Description

Introduction to the study of politics, focusing on American national government. Our review will cover a wide range of subjects, from the politics of the American founding, the struggle for equal rights, political institutions, civic and political organizations, to U.S. foreign policy.

Objectives

The goals of the course are to enable students to understand how the American political system works, to evaluate the workings of the system, and to explore the practical expressions of the concepts of citizenship and power. As a social science and U.S. history course in the General Education program, it has the following learning objectives: to enable the understanding that human conduct and behavior are subject to scientific inquiry; to enable the understanding of the difference between rigorous and systematic thinking and uncritical thinking about social phenomena; to enable an understanding of the kinds of questions social scientists ask and the ways they go about answering these questions; to enable knowledge of the major concepts, models, and issues in political science; to enable students in the acquisition of knowledge of substance and methods for comprehending the historical narratives or themes presented throughout the semester; and to enable students in the acquisition of knowledge of common institutions in American society and how they have affected different groups.

Required Text


Grades

Grades for the course are on an A-E basis, but the course can be taken on an S-U basis. Grades will be based on:
1. your attendance and participation in the discussion sections;
2. eleven quizzes;
3. a short essay on a topic covered in *The First Year, Obama in the Oval Office*, due by the mid-term point;
4. a cumulative final exam.

In your discussion section, there will three group debates and you will write two short essays (2-3 pages, typed, double-space) that will **recount and comment** on the major arguments in these debates. This will be part of the attendance and participation requirement. Your discussion section instructors will choose the debate topics and readings. These readings will be in addition to the textbook. Specific instructions will be provided by the section instructors.

Also as part of the attendance and participation requirement, you must complete three library tutorials on how to do research, how to evaluate Internet sources, and how to avoid plagiarism. The tutorials are available online and you must complete them on or before February 4th. To complete the tutorials follow this link: [http://library.albany.edu/usered/tutorials.html](http://library.albany.edu/usered/tutorials.html) Make sure that you click on the "credit" link when you take them. At the end of each "credit" tutorial, you will be asked to fill out a form. Without filling the form you cannot receive credit for the tutorial.

Quizzes will be unannounced. Each will be worth 10 points. The quizzes will evaluate your understanding of boldface terms in the text as well as of key points made during my lectures. Use the “Flashcards” button for each chapter available at [http://republic.cqpress.com](http://republic.cqpress.com) to review the book’s key terms. You can also take the online quizzes as part of your preparation. Close attention, good note-taking, and systematic review of your notes will increase the likelihood of a good performance on your part. Your grade will be calculated on the basis of a 100 point score, using the following scale:

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<th>Score</th>
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<td>94-90</td>
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<td>74-71</td>
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The short essay should be between 3-5 pages, typed, double-space. Your section instructor will give you a selection of topics to choose from The First Year, Obama in the Oval Office and you will write a critique based on your own research. You will essentially produce a critical reaction to the author’s approach, argument, evidence, analysis, and/or interpretation of the chosen topic. You can use the section “Consider the Source” on pp. 24-25 in the textbook as your how-to-guide to writing the essay. A rubric for the evaluation of the essay, which will also help you write it, will be provided on Blackboard.

The cumulative final exam will comprise a selection of questions based on the lectures and from the practice quizzes at the end of chapters 1-10, 12-14, 16, 19. Taking the online quizzes will also help you prepare for the final exam. The questions in the final exam will be written as a combination of multiple choice, short-answer, fill-in-the-blank, and true or false. The exam will also be graded on the basis of a 100 point score using the scale noted above. Lecture notes will not be posted on Blackboard. In addition to reading carefully and knowing the answers to the questions in the textbook, you will need to pay attention during lectures and take good notes in order to do well in the final exam. Through emphasis and repetition I will help you sort out what is particularly important and therefore may be included in the final. There will be no plenary review session or study guide prior to the final.

Your grade for the course will be computed as follows:

Attendance and participation – 20%
  Attendance to discussion section – 20%
  Participation in section discussions and debates – 30%
  Debate reports – 40%
  Library tutorials – 10%
Quizzes – 30%
Short Essay – 20%
Final exam – 30%

Students are reminded that all work handed in must be their own. Cheating on the exam or plagiarism will be severely punished. Please note that ignorance of what constitutes plagiarism is not a valid excuse for this academic violation. You cannot pass the course unless you attend your discussion section! All assignments must be completed before you can receive a grade for the course.
Office Hours

Mondays and Wednesdays from 11:00 am – 12:30 pm in the political science contact office, located in Humanities B16. If this schedule does not work for you, I am also available at a mutually convenient day and time by appointment.

Your teaching assistant’s office hours will be announced in your discussion section.

My e-mail is conga@albany.edu. I will use Blackboard mail to communicate with the class as a whole but to reply to my messages or to reach me by e-mail you cannot use Blackboard mail. You must use webmail or the application of your choice.

Course Outline

January
20-22 Introduction
25-27 – What is Politics?
29 – Citizenship and Political Culture

February
1 – Citizenship and Political Culture, cont.
3-5 The Founding Library tutorials due by Feb. 4.
8-10 Federalism
12 – American Liberties
15 – NO CLASS.
17 – American Liberties, cont.
19-22 Equal Rights
24-26 Congress

March
1-3 The Presidency
5-8 The Bureaucracy Mid-term point. Short essay due March 8.
10-12 The Judiciary
15-17 Public Opinion
19-22 Political Parties
24-26 Interest Groups
29 to April 5 – Spring Break

April
7-9 The Electoral Process
12-14 The Media
16-19 State and Local Politics
21-23 Social and Environmental Policy
26-28 Economic Policy
30 – Foreign Policy

**May**
3 – Foreign Policy, cont. Last day of class.
7 – Final exam, LC 7, 3:30-5:30pm.

NOTE: This syllabus is a blueprint, not a legal contract and should not be construed as such. While its content is binding, I reserve the right to modify its terms as needed during the course of the semester. Any changes will be effective immediately after due notification in class and on Blackboard.