

**POLITICAL SCIENCE 3171**  
**Government and Capitalism in the United States**  
**Professor Ed Greenberg, Spring, 2003**

Office Hours: Generally available every day, from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM, at my office at the Institute of Behavioral Science, Building #2, 1546 Broadway (1.5 blocks north of the Starbucks located at University and Broadway). Drop by at any time, *but please call or email first to make sure I have not stepped out for a latte, a visit to the gym, or a meeting.*

Appointments: Please phone, contact me by email, or talk to me after class to schedule an appointment.

Contact Information:

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Greenberg web pages:

[www.colorado.edu/IBS/PEC/edg.html](http://www.colorado.edu/IBS/PEC/edg.html) and [www.ablongman.com/greenberg](http://www.ablongman.com/greenberg).

### **Course Description**

Adam Smith, John Locke and many of the founders of the American Republic believed that the best form of government is one that governs the least. As even the most casual observer of the American scene must know, however, such a model of government has long since absented the scene, induced to move offstage by, among other things, the Progressive movement, the Great Depression, World War II, the Cold War, the civil rights, environmental, and consumer movements, and the war on terrorism. This course examines this transformation in responsibilities and reach of the federal government, how it happened, what it means for Americans, and what the future may hold.

Our inquiry will be guided by a number of specific questions: how is it that a large scale, activist, interventionist, and expensive government has emerged in a nation traditionally and ideologically committed to a small-scale, passive, non-interventionist, and low-cost government? How did such a new form of government emerge? What are the most important implications of this new form of government for political, economic, and social life in the U.S.? Is this new form of government compatible with our notions of democracy and liberty? Has it become a permanent feature of American life or will the current conservative tide in American politics roll it back or sweep it aside? To help us tackle these questions, we will read from a wide range of theoretical, literary, historical, and analytical works written from diverse political and philosophical perspectives.

This course carries the title "Government and Capitalism in the United States" because I

believe that one can only understand why the scale, reach, and responsibilities of the federal government have changed by first understanding how changes in America's market capitalist economy (and consequent social changes) created a demand among elites and the mass public for a different kind of government. I will suggest, as well, that involvement in world affairs and the waging of and preparing for war have also been important factors in this story of the growth of government.

Thematically the course is organized in the following way. First, we will consider the nature and logic of capitalism, and the classic arguments of Adam Smith and John Locke on the proper role of government in a market capitalist society. Their arguments will, no doubt, sound familiar, for they still form the bedrock of the American ideology. Second, we will carefully examine the most important and compelling explanations for why government in the United States has moved so far away from the Locke-Smith model. Third, we will attempt to test the adequacy of each of these competing explanations for why government has changed in the United States by taking a careful look at key historical turning points in the relationship between government and economy/society. This examination will help us understand how the federal government got to where it is today. Fourth, we will think about the future role of government in the United States, especially as the American people think about what to do about the environment, economic growth, technological change, poverty, education, terrorism, and more.

### **Course Readings**

Course Readings Packet Most of the required readings for this course are contained in a course packet I have put together from a variety of sources. The packet is on sale at the UMC Bookstore.

Reserve Additional readings for this course are on reserve at Norlin Library. Sorry for the inconvenience, but I needed to take this step in order to keep down the cost of the Course Packet.

### **Course Assignments and Grade**

Your course grade will be based on two take-home examinations, and a course research paper.

Take-home examinations. Each of the *two* take-home examinations will count for 20 percent of your course grade, making a total of *40 percent*. Exams should be four to five pages in length, typed double spaced, with standard margins. Topics/issues/questions on which you are to write will be distributed in class one week before the examinations are due. Deadlines are listed in the course schedule below. Note that I have scheduled special "study dates" when we will not meet as a class in order to afford you some free time to work on your take home exams. I expect completed examinations to be

submitted on time, in person to me in class or in my mailbox at my IBS office. Please submit them in hard-copy form so that I will not be forced to download 60 or so email attachments. *Late papers will be assessed a one-letter grade penalty for each day they are late.*

Research paper. You will be responsible for writing a research paper of approximately 12 to 15 pages in length, with standard spacing and margins. The research paper will count 50 percent towards your course grade. Please let me know the subject of your paper no later than April 4, 2003. The paper is due in my mail box at the Institute of Behavioral Science, Building #2 on May 1, no later than 5:00 PM.

