



Southern
Illinois University
Carbondale

Department of Political Science

**POLS 114: Introduction to American Government and Politics
Spring Semester 2009**

Professor: Ken Mulligan, Ph.D.
E-mail: kmulliga@siu.edu
Office: 3171 Faner Hall
Office Hours: Mon. 9 to 11 am, Tues. and Thurs. from 2 to 4 pm, and by appt.

Teaching Assistant: Ryan Burge, Doctoral Candidate
E-mail: rburge@siu.edu
Office: 3181 Faner Hall
Office Hours: Wed. 10 am to 12 pm, Thurs. 3 to 5 pm, and by appt.

Access Slides & Assignments via Blackboard: <https://mycourses.siu.edu>

<u>Class</u>	<u>Instructor</u>	<u>Day</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Room</u>
Lecture	Mulligan	Tues./Thurs.	1:00 – 1:50 pm	Wham! 0105
Discussion Sect. 001	Burge	Thurs.	11:00 – 1150 am	AG 0168
Discussion Sect. 002	Burge	Thurs.	3:00 – 3:50 pm	EGRA 0320
Discussion Sect. 003	Burge	Thurs.	2:00 – 2:50 pm	AG 0116
Discussion Sect. 004	Burge	Thurs.	12:00 – 12:50 pm	AG 0168

Course Description

This course provides an introduction to American government and politics at the national level. We will discuss the founding and institutions of the American government, the Constitution, civil liberties, civil rights, and political behavior including voting, elections, public opinion, and the media. We will discuss current affairs and political issues, such as the recent economic collapse and budget crisis facing the federal and state governments, with the intention of applying what we are learning about U.S. government and politics to contemporary issues and events.

Required Reading

The course requires one book and selected readings. The book has been ordered from the SIU bookstore and 710 bookstore.

James Q. Wilson. 2009. *American Government, Brief Version*, 9th edition. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.



Other readings are available online as indicated on the electronic version of this syllabus or provided in your discussion section. *Students are responsible for making themselves aware of these readings, obtaining them, and reading them prior to the class in which they are discussed.*

Course Requirements and Grading

Overview

- First Exam 20% of overall grade
- Second Exam 20% of overall grade
- Third Exam 20% of overall grade
- 3 Best Quizzes 15% of overall grade (5% per quiz)
- Two Response Papers 15% of overall grade (7.5% per paper)
- Informed Participation 8% of overall grade
- Research Requirement 2% of overall grade
- Total 100%

Exams

Exam #1. 20% of final grade. The first exam will be held on Thursday, February 12. It will cover all the material from lectures, class discussions, and reading up to the day of the exam. The emphasis of the exam will be on material covered in the lectures and the main textbook. There may be questions from the discussion sections, including the reading from those sections. (Please see below for the policy on missed exams and arriving late to exams)

Exam #2. 20% of final grade. The second exam will be held on Thursday, March 26. It will cover all the material from lectures, class discussions, and reading since the first exam. (Please see below for the policy on missed exams and arriving late to exams)

Exam #3. 20% of final grade. The third (final) exam will be held at the day and time allotted by the registrar, which is Tuesday, May 5, from 12:00 to 1:50 p.m. in our regular lecture meeting place. It will cover all the material from lectures, class discussions, and reading since the second exam. (Please see below for the policy on missed exams and arriving late to exams)

Please see below for the policy on missed exams, missed quizzes, missed assignments, and late assignments.

Follow Current Events

In this class we will discuss current events including, but not limited to, the presidential election campaign. Students are required to follow current governmental, political, social, and cultural issues and events by reading a national newspaper every day. Recommended newspapers include the *New York Times* (www.nytimes.com), the *Washington Post* (www.washingtonpost.com), and the *Los Angeles Times* (www.latimes.com). Students can read each of these online for free. Students can also get a print copy of the *NYT* delivered to their door every morning for more than 50% off the cover price. Current events widely



covered in the news media may be included on quizzes (see below) and may also be on exams.

