

Political Science 1101--Section 880

The American Political System

Spring 2009
LIBR M424A
Tuesday/Thursday 12:30-1:45

Dr. Lauri McNown
Ketchum 34, 303-492-3998
Tuesday/Thursday 10:30-12:00
mcnown@colorado.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION--The United States federal government operates under a Constitution that was written 222 years ago making it the oldest written Constitution in operation in the world. This course will take the Constitution not only as the starting point but as the foundation, and guidepost at every point along the way. But, as important as the Constitution is, the story and complexity of American politics develops from the interaction of political culture, competing groups, formal and informal institutions, the fragmentation and clashing of different interests, the accompanying economic system and the complex web of global politics.

The goal of this semester is to gain a sense and understanding of the "ecology" of the American Political System. So, while we will take the Constitution as the central point for our study of American Government our focus will be on not only what is in the document, particularly the theory of separation of powers and checks and balances, but what is not in the document as well. We will discover how the gaps have been filled and what gaps remain. We will be especially interested in the interaction among the branches and actors.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS--Students in this class will be required to demonstrate an awareness of political issues and concepts both from the academic and more general viewpoints. An integration of these viewpoints will be sought. Therefore, knowledge of current political events is expected. A synthesis of concepts presented in class and the real world examples will be sought. It is expected that students will follow news events closely and will be able to integrate knowledge of current events into their understanding of the processes of American government as the semester progresses.

Five papers will be assigned during the course of the semester. Specific guidelines on each paper will be given approximately one week before the due date. In general the papers will ask you to demonstrate a critical understanding of concepts presented in class as applied to contemporary events. Each paper will be three to four typed pages in length. You may (and indeed, you are encouraged) to re-write each paper once. The re-written paper will be due one week after the graded original is handed back. An average of the original and the rewritten grades will be used in the final calculation of the course grade. One paper of the five will be dropped in the final calculation.

In addition each student will investigate a current issue and write several short papers relating this issue to topics covered in class. Responses to reading will be required via e-mail.

One in-class midterm examination and a take-home final examination will also be given during the semester.

Therefore, the final grade in this class will be based on the midterm, the final, the papers and

"involvement" in the course. You will be expected to lead the discussion once during the semester. **Regular, on-time attendance, class participation, reading, and knowledge of current events are expected. Chronic deficiencies in these areas will affect the final grade.**

The final grade will be calculated as follows:

• Four Papers each worth 15%	= 60%
• Midterm	= 10
• Final	= 15
• Attendance, Participation,	
• Worksheets, Discussion questions,	= 10
• Short issue papers (project)	= 5
	<hr/>
	100%

BOOKS--There are three books to purchase for this class:

Patterson, Thomas E., *We the People: A Concise Introduction to American Politics*, eighth edition, 2009.

Ellis, Richard J. and Nelson, Michael, *Debating the Presidency: Conflicting Perspectives on the American Executive*, 2006.

Shafritz, Jay M. and Weinberg, Lee S., eds., *Classics in American Government*, 3rd edition, 2006.

In addition, a number of articles will be assigned during the semester.

OUT OF CLASS CONSULTATION--I enjoy talking to students and encourage you to talk to me before or after class. I also hope that you will make use of my office hours. If your schedule conflicts with these hours I will be happy to make other arrangements to meet with you.

COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK OF:	TOPIC	READING	ASSIGNMENTS (additional worksheets and short reaction papers may be added) EXAMS AND PAPERS
----------	-------	---------	---

Jan 13	American Political Culture	Patterson, Chapter One Shafritz and Weinberg, #3, 4	Assignment 1 of Project assigned on Jan 15
Jan 20	Constitutional Democracy	Patterson, Chapter Two Shafritz and Weinberg, #5, 6, 43	Assignment 1 of Project Due on Jan. 22 Paper #1 assigned on Jan. 22
Jan 27	Federalism	Patterson, Chapter Three Shafritz and Weinberg, #10, 11, 12, 13	Paper #1 due, in class, on Jan 29
Feb 3	Public Opinion and Political Socialization	Patterson, Chapter Six Shafritz and Weinberg, #27, 28, 29, 31	Assignment 2 of Project Due Feb 5
Feb 10	Political Participation and Voting	Patterson, Chapter Seven Shafritz and Weinberg, #40,41,42	Paper #2 assigned on Feb 12
Feb 17	Political Parties, Candidates and Campaigns	Patterson, Chapter Eight Shafritz and Weinberg, # 33, 34, 36, 37 Ellis and Nelson, ch. 2, ch. 3	Paper #2 due, in class, on Feb 19
Feb 24	Interest Groups	Patterson, Chapter Nine Shafritz and Weinberg, #43, 44, 45, 46	Assignment 3 of Project Due Feb 26
March 3	The Media	Patterson, Chapter Ten Shafritz and Weinberg, #48,49,50 Ellis and Nelson, ch. 5	Midterm exam, in class, March 5 Paper #3 assigned on March 5

March 10	Congress	Patterson, Chapter Eleven Shafritz and Weinberg, #51, 52, 53, 54, Ellis and Nelson, ch. 6, ch. 7	Paper #3 due, in class, on March 12
March 17	The Presidency	Patterson, Chapter Twelve Shafritz and Weinberg, #55, 56, 57, 58, 59 Ellis and Nelson, ch. 1, 10	Assignment 4 of Project Due March 19
March 24			Spring Break

March 31	The Presidency, continued	Shafritz and Weinberg. #61, 62 Ellis and Nelson, ch. 4	Paper #4 assigned on April 2
April 7	The Judiciary	Patterson, Chapter Fourteen Shafritz and Weinberg, #63, review 64 & 66, 67 Ellis and Nelson, ch. 8	Paper #4 due, in class, on April 9
April 14	Civil Liberties	Patterson, Chapter Four Shafritz and Weinberg, #14, 15, 16, 19, 20, 22	Assignment 5 of Project Due April 16 Paper #5 assigned on April 16
April 21	Equal Rights	Patterson, Chapter Five Shafritz and Weinberg, #24, 25	Paper #5 due, in class, April 23
April 28	Wrap-up. Reports on semester long issues.		

2

The take-home final exam will be due at the published time of the final exam, Tuesday, May 5, 4:30 pm.

Administrative Information

1. If you qualify for **accommodations because of a disability**, please submit a letter to me from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs may be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Contact: 303-492-8671, Willard 322, or www.Colorado.EDU/disabilityservices
2. Campus policy regarding **religious observances** requires that faculty make every effort to reasonably and fairly deal with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. Please inform me of any potential conflicts with the requirements of the class. See policy details at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html
3. Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Students who fail to adhere to **behavioral standards** may be subject to discipline. Faculty have the professional responsibility to treat students with understanding, dignity and respect, to guide classroom discussion and to set reasonable limits on the manner in which students express opinions. See policies at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html> and at http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code
4. All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the **academic integrity policy** of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu; 303-725-2273). Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). Additional information on the Honor Code can be found at

<http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html> and at <http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode>

