

Political Science 200
Introduction to American Politics

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Course Description and Goals:

An understanding of the American system of government is essential to the development and the protection of our citizenship. This understanding includes knowledge of where we came from, where we are, and how we got here. Therefore, we will be investigating important documents in the development of the American republic as well as examining the fabric of the modern system. Through this analysis we will attain appreciation of the progression of American government.

The first portion of this class will focus solely on the facts of American government. Things like the workings of Congress, the relationship of the branches of the federal government and the nature of the electoral process will be covered in this section. This will be used as a preparatory method for the second section of the course, which will come after the mid-term exam.

The second section of the course will be different. While we will still be involved in learning the workings of the American political system, the concepts themselves will be more open to interpretation. This will, hopefully, engender more discussion and friendly debate within the class setting.

Required Books:

Bardes, Barbara, Mack Shelley and Steffen Schmidt, *American Government and Politics Today: The Essentials*, 2008 edition. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2009.

Hamilton, Alexander, James Madison, and John Jay, *The Federalist Papers*, edited by Clinton Rossiter, with an introduction and notes by Charles Kesler. New York, NY: Mentor Books, 1999.

These books are available at the bookstore. Earlier versions are available in various places but, as politics is a constantly changing creature, there have been changes. You purchase earlier editions at your own risk.

Grading Standards:

This course will be graded on a 200-point scale. Grades will be determined by dividing the number of points received by 2, and then applying it to the standard A-F scale, as outlined below.

A+	198-200 points	C	144-155 points
A	184-197 points	C-	140-143 points
A-	180-182 points	D+	136-139 points
B+	176-179 points	D	124-135 points
B	164-175 points	D-	120-123 points
B-	160-163 points	F	119 and less
C+	156-159 points		

Point Breakdown:

First exam	20 points
Second exam	60 points
Final exam	80 points
Thought papers (10 papers, 1 page each)	40 points (4 points each)

Exams:

The exams for this course will be comprehensive. As such, they will cover all the material from the beginning of the class (the first will cover the first portion of the class, the second all the material from the first exam as well as the new material, while the final will cover everything). They will consist of multiple choice and short-answer/essay questions. The first exam will be graded and handed back to you before the last date to drop without a grade so that you can be a bit more informed as to your performance in the class for the consideration of that decision. Likewise, the second exam is scheduled in such a way that you should have it back in time to withdraw from the class without permission of the dean.

Arriving late for an exam is highly discouraged, as the exams will likely take much of the period to complete. Those arriving after the first person to complete the test leaves will not be allowed to take the exam.

Thought papers:

At the risk of sounding too simplistic, these short papers will cover the material. They will be due at the beginning of the first class for which the reading material was assigned. You are limited to one typed page (while I can read small text, please don't make it so small as to be illegible). Anything more than one page *will not be read*. Each paper must cover one assigned reading, whether it is a Federalist Paper or a chapter in the text for the class. You will be graded on ten papers. At least three of the thought papers for the class must be done over a Federalist Paper. The remaining seven may be chosen at your discretion. Note that there are more than ten readings during the semester. This assignment is designed so that, if you miss points on early thought papers, you can make up those assignments by doing additional papers later. Only the ten highest grades will count towards the final total. Keep in mind that the semester's readings are heavy in the

beginning and then taper off later. Conceivably, a highly motivated student could be completely done with their thought papers for the entire semester before the first exam. On the other hand, however, if you wait until after the second exam to begin, there will not be enough remaining assignments to finish all ten (not to mention the fact that there are no Federalist Papers assigned after that point in the semester).

A good portion of the paper will necessarily be summary of the piece you have chosen to write on. However, I would like to see about a quarter to a third of it be your thoughts about the assigned reading in question. Do you think the authors are off in their thoughts? If they aren't right, how are they wrong? If they are right, what is good about their argument? The goal is to demonstrate that you have engaged the material in this way. (Simple criticism isn't the only way to engage the material, just so you know).

Because this sort of reading is something that is learned, I will be grading these in a particular way. The measure will be a 0-to-4 scale. It will be a measure of two separate standards: the summary portion and the critical thinking portion. Each can receive 0, 1, or 2 points. Zero points means that the summary or critical thinking was not there or completely missed the subject. One point indicates the attempt to summarize or to critically engage the material was there, but was still lacking in some way. Two points are an adequate summary or engagement. When any points are missed, I will make sure to add comments to point you in the right direction for future papers.

The last part of this section is a comment on the length. There are two reasons for the one page limit on the length of the paper. The first is that I want to have time to get these back to you in class the next week. The second is to help you practice writing in a succinct style; that ability will stand you in good stead not only on the exams in this class but in your further studies, whether at the University or in the private sector.