Top 3 Quizzes *15% of overall grade (5% per quiz)*

Five quizzes will be administered in discussion sections over the course of the semester at the discretion of the teaching assistant. The material covered in quizzes will vary and include material from the discussion readings and current events (see above). In some cases, quizzes may be unannounced, where students are not informed about the timing of the quiz ahead of time. Each student's three best quiz scores will be incorporated into their final overall grade in the course. Missed quizzes will receive a failing grade. In the case of an excused absence from a quiz, grading of quizzes will be at the discretion of the teaching assistant and professor in communication with the student. (Please see below for the policy on missed exams, missed quizzes, missed assignments, and late assignments)

Two Response Papers *15% of overall grade (7.5% per paper)*

Each student is responsible for signing up for and writing two short papers, each of which summarizes and critiques a reading assigned to a particular day of the discussion section. Details on these response papers will be provided early in the semester. Where a student has a response paper due on a specific day, a paper copy of the assignment (stapled in the top left corner) must be available to give to the teaching assistant in class at the beginning of the class. Otherwise it is considered late. (Please see below for the policy on missed exams, missed quizzes, missed assignments, and late assignments) There will be an outline on Blackboard indicating how these response papers should be written and this will also be reviewed during the first week of discussion section.

Informed Participation *8% of overall grade*

This class meets three times per week – twice in lecture and once for discussion. For students who miss a lecture or discussion, the instructor and teaching assistant regret that they cannot provide a private lecture or summary of what was missed. Students who miss a lecture or discussion are responsible for finding out what they missed from other students in the class. The teaching assistant will provide further details on expectations of attendance and discussion.

Please show up to lecture and discussion on time and stay for the duration of the class. Students will receive no attendance or participation points if found engaging in disruptive behavior, which includes holding conversations with one another, sleeping, reading the newspaper, doing homework, or any other similar activity. All cell phones, pagers, iPods, and other electronic devices must be turned off before class. Laptop computers are to be used for note taking purposes only.

Students are responsible for reading the assigned material before class and discussion sections and coming to the discussion section prepared to discuss it. Eight percent of the overall grade is based on attendance and the instructors' perceptions of students' informed participation.



Research Requirement 2% of final grade

Students will be introduced academic social science research in one of two ways. First, students may write a seven page paper on research design in the social sciences. Students who choose this option will be provided details on how to complete this assignment. Second, students may participate in up to six hours of academic research as research participants. Students who choose this second option will be provided opportunities to sign up for research participation and be provided detailed information on how to participate early in the semester. Students are free to choose either the first or second option (but not both). The choice is totally up to each student. Students will not be advantaged or disadvantaged for choosing one option over the other. Upon completing either option students will automatically receive an “A” on this research requirement.

Grading

Students’ exams, quizzes, response papers, research requirement, and overall grade in the course will be calculated according to the following scales. The reaction papers, research requirement, and participation grades will be awarded as the midpoint of the letter-grade range as indicated in the first column of the table below. Thus an “A” on a reaction paper, worth 5 percent of the overall grade, would be awarded a numerical grade of “96.5,” an “A-“ would be scored as a “91.5,” etc. The exam and quiz grades, as well as the overall final grade, will be awarded according to the scale in the second column. Since SIU does not observe plusses or minuses in the awarding of final grades, pluses and minuses are not possible in the submission of final course grades. If your final grade is an “A-“ you will receive an “A,” if your final grade is a “B+“ or “B-“ you will receive a “B,” etc. Grades in this course are awarded based on merit, according to the requirements outlined above, in conjunction with the judgment of the professor and teaching assistant, and are not otherwise negotiable.

