

Introduction to American Government and Politics

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	By appointment	

Class	Day	Time	Room	Instructor
Lecture	T/R	10:00-10:50	AG 0102	Professor McClurg
Secton 07	R	4:00-4:50	AG 0170	Jeremy Phillips
Secton 08	R	12:00-12:50	AG 0116	Jeremy Phillips
Secton 09	R	2:00-2:50	FANER 2525	Jeremy Phillips
Secton 10	R	3:00-3:50	WHAM 0205	Jeremy Phillips

1 Course Description

This course is a college level introduction to American government. Students will begin to develop the body of knowledge necessary for informed civic participation. More specifically, students will learn about democratic principles, the structure and institutions of government, and the role that ethnicity, race, gender, class, culture and the economy play in shaping the political landscape in America.

By the end of the course students will understand:

1. what the fundamental characteristics of American government are and how the U.S. Constitution affects the organization of government, the relationship between national and state governments, and the relationship between government and citizens.
2. human political behavior as it is expressed individually, collectively, and in groups.
3. how the executive, legislative and judicial branches are organized and the role they play in the policy-making process.
4. how to effectively use this knowledge as thoughtful citizens participating in civil society.

2 Course Requirements and Graded Evaluation

2.1 Exams

There will be three exams in this class. The two midterm exams are worth 150 points each and will cover distinct units identified on the course schedule. The final exam will be comprehensive and is worth 250 points. Every exam will have two parts – a set of multiple-choice questions and an essay. The multiple choice portion of the exam will be administered to the entire class. The essays will be provided to the class

at the beginning of exam week and will be written in your discussion section meeting for that week. For the final exam, you will write the essay at the very last discussion section meeting (week of December 1).

2.2 Discussion Section Participation

One-third of your class time will be spent in a discussion section, where you will be expected to actively participate in a discussion activity that illustrates important political concepts, addresses material from the course, or covers contemporary political events. This portion of your course grade is worth 150 points. One half will be based on participation, while the other half will be based on the teaching assistant's evaluation of the quality of that participation. Be forewarned—if you do not attend section frequently, both parts of your discussion section grade will suffer. A discussion section schedule will be distributed in class.

2.3 Short Paper

You will be required to write a 3-4 page paper on the following question: what role did young voters play in the 2008 election? Good answers to this question require familiarity with the 2008 presidential election, assigned reading material from the Wattenberg text (see below), and clear thinking. A more specific assignment sheet will be handed out at a later date. This portion of your grade is worth 100 points.

2.4 Quizzes, Attendance, and Participation

Learning is an active exercise. Students at all levels of learning and accomplishment benefit when they become actively engaged in class. I will assess your attendance and participation through weekly quizzes, worth a total of 200 points. One hundred of these points are based purely on showing up and taking the quiz; the other half will be based on your cumulative quiz score.

2.5 Assignment Schedule

First Midterm	150 points	<i>Week of September 22</i>
Second Midterm	150 points	<i>Week of October 27</i>
Final Exam, Essay	50 points	<i>Week of December 8</i>
Final Exam, Multiple Choice	200 points	<i>December 13, 10:10 - 12:10</i>
Discussion Section Participation	150 points	<i>Weekly</i>
Short Paper	100 points	<i>Week of November 5</i>
Lecture Attendance	100 points	<i>Weekly</i>
Reading Quizzes	100 points	<i>Weekly</i>

2.6 Grading Scale

Grades are distributed on the basis of the following scale:

1000 to 900	A
899 to 800	B
799 to 700	C
699 to 600	D
Below 600	F

3 Class Policies

3.1 Absences

You are expected to attend every lecture and discussion session. Students arriving after attendance is taken will be considered absent for the day. If you must miss class for some reason, you can receive an excused

absence by contacting me **IN ADVANCE**. I reserve the right to see documentation for your absence or to decide what constitutes a reasonable excuse. If you miss class, you are responsible for finding out what you missed.

3.2 Missed Assignments

All assignments are due at the start of class on the date assigned unless the instructor indicates otherwise. Any assignment not turned in on time will lose half a letter grade for each day it is late. Any assignment that is more than 48 hours late will not be accepted. See “Problems and Emergencies” for the only exceptions to this policy.

