

American Government: Roots and Reform, Chapter 12

“The Voice of the People: An Echo” pp. 358- 363 & “The Unpolitical Animal: How Political Science Understands Voters” pp-364-372 & “Telling Americans to Vote, or Else” pp.373-376
The Enduring Debate: pp. 358-376

The Campaign Process

American Government: Roots and Reform, Chapter 13

April 3rd

The News Media

American Government: Roots and Reform, Chapter 14

“News vs. Entertainment” How Increasing Media Choice Widens Gaps in Political Knowledge and Turnout” pp. 330-336 & Debating the Issues: The Future of Political Journalism pp. 337-357
The Enduring Debate: pp. 330-357

Interest Groups

American Government: Roots and Reform, Chapter 15

“The Alleged Mischiefs of Faction” pp. 444-451 & “The Logic of Collective Action” pp. 452 - 461
The Enduring Debate: pp. 444-461

April 10th

EXAM 2

April 17st

No class meeting (Spring Break)

April 24th

Domestic Policymaking

American Government: Roots and Reform, Chapter 16

Economic Policymaking

American Government: Roots and Reform, Chapter 17

Foreign and Defense Policymaking

American Government: Roots and Reform, Chapter 18

May 1st

Civil Liberties

American Government: Roots and Reform, Chapter 4

Civil Rights

American Government: Roots and Reform, Chapter 5

May 8th

FINAL EXAM

8:00pm –10:00pm