	Assignment, Research Requirement, & Participation	Exam, Quiz, and Final Grade Ranges
A	96.5	93 - 100
A-	91.5	90 - 92.99
B+	88.5	87 - 89.99
B	85	83 - 86.99
B-	81.5	80 - 82.99
C+	78.5	77 - 79.99
C	75	73 - 76.99
C-	71.5	70 - 72.99
D	65	60 - 69.99
F	30	0 - 59.99



Policy on Late Response Papers

Students are responsible for turning in a paper copy of their assignment, stapled in the upper left corner, at the beginning of the class in which it is due. Papers submitted via email will **NOT** be accepted unless explicit **prior** permission is granted by the teaching assistant. *Late papers* (those not ready to be handed in at the beginning of the class in which they are due) are penalized one full letter grade (e.g., from an “A” to a “B”) for each day that they are late. This means that an “A” assignment turned in five days late automatically receives a failing grade. If a response paper is to be turned in late it must be handed to one of the student workers in the political science office who will then put in Ryan Burge’s mailbox. This office is located in Faner 3081. If this procedure is not followed then the paper will automatically receive a zero. *Students who find themselves turning in their assignment or paper late would benefit from communicating with the teaching assistant before turning in their late assignment.*

Policy on Missed Exams and Arriving Late to an Exam

Students must arrive at exams on time. Students who are more than 20 minutes late for an exam will not be permitted to take the exam. After 20 minutes, the exam is considered missed. All students **MUST** take the final exam. Under no circumstances will students be excused from taking the final exam except with **PRIOR** approval. Students will not otherwise be able or allowed to miss the final exam taken at the time allotted by the registrar. Students who miss the final exam will be allotted a grade of zero on the final exam. For the exams other than the final exam, *missed exams* will receive a grade of zero except in cases of sufficient, demonstrated, appropriate, and verifiable emergencies or tragedies or where the student has prior approval from the instructor or teaching assistant. If the TA or instructor view the emergency or tragedy as not sufficient, demonstrated, appropriate, or verifiable the student automatically receives a zero on the exam. All such grades are awarded based on the considered discretion of the professor and/or teaching assistant and are not otherwise negotiable.

For the exams other than the final exam *only*, students who miss an exam due to an identified and verified emergency or tragedy *must make contact* with the TA or instructor *no more than* two days after the exam takes place. “Make contact” is defined explicitly as sending an email and receiving a response or talking live on the phone (not merely *attempting* to call) or meeting in person with the TA or instructor. Students who miss an exam in this context but do not make contact the TA or instructor within two days automatically receive a zero on the exam. In cases of missed exams excused by the instructor or teaching assistant, and with their approval within two days of the missed exam, an alternative writing assignment *may* be assigned at the discretion of the TA and the instructor. Students who have prior approval for this must complete the assignment by the date specified by the TA or the instructor. In this context, late assignments are not permitted under any circumstances. If a student does not complete the assignment by the time and date specified, for whatever reason, the grade for the exam automatically becomes a zero, regardless of whether or not the student completed the assignment but handed it in late.



Contacting the Professor and Teaching Assistant

Your professor and teaching assistant prefer to address most questions after class, during office hours, by email, or telephone. Please direct all emails both to your professor and your teaching assistant (please see the front page of this syllabus for these email addresses). All email communication must be appropriately written. This includes using proper grammar and identifying yourself by your first and last name. Cryptic or anonymous emails may not be answered.

Policy on Academic Honesty

All of the work you do in this course is expected to be your own, done exclusively for this course. Instances of suspected cheating or plagiarism (using someone else's ideas or words without proper attribution) will be dealt with in accordance with the university's policy on academic honesty. Please note that penalties for academic dishonesty are severe and ignorance is not an excuse for cheating or plagiarism.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities that have been documented by the SIU office of Disability Support Services will be accommodated according to university policy. For more information please visit the Disabilities Support Services website at www.siu.edu/~dss/ or call the DSS office at (618) 453-5738.



Tentative Class Schedule

Please note that the schedule below is a guideline. Actual material covered in class may deviate from the schedule according to the progress of the class and discussion. Unless otherwise indicated orally during class and/or discussion, we will follow the order of the topics as listed in the schedule. *It is the responsibility of students that they be aware of where we are in the progress of the course and where we deviate from this schedule.* This will be made clear orally in class and/or discussion.