3.3 Makeup Exams

There will be no make-up exams. If you miss an exam, you will receive a zero. If you are late to an exam, you must take it in the time that is remaining when you arrive. See “Problems and Emergencies” for the only exceptions to this rule. Any student who is legitimately excused from the exam will write a ten page research paper in lieu of taking a make-up exam.

3.4 Cheating and Academic Misconduct

Any student engaging in academic misconduct will receive an **F** in the course and will be reported to the Dean for further disciplinary action outlined in the *University Code of Student Conduct*. If you have any questions about what constitutes cheating, academic misconduct, or plagiarism, examine the university policy and/or ask the instructor prior to turning in any assignment. It is **YOUR** responsibility to familiarize yourself with university policy.

3.5 Problems and Emergencies

If a problem or emergency arises that prevents you from attending an exam, turning in a paper, or coming to class, you should contact Professor McClurg as soon as possible. The best way to contact me is via email (mcclurg@siu.edu). If you do not hear back from me within a reasonable amount of time, you may call me at home. Students contacting me **PRIOR** to missing an assignment receive greater leniency from the instructor. Examples of excuses that have **NOT** been accepted in the past include the following: oversleeping, taking too much medication, being incarcerated, or having a cold. You are welcome to clarify what constitutes an acceptable excuse with me at any point in the semester.

3.6 Grading Policies & Standards

Graded material is returned as promptly as possible. When students receive an exam or assignment back and are dissatisfied with their grade, they must wait at least two days until asking the instructor to review the grade. If a student wants a re-grade, s/he must submit a single-spaced, one paragraph note explaining why the original grade is inappropriate. All assignments submitted for a re-grade can go up or down.

3.7 Disability Policy

It is the policy of this university and this professor to help disabled individuals succeed in the classroom. The student is responsible for notifying the professor and the university of any special problems or needs as soon as possible. The professor and university are responsible for doing whatever they can within university policy to accommodate that student. It is in your best interest to notify the professor and university **immediately** so that arrangements can be made as soon as possible. For more information, please contact Kathleen Plesko at Disabled Student Services or go to the DSS homepage.

<http://www.siu.edu/~dss>

3.8 Contacting the Instructor

I am happy to help students however I can. If you have any questions, send it to me in an email and I will reply as soon as possible, usually within 24 hours. If your question requires a lengthy explanation, please come to my office during office hours or make an appointment. When contacting me, it is important to be professional, meaning written communication must be properly addressed and follow common rules of English grammar. If an email or note to the professor does not meet the following criteria, it will be ignored.

1. It respectfully addresses the professor.
2. It identifies the student and class.
3. It has capital letters, periods, and uses good grammar in appropriate spots.
4. It includes information on how the professor can get back to the student with an answer.

3.9 Appropriate Classroom Behavior

I reserve the right to end class if students are being disruptive. Examples of disruptive behavior include holding conversations unrelated to the course material, sleeping, reading the newspaper, doing homework, and similar activities. If I end the class, I will NOT go over the material scheduled for class that day, but you will STILL be responsible for it on the exam.

3.10 Policy Acknowledgment

To be eligible for a grade in this class, the last page of the syllabus must be read, signed, and turned in to the instructor or a teaching assistant. You will not receive any credit in the course until this form has been turned in. (That means, for example, that if you turn it in after your first midterm, then your score on the midterm is a zero.) A word to the wise - students who do not turn this form in immediately are unlikely to remember later on, so get it done!

4 Following Political Developments in the Media

The study of American politics cannot be divorced from current events. I strongly recommend that you regularly monitor politics in the national media. Along with any local papers you read, I recommend that you peruse the following newspapers: *The New York Times* or *The Washington Post*. Each of these papers has national print editions available through the bookstore, as well as free online content. Additionally, you may want to examine news magazines for more in-depth coverage of particular issues and events. *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report* and *The National Journal* are two particularly informative periodicals. Other options include *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *The Economist*. I will post a set of helpful links on the course webpage as well to facilitate your ability to keep abreast of current affairs.

