

Political Science 2051
American Government
Fall 2016

Course Description

This course is designed to both acquaint you with the fundamentals of American government and politics and to improve your skills in evaluating and analyzing issues in American politics. The class will be organized into four main sections. The first describes the foundations of our American system including the constitution, political culture, federalism, and civil rights/liberties. The second is devoted to the American political institutions including the legislative, executive, and judicial branches. The third section will deal with the democratic aspects of our political system, such as public opinion and elections. This section will also delve into the inner workings of political parties and interest groups. The last section deals with issues of public policy, including economic policy, social policy and foreign policy.

Professor:

John Boersma
jboers1@lsu.edu

Office Hours:

M, 9:30-11:00
T, 12:30-2:30, and by appointment
332 Stubbs Hall

Class Time and Location:

MWF 8:30-9:20 am 324 Hodges Hall

General Education Credit:

General education credit for the social sciences will be earned by students in this course, since our study aims at a number of the goals of the general education program at LSU. According to a LSU catalogue, "General education courses are not hurdles to be overcome; rather, they are means by which students learn to think, describe, interpret, and analyze the world. Their primary aim is to educate rather than train, and to instill a desire for life-long learning." In the social sciences, the learning outcome sought is the following: "LSU graduates will demonstrate an understanding of the informing factors of global interdependence, including economic forces, political dynamics, and cultural and linguistic difference." From our initial study of the American founding, through our consideration of American institutions, constitutional design, and public policy, we keep an eye on the global dimension of the political issues we consider. While our focus for much of the course is the American regime, we look as well at the global impacts of the American system of governance.

Note: Scantrons and Blue Books will be required on test days.

Course Materials:

The following books are required, and are (or will soon be) available in the bookstore. Please obtain these specific editions so that we can all work from the same translations and/or page numbers. The books are listed in the order in which we will study them. Additional articles are available through the Moodle website, either in pdf, internet link, or as a word document.

- *American Government: Power and Purpose (13th Edition)* – By: Lowi, Ginsberg, Shepsle, Ansolabehere
 - NOTE: Please obtain the **Full Edition (with policy chapters)**, and **NOT** the Brief or Core editions
- *The Enduring Debate* – By: David Canon, John Coleman, and Kenneth Mayer
- Any additional readings will be available on Moodle

Grading out of 500 pts

A+: 97-100

A: 93-96

A-: 90-92

B+: 87-89

B: 83-86

B-: 80-82

C+: 77-79

C: 73-76

C-: 70-72

D+: 67-69

D: 63-66

D-: 60-62

F: 59>below

- **Four** non-cumulative exams on the dates assigned – **75 pts each/ total 300 pts**
 - Exams will include **multiple choice** and **essay questions**, each will cover lecture material and textbook readings.
- **Two** papers that will be between **5 and 7 pages** in length – **100 pts/ total 200 pts**
- In addition, I will sporadically take class attendance, for which you are able to attain bonus points.
- **Course Total:** 500 points

09/7	Federalism	
	AG:	79-93
09/9	Federalism; Separation of Powers	
	<i>Enduring Debate:</i>	Paul Peterson, "The Price of Federalism"
	<i>Enduring Debate:</i>	George J. Annas "Jumping Frogs, Endangered Toads, and California's Medical-Marijuana Law"
09/12	Separation of Powers	
	AG:	93-103
	AG:	Federalist 51 (Appendix A39 - A42)
	Moodle:	William Marshall, "Eleven Reasons Why Presidential Power Inevitably Expands and Why it Matters"
09/14	Civil Liberties	
	AG:	104-145
09/16	Civil Rights	
	AG:	146-184
09/19	Test	

Part Two

09/21	Congress: Representation; Problems of Legislative Organization	
	AG:	186-209
	<i>Enduring Debate:</i>	John R. Hibbing and Elizabeth Theis-Morse, "Too Much of a Good Thing: More Representatives is Not Necessarily Better"
09/23	Congress: The Organization of Congress; How a Bill Becomes a Law	
	AG:	209-231
09/26	Congress: How Congress Decides; Additional Powers	
	AG:	231-245

10/19	Public Opinion	
	AG:	392-432
10/21	Measuring Public Opinion	
	AG:	432-445
	<i>Enduring Debate:</i>	George Gallup, "Polling the Public"
	<i>Enduring Debate:</i>	Richard Morin, "Choice Words: If You Can't Understand Our Poll Questions, Then How Can We Understand Your Answers?"
10/24	Elections	
	AG:	446-476
10/26	Elections	
	AG:	476-511
10/28	Elections/Political Parties	
	<i>Enduring Debate:</i>	V.O. Key, Jr., "The Responsible Electorate"
	<i>Enduring Debate:</i>	Louis Menand, "The Unpolitical Animal: How Political Science Understands Voters"
	<i>Enduring Debate:</i>	William Galston, "Telling Americans to Vote or Else"
10/31	Political Parties	
	AG:	512-528
11/2	Political Parties	
	AG:	528-557
11/4	Interest Groups	
	AG:	558-567
	<i>Enduring Debate:</i>	Alexis De Tocqueville, "Political Association in the United States"
	<i>Enduring Debate:</i>	David Truman, "The Alleged Mischiefs of Faction"

11/7 **Interest Groups**

AG: 568- 596

Enduring Debate: Ronald Dworkin, "The Decision that Threatens Democracy"

Enduring Debate: Bradley A. Smith, "Citizens United We Stand"

11/9 **TEST**

Part Four

11/11 **The Media**

AG: 598-630

Enduring Debate: Markus Prior, "News vs. Entertainment: How Increasing Media Choice Widens Gaps in Political Knowledge and Turnout"

Enduring Debate: Paul Starr, "Goodbye to the Age of Newspapers (Hello to a New Era of Corruption"

Enduring Debate: James Fallows, "How to Save the News"

11/14 **Economic Policy**

AG: 632-667

11/16 **Economic Policy**

AG: 667-674

Enduring Debate: Timothy Noah, "The United States of Inequality, Part 10: Why We Can't Ignore Growing Income Inequality"

Enduring Debate: Richard Epstein, "Three Cheers for Income Inequality"

11/18 **Social Policy**

AG: 674-694

11/21 **Social Policy**

AG: 694-701

Enduring Debate: Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Call for Federal Responsibility"

Enduring Debate: Herbert Hoover, "Against the Proposed Deal"

11/23 The Effects of Social and Economic Policy

Moodle: Samuelson, "Family Meltdown"
Moodle: Kay Hymowitz, "Marriage and Caste"
Moodle: Joshua Rothman, "The Lives of Poor White People"
Moodle: Robert Putnam, "Bowling Alone"

11/28 Foreign Policy

AG: 702-720

11/30 Foreign Policy

*******PAPER TWO DUE*******

AG: 721-731

Enduring Debate: Micah Zenko and Michael A. Cohen, "Clear and Present Safety: The United States is Safer than Washington Thinks"

Enduring Debate: Paul Miller, "National Insecurity: Just How Safe is the United States?"

12/2 Foreign Policy

Moodle: Irving Kristol, "What is a Neoconservative?"
Moodle: Irving Kristol, "The Neocon Persuasion"
Moodle: George W. Bush, "National Security Strategy"
Moodle: Claes Ryn, "Ideology of American Empire"