Week 1

- Tues., 01/13 Introduction to the Course
- Thurs., 01/15 Introduction to American Politics and Government
Reading: Wilson ch. 1
- Discussion How to succeed in this class

Week 2

- Tues., 01/20 Presidential Inauguration
- Thurs., 01/22 Establishing a National Government
Reading: Declaration of Independence (Wilson Appendix p. A1), and
Federalist 51 (Wilson Appendix p. A28)
- Discussion *Reading:* [Obama's World](#), *The Economist*

Week 3

- Tues., 01/27 The U.S. Constitution
Reading: Wilson ch. 2
- Thurs., 01/29 The U.S. Constitution, Cont.
Reading: The U.S. Constitution (Wilson Appendix p. A4)
- Discussion Iraq War
Reading: Online video: [The War Briefing](#), a PBS Frontline
Documentary

Week 4

- Tues., 02/03 Civil Liberties
Reading: Wilson ch. 3
- Thurs., 02/05 Civil Liberties, cont.
- Discussion Gun Control
Reading: Read this (linked) [Article in the Wall Street Journal](#)



Week 5

Tues., 02/10 Civil Rights
Reading: Wilson ch. 4

Thurs., 02/12 **EXAM #1**

Discussion Affirmative Action
Reading: "[The New Affirmative Action](#)," *New York Times*

Week 6

Tues., 02/17 Federalism
Reading: Wilson ch. 5

Thurs., 02/19 Congress
Reading: Wilson ch. 9

Discussion Health Care Reform
Reading: [Sick Around the World](#)- a PBS Frontline documentary.

Week 7

Tues., 02/24 Congress, Cont.

Thurs., 02/26 Presidency
Reading: Wilson ch. 10

Discussion Credit Cards
Reading: [Colleges Profit as Banks Market Credit Cards to Students](#),
New York Times

Week 8

Tues., 03/03 Presidency, Cont.

Thurs., 03/05 Judiciary
Reading: Wilson ch. 12

Discussion Academic Freedom and Political Correctness
Reading: "[Backlash Over Book on Policy for Israel](#)", *New York Times*

Week 9 **Spring Break**

Week 10

Tues., 03/17 Judiciary, Cont.

Thurs., 03/19 Political Parties

Reading: Wilson ch. 7, p. 123-141, and *Federalist 10*, (Wilson Appendix p. A22)

Discussion The Price of Oil

Reading: "[The Breaking Point](#)" *New York Times Magazine*

Week 11

Tues., 03/24 Interest Groups

Reading: Wilson ch. 7, p. 141-end of chapter

Thurs., 03/26 **EXAM #2**

Discussion Assisted Suicide

Reading: [A Death in the Family](#), *New York Times Magazine*

Week 12

Tues., 03/31 Political Campaigns, Elections, and Voting

Reading: Wilson ch. 8

Thurs., 04/02 Campaigns, Elections, and Voting, Cont.

Discussion The Economic Crisis

Reading: Video and transcript:
"[House of Cards: The Mortgage Mess](#)," by Steve Kroft of *60 Minutes*

Week 13

Tues., 04/07 Campaigns, Elections, and Voting, Cont.

Thurs., 04/09 Campaigns, Elections, and Voting, Cont.

Discussion The Economic Crisis, cont.

Reading: Video and transcript:
"[Wall Street's Shadow Market](#)" by Steve Kroft of *60 Minutes*

Week 14

- Tues., 04/14 Public Opinion
Reading: Wilson ch. 6 p. 90-107
- Thurs., 04/16 Public Opinion, Cont.
- Discussion The National Deficit
Reading: Video and transcript:
 "[U.S. Heading for Financial Trouble](#)" by Steve Kroft of
 60 Minutes

Week 15

- Tues., 04/21 The Media
Reading: Wilson ch. 6 p. 107-end of chapter
- Thurs., 04/23 Media, Cont.
- Discussion Abortion
Reading: Online video: [The Last Abortion Clinic](#), PBS Frontline

Week 16

- Tues., 04/28 Domestic Policy
Reading: Wilson ch. 13
- Thurs., 04/30 Foreign Policy
Reading: Wilson ch. 14
- Discussion Exam Review

Week 17

- Tues., 05/05 **Final Exam** from 12:00 to 1:50 pm