Your assignment for the paper is as follows: examine the past, present, and possible future role of the federal government in some area of public policy that is of interest to you and vital to the health and well-being of American society. In your paper, you should include the following:

- ❑ A description of the history of the federal government's role in a particular policy area and what it is doing presently.
- ❑ Arguments that have been made both for and against an increased federal role in the policy area you have selected.
- ❑ Your position on a possible future federal role in the policy area that you have selected, based on your own philosophy concerning the appropriate role for government in a market capitalist society.

Please come see me for advice on getting started, bibliographic assistance, and anything else you might think would be helpful.

Policy areas might include (but are not limited to) the environment, economic growth, jobs, education, poverty, technological development and change, terrorism, national defense, racial equality, and more. Be as specific as you can be. For example, in the environmental area, you will want to narrow your focus to air or water pollution, or sprawl, or greenhouse emissions, and so on. On the education front, you would want to narrow your focus to school vouchers, let us say, or aid to higher education. In other words, a twenty page paper cannot do justice to a very broad topic such as government and the environment, or government and education. So, Focus! Focus! Focus!

**Special note:** Please do not use a web-based or non-web-based service to buy an essay. I will use the appropriate software and internet search engines to check up on suspicious papers. Use of such a paper will result in a grade of "F" for the assignment.

Class participation. Most of April will be devoted to student run, in-class debates on the general topic of "what is the most appropriate role for the federal government?" Each class session will be devoted to a series of debates organized around particular policy issues. Your research paper will form the basis for your participation in these debates. 10 percent of your course grade will be based on the quality of your participation in these debates.

## **Course Schedule and Reading Assignments**

\* Please note: underlined readings are “on reserve” at Norlin Library.

### I. Introduction to the Course (1/14)

### II. Foundations

A. On the Nature and Logic of Capitalism (1/16)  
Reading #1 (Smith)

B. Laissez Faire (1/21 & 1/23)  
Readings #2 (Smith) and #3 (Locke)

### III. Alternative Perspectives on the Growing Role of Government

A. Democracy (1/28)  
Readings #4 (Neiman) and #5 (Stimson)

B. Biased Pluralism and Hyper-Pluralism (1/30 and 2/4)  
Readings #6 (Lindblom) and #7 (Rauch)

C. Macro-Determinism (2/6 and 2/11)  
Readings #8 (Neiman), #9 (Greenberg), and #10 (Porter)

**[Take-home examination #1: distributed 2/11; study day, no class 2/13; exam due 2/18]**

### IV. Turning Points in the Transformation of the Federal Government

A. The Progressive Era (2/18 and 2/20)  
Readings # 11 (Allen) and #12 (Greenberg)  
Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle*

B. The Great Depression and the New Deal (2/25, 2/27, and 3/4)  
Readings #13 (Greenberg) and #14 (Kennedy)  
PBS films, “The Great Depression” (in class, 2/25 and 2/27)

**[Submit the topic of your research paper no later than March 4 ]**

C. World War II and the Cold War (3/6)  
Readings #15 (Kennedy) and #16 (Hodgson)

D. The Great Society (3/11)

Readings #17 (Polenberg), #18 (Califano), and #19 (Yergin)

- E. The Reagan Revolution (3/13 and 3/18)  
Readings #20 (Kuttner) and #21 (Edsall)

**[Take-home examination #2: distributed 3/18; study day, no class 3/20; exam due 4/1]**

**[Spring Break: 3/22-3/26....Don't ruin your fun!....Please finish your take-home exam before you leave for break]**

V. The Contemporary Debate Over the Role of Government

- A. Theoretical Disputes (4/1 and 4/3)  
Readings #22 (Arrow), #23 (Brookings), #24 (Solomon),  
and #25 (Gwartney)
- B. In-class, student-run debates on the role of government  
Tuesdays and Thursdays (4/8-4/29)  
Debate organization and topics TBA

**[Research papers due: 5/1, no later than 5:00 PM]**