

(AN ELECTION-BASED)

v

POLITICAL SCIENCE 1101-200: INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN GOVERNMENT FALL 2010

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Anand Edward Sokhey
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WHEN: M/W/F, 11-11:50 a.m.
WHERE: Duane (DUAN), G2B47
OFFICE HRS.: W 1:30-4:00 p.m.

COURSE OVERVIEW

In this introductory course, we will examine the basic components of American democracy, including institutions, political parties, and of course, the everyday citizen. However, as we find ourselves gearing up for another election season, we will examine all of these things through the lens of another American institution – the midterm election. Thinking about issues and developments as we move from the primaries into the fall, we will relate what we see to theories of politics and enduring debates over the meaning of representation.

We will begin by looking at the history and foundations of the American system, before moving on to the core of the course, in which we will examine the various connections between citizens and government. Specifically, we will study political participation, public opinion, voting behavior/elections, and the role of the media. Finally, after some reflection on the 2010 midterms, we will wrap up by learning about other governmental institutions, including Congress, the Bureaucracy, and the Judiciary.

COURSE GOALS

My basic objectives for this course are to provide you with:

1. an understanding of the structure of American government
2. an understanding of the role (and importance) of elections in the American political system
3. an understanding of political behavior, at both the individual and mass levels
4. the ability to synthesize material and apply concepts covered in class to contemporary politics
5. knowledge and skills that you will assist you as thoughtful members of a democratic society/the American electorate

REQUIRED TEXTS

Two books are required for this course, and both have been ordered at the CU Bookstore (though feel free to purchase either of them online). A copy of each has been placed on reserve at the library.

1. *America's New Democracy* (2009, 5th edition) by Morris Fiorina, Paul Peterson, Bertram Johnson, and William G. Mayer. New York: Longman (referred to as "F" hereafter)

2. *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America* (2009) by Morris Fiorina, with Samuel Abrams and Jeremy Pope. (referred to as "CW" hereafter)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Exam 1:	25%
Exam 2:	30%
Exam 3:	25%
Reaction Paper:	10%
Attendance:	10%

Attendance: Part of this course will be interactive lecture – meaning that I will ask you questions as we move through the material. Thus, it is crucial that you attend class regularly and make a special effort to be well-prepared, having read and thought about the readings in advance.

To encourage you to take coming to class seriously, attendance counts for 10% of your final grade. At the beginning of class I will pass around a sign-in sheet (**do not** sign-in for others – this violates the honor code). Everyone in the class gets six "freebies" (meaning that you get six *unexcused* absences). However, for every unexcused absence after six, you lose 1% of your final course grade, up to 10% off. To be fair to everyone, in order

for an absence to be excused I require prior notification via email (if at all possible) and documentation upon your return to campus (if applicable). That being said, I am a reasonable person and certainly understand that family/personal emergencies are rarely anticipated. If you need to miss class – and are not using one of your unexcused absences – please inform me of your circumstances as soon as possible. (I reserve the right to refuse particular excuses; please contact me if you have questions about what constitutes an excused absence.)

Exams: Three in-class, non-comprehensive “midterms” will be administered during the semester. While the exams are not be comprehensive in a traditional sense (i.e., in terms of asking about detailed information from previous parts of the course), they may ask you to connect the material covered at any given time to broader themes/ideas of the course. All exams will be comprised of multiple choice questions and/or short answer/essay questions on key terms and concepts. Material for each test will come from class lectures, discussions, and the assigned readings.

Reaction Paper: Attending class and studying for exams will help you master the course material. However, an equally important part of higher education is the development of skills that will help you think carefully and critically, and enable you to express yourself clearly, concisely, and cogently. Thus, 10% of your final grade comes from a writing assignment (10%).

The writing assignment will focus on the assigned book *Culture War?* Your assignment – in three to four pages – is to briefly summarize the book’s arguments (in your own words), and then to discuss it in light of the midterm elections and current political events. (More details on the assignment will be provided around the seventh week of the course; please see the course schedule for the tentative due date.)

Guidelines on the Paper: The paper is to be **no more** than three to four pages, 12 point font, double-spaced, with all references to course and other materials properly cited (an attached reference sheet will not count as going over the page limit). Please see or contact me *before* you turn in an assignment if you are unsure about how/when to cite something. Each paper will be graded based on substance, organization, and writing style (i.e., I will grade down for multiple spelling and grammatical errors). Substantively, I will be looking for evidence that you have truly engaged the material. Papers will be graded on a 10 point scale (see below for details).

Grading Policy: Papers

A (~9-10): An ‘A’ paper thoroughly covers the assigned reading. It presents a clear summary/synthesis, as well as appropriate evidence from class readings or other sources to support any opinions/comments/questions/arguments. Additionally, it is well-written, organized, and has proper documentation of sources.

B (~8-9): A ‘B’ paper is like a “sloppier” version of an A paper. For example, though it may get the general ideas right, the paper may need a bit of work in terms of organization. Likewise, poor writing in an otherwise solid effort may make for a B paper.

C (~7-8): A ‘C’ paper combines several serious problems, including disorganization and unsupported statements, a poor summary/synthesis, and poor writing.

D (~6-7): A ‘D’ paper will have fundamental problems involving organization, the summary/synthesis of material, the use of evidence to support opinions/arguments, and writing.

F (below 6): An ‘F’ paper is an extreme ‘D’ paper. Very poor writing (extensive spelling and grammatical mistakes), combined with a very poor summary/synthesis and minimal/no use of evidence to support comments/questions will result in a failing grade.