5 Textbooks

The reading assignments are chosen to build upon the analytic foundation laid in class. In other words, I will not simply repeat what is in your text, so you should make sure to stay current with the reading assignments. If you have any difficulty obtaining the assigned books, please notify me as soon as possible. Unfortunately, I cannot place copies on reserve at the library due to copyright laws and do not have enough to distribute to students who are unable to purchase them.

- Bianco, William T. and David T. Cannon. *American Politics Today*. Core Edition. New York: Norton, 2009.
- Wattenberg, Martin P. *Is Voting for Young People?* New York: Pearson Longman, 2007.

6 Course Schedule & Reading Assignments

6.1 History and Framework of American Government

Learning Objectives

- Students will learn the fundamental characteristics of democracy.
- Students will learn how the Constitution affects the organization of government, the relationship between national and state governments, and the relationship between government and citizens.
- Students will learn the fundamental political principles underlying the U.S. Constitution.

Topics and Reading Assignments

August 25. Introduction to the class.

August 27. Introduction to politics and political science.
Bianco and Cannon, Chapter 1

September 1. The U.S. Constitution.
Bianco and Cannon, Chapter 2

September 3. No Class - American Political Science Association Annual Meeting

September 8. Separation of powers.
Bianco and Cannon, pages A1-A2, A6-A11

September 10. Federalism
Bianco and Cannon, Chapter 3

September 15. Civil liberties.
Bianco and Cannon, Chapter 4

September 17. Civil rights.
Bianco and Cannon, Chapter 14

September 22. First Midterm.

6.2 Mass Politics: Citizens and Linkages to their Government

Learning Objectives

- Students will learn the ways in which citizens participate in public affairs.
- Students will learn how each of these linkages fits into the governing process.
- Students will learn how cultural, economic, and social factors influence political participation.

Topics and Reading Assignments

September 24. Public opinion.
Bianco and Cannon, Chapter 5.

September 29. Public opinion.

October 1. Voting and participation.
Bianco and Cannon, Chapter 8.

October 6. Campaigns and elections.

October 8. The media.
Bianco and Cannon, Chapter 6.

October 13. Party politics.
Bianco and Cannon, Chapter 7.

October 15. Party politics.

October 20. Interest group politics.
Bianco and Cannon, Chapter 9.

October 22. Interest group politics.

October 27. Second Midterm.

6.3 American Governing Institutions

Learning Objectives

- Students will learn how the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government are organized, what responsibilities they have and what roles they play in the policy making process.
- Students will learn how the branches of government interact with the general public.

Topics and Reading Assignments

October 29. Legislative politics.

November 3. Legislative politics.
Bianco and Cannon, Chapter 10.

November 5. Legislative politics.

November 10. Presidential politics.
Bianco and Cannon, Chapter 11.

November 12. Presidential politics.

November 17. Presidential politics.

November 19. Bureaucratic politics.
Bianco and Cannon, Chapter 12.

November 24. No Class - Thanksgiving Break.

November 26. No Class - Thanksgiving Break.

December 1. Judicial politics.
Bianco and Cannon, Chapter 13.

December 3. Judicial politics.

December 8. Politics at work - contemporary examples.

December 10. Class Wrap-up.

Policy Acknowledgment

I, _____ (print your name), acknowledge that I have read and understand the following information about Political Science 114 “Introduction to American Government and Politics” with Professor McClurg. I understand that this information and these policies apply to me in the context of this course. I also understand that this syllabus represents a plan for the semester and that the instructor reserves the right to change the requirements, policies, and schedule of topics for the course as deemed necessary for instructional purposes.

- ___ Instructor Office Hours
- ___ Instructor Emails
- ___ Course Webpage
- ___ Course Requirements
- ___ Attendance Policy
- ___ Missed Assignment Policy
- ___ Make-Up Exam Policy
- ___ Problems / Emergency Policy
- ___ Grading Policy Standards
- ___ Disability Policy
- ___ Contacting the Instructor Policy
- ___ Reading Assignments
- ___ Classroom Behavior Policy

_____ (signature and date)