General Course Policies:

- Deadlines and Late work: Assigned written work is due in class on the date indicated on the syllabus. This is true, regardless of any potential absence on that date. If you know you are going to be away when an assignment comes due, turn it in *before* you leave. I will automatically deduct 25% from your grade for each day it is late (starting 10 minutes after class ends) unless I have valid documentation of a serious illness or emergency. Assignments turned in four days or more after the due date will receive a score of zero.
- Books: The books listed above are required. Earlier editions, especially of the Barden text, are outdated and should only be used with a strong dose of care and discussion with me personally. The Federalist Papers are fairly universal, but if you don't buy the same edition as the class, you will have difficulties when we go over the text in class with everyone else.
- Make-up work: I only allow make-up exams if I am notified prior to the scheduled exam and am provided appropriate documentation from an official who verifies the absence: a doctor, university or intercollegiate athletic official, etc. The absence must have been unavoidable because of a compelling reason (e.g., a medical emergency). If you have questions on who is an appropriate authority to verify an absence, please see me. Be aware: makeup exams may be more difficult and certainly will not be the

same as the actual exam. The final exam can not be made up. Daily thought papers, as there is more than enough room to make these up by simply doing the assignment on alternate days, also cannot be made up.

- Cell-Phones: While I would prefer that students not bring cell phones to class at all, I do recognize the need in some cases (examples might include a student with a spouse who is expecting or someone who is a medical professional and on-call). However, ringers (*or even cell phones with loud vibrate settings*) going off at random during class will not be tolerated. As a rule of thumb, ask yourself whether or not I will be able to hear it at the front of the class during the lecture. Please do not have your phone on during class. If you have an appropriate need, please discuss this with me before the cell phone goes off. If not, I will assume that the call is for me and answer the cell phone appropriately. If it rings in any way during an exam, you will be asked to turn in the exam on the spot.
- Academic Dishonesty: It is unfortunate that this needs to be mentioned, however, please note that cheating or plagiarism will not be tolerated; either activity will result in a mark of zero for the assignment and/or failure of the course for all parties involved. I take this very seriously. All work is expected to be your own. Copying, borrowing or even paraphrasing text without using quotation marks and appropriately crediting the source is plagiarism. This includes sources on the Internet. If you have questions about this, come talk to me personally.
- Incomplete grades: Incomplete grades (I) will only be assigned if a student has passed the first half of the course (e.g., with a grade of C- or better after the mid-term exam). In addition, the student must provide me with thorough and appropriate documentation of an extraordinary and substantial illness or emergency that precludes successfully completing the course. If the emergency occurs prior to completing the second exam, the student should withdraw rather than seek an incomplete grade.
- Dropping: While given the right to do so by University policy, I **do not** drop students from the roll. Such decisions are solely at the student's discretion. If you wish to drop this class, make sure to do so properly. Simply failing to come to class does not constitute dropping this course.
- Extra credit: Extra-credit assignments, at my discretion, *may* be offered during the semester. However, no opportunities to revise and turn in work again will be offered. Please keep track of your performance as the semester goes on and seek help if necessary before it is too late. There is *absolutely no guarantee* of extra credit opportunities.
- Students with Disabilities: Qualified students with disabilities needing appropriate academic adjustments should contact me personally as soon as possible to ensure your needs are met in a timely manner. Handouts will be available in alternative formats upon request.

Class Schedule: Assignments and Assigned Readings

- 1-19 Pass out and review Syllabus
- 1-21 Congress
Bardes, et al. Chapter 10
Federalist Papers, numbers 52, 57, 62-3.
- 1-26 Congress continued
- 1-28 Courts
Bardes, et al. Chapter 13.
Federalist Papers, numbers 78, 81, 83
- 2-2 Courts continued
- 2-4 President
Bardes, et al. Chapter 11
Federalist Papers, numbers 68, 69, 70, 74
- 2-9 President continued
- 2-11 Review
- 2-16 Exam 1
- 2-18 Constitution
Bardes et al. Chapter 2
Federalist Papers, numbers 10, 15, 30, 37, 51
- 3-23 Constitution continued
- 3-25 Constitution continued
- 3-2 Federalism
Bardes, et al. Chapter 3
- 3-4 Federalism continued
- 3-9 Political Parties
Bardes, et al. Chapter 8
- 3-11 Political Parties continued
- 3-16 – Spring Break
- 3-18 – Spring Break
- 3-23 Interest Groups
Bardes, et al. Chapter 7
- 3-25 Interest Groups continued
- 3-30 Public Opinions and Behavior
Bardes, et al. Chapter 6
- 4-1 Public Opinions and Behavior continued

- 4-6 Elections
Bardes, et al. Chapter 9
- 4-8 Elections continued

- 4-13 Review
- 4-15 Exam 2

- 4-20 Civil Rights and Liberties
Bardes, et al. Chapters 4 and 5
- 4-22 Civil Rights and Liberties continued

- 4-27 Domestic Policy
Bardes, et al. Chapter 14
- 4-29 Domestic Policy continued

- 5-4 Foreign Policy
Bardes, et al. Chapter 15
- 5-6 Foreign Policy continued

Final Exam: Thursday, May 12, 1000-1200,
regular classroom.

Important University dates:

- Martin Luther King Holiday – 1/18
- Last day to add/change courses – 1/29
- Last day to drop without a grade – 2/5
- Last day to change grading options – 2/12
- Spring Break – 3/14 – 3/21
- Last day to withdraw without approval of dean – 4/16
- Last day to withdraw with approval of dean – 5/7
- Finals Week – 5/10 – 5/15
- Last day to remove an incomplete grade – 5/14
- Spring Commencement – 5/16