Grading Policy: Final Grades

Final grades will be based on the following:

A	94% and above	B	84-86%	C	74-76%	D	60-66%
A-	90-93%	B-	80-83%	C-	70-73%	E	59% and below
B+	87-89%	C+	77-79%	D+	67-69%		

Please note that I reserve the right – at my discretion – to “bump” a final grade if a student borders between two letter grades. Attendance, improvement, class participation and effort will go into such a decision, though again, such decisions are made solely at my discretion.

CULearn: Additional information will be posted on the course website (culearn.colorado.edu). Please check the website for updates to the class schedule, assignments, links to suggested readings, etc.

A Note on Participation in Class: Please be respectful of others (and their opinions) when participating in class discussions. Rude or inappropriate comments will not be tolerated.

Extra Credit: Extra Credit Opportunities *may* arise during the semester – stay tuned for details.

Excuses: I am a reasonable person, and will accept *legitimate* excuses for late work and the missing of in-class exams (note: I basically consider “legitimate” to be limited to family/personal emergencies and serious illnesses, though ask me if you questions about specific circumstances). To be fair to everyone, I require prior notification (if at all possible) via email for missed deadlines, and documentation upon your return to campus. (Again, acceptance of excuses is at my discretion.)

Disability: I am more than happy to make special arrangements for students with disabilities that have been documented through Disability Services (colorado.edu/disabilityservices). If you have a disability, please contact me within the first week of the term/as soon as possible – with proper documentation – so that I have sufficient time to make any necessary arrangements for you.

Religious Observance: In-line with campus policy, I will make every effort to reasonably accommodate students who have conflicts with scheduled exams because of religious obligations. Please note that requests for special accommodations need to be presented at least one week prior to scheduled exams/assignments. See http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html for full details.

Discrimination and Harassment: The University of Colorado at Boulder policy on Discrimination & Harassment, the CU policy on Sexual Harassment, and the CU policy on Amorous Relationships apply to all members of the university community. More information is available at: <http://www.colorado.edu/odh>.

Academic Honesty: Cheating on assignments (whether on papers, class exercises, exams, etc.) will not be tolerated, and can seriously damage (and even end) your college career. All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the Honor Code of the institution. All incidents of academic misconduct – this includes lying, as well as more conventional cases of cheating and plagiarism – will be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu).

COURSE PLAN AND ASSIGNED READINGS

Please note that the course reading, lecture, and exam schedule is *not* set in stone (except for the final exam date and time – Tuesday, December 14th, 7:30-10:00 p.m.) – I may add/drop/re-arrange the material based upon the pace and performance of the class.

PART I: THE CONSTITUTION AND AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

- Monday, August 23: Introduction to the Class. (no assigned reading)
- Wednesday, August 25: Introduction to politics and political science; F: Ch. 1
- Friday, August 27: The American Constitution; F: Ch. 2
- Monday, August 30: The American Constitution (cont.); begin Federalism; F: Ch. 3
- Wednesday, September 1: Federalism (cont.)
- Friday, September 3: No Class Meeting
- Monday, September 6: Labor Day – No Class Meeting
- Wednesday, September 8: Civil Liberties, F: Ch. 14
- Friday, September 10: Finish Civil Liberties, begin Civil Rights, F: Ch. 15
- Monday, September 13: Civil Rights (cont.)
- Wednesday, September 15: Catch Up Day/Review for Exam 1
- Friday, September 17: Exam 1
- Monday, September 20: Return Exam 1

PART 2: CITIZENS AND GOVERNMENT

- Wednesday, September 22: American Political Culture and Political Representation; F: Ch. 4
- Friday, September 24: Public Opinion—polling basics; F: Ch. 5

- Monday, September 27: Public Opinion (cont.)
- Wednesday, September 29: Public Opinion (cont.)
- Friday, October 1: Catch Up Day

- Monday, October 4: Media F: Ch. 6
- Wednesday, October 6: Media (cont.)
- Friday, October 8: Political Participation; F: Ch. 7

- Monday, October 11: Political Participation (cont.)
- Wednesday, October 13: National Elections; F: Ch. 8
- Friday, October 15: Party Politics; F: Ch. 9

- Monday, October 18: Party Politics (cont.)
- Wednesday, October 20: *Culture War?* Issues, Elections & the US political landscape; CW: preface(s) & Ch. 1-2
- Friday, October 22: *Culture War?* (cont.), Specific Issues; CW: Ch.3-5

- Monday, October 25: *Culture War?* (cont.), Specific Issues (cont.) ; CW: Ch.6-7
- Wednesday, October 27: *Culture War?* (cont.), 2008 and beyond; CW: Ch. 8-10 & epilogue
- Friday, October 29: Catch Up/Midterm Elections Discussion

- Monday, November 1: Midterm Elections Discussion
- Wednesday, November 3: Midterm Elections Wrap-Up/Discussion; Review for Exam 2
- Friday, November 5: Exam 2

- Monday, November 8: Return Exam 2

PART 3: AMERICAN INSTITUTIONS

- Wednesday, November 10: Legislative Politics; F: Ch. 10
- Friday, November 12: Legislative Politics (cont.)

- Monday, November 15: Presidential politics; F: Ch. 11
- Wednesday, November 17: Presidential politics (cont.)
- Friday, November 19: Bureaucratic Politics; F: Ch. 12 →→→Reaction Paper Due in class!!!

- Monday, November 22: No Class – Fall Break
- Wednesday, November 24: No Class – Fall Break
- Friday, November 26: No Class – Fall Break

- Monday, November 29: Bureaucratic Politics (cont.)
- Wednesday, December 1: Judicial Politics; F: Ch. 13
- Friday, December 3: Judicial Politics (cont.)

- Monday, December 6: Catch Up Day
- Wednesday, December 8: Course Wrap-up/Conclusion
- Friday, December 10: Review for final exam

Final Exam: Tuesday, December 14th, 7:30-10:00 p.m.