**Political Science 110 – American Institutions**

**Course #:** 52871 **Instructor:** Nick Hernandez

**Term:** Spring 2009 **email:**nickrhernandez@hotmail.com

**Day/Time:** Mon/Wed/Fri 10:00-10:50AM

“…liberty is not the chief and constant object of their (Americans) desires; equality is their idol: they make rapid and sudden efforts to obtain liberty and, if they miss their aim, resign themselves to their disappointment; but nothing can satisfy them without equality, and they would rather perish than lose it.”

-Alexis De Tocqueville

**Course Description:**

This course explores national, state, and local governments, the political processes, issues, and policies of those governments, and the rights and responsibilities of citizens living under these governments by outlining the structure, processes, function of each area of government. (Meets the Reedley College government and constitution requirement for the associate degree, does not satisfy the U.S. Constitution, national, state, or local government requirements for transfer students seeking a bachelors degree)

Basic Skills Advisories: Eligibility for English 125 and 126. (A)

**Instructional Objectives:**

Upon completion of this class students will be able to:

* monitor the progress of issues and events through the media
* identify the key responsibilities and limitations of each branch of the national government
* describe the checks and balances system, giving specific examples of how each branch of government functions in relation to the other two branches
* Identify various means through which an individual might become politically active in the United States (e.g., voting, letter-writing, demonstrations, etc.)
* explain the spectrum of American political ideology
* explain the impact of interest groups in American government and politics
* discuss the Constitution of the United States as it prescribes various civil liberties and civil rights
* identify key elements of domestic and foreign policy and relate how events can dicatate our government’s priorities

**Instructional Methodologies**

This course will be based on lectures and group discussions but will also be structured in a university seminar manner. This structure demands class participation from the student and will be considered into the student’s final grade.

**Texts/Readings**

**Required Text:**

Schmidt, Shelley, Bardes, American Government and Politics Today, 2006-2007, brief edition, (Thomson/Wadsworth, Inc., 2007)

**Recommended:** Students are encouraged to access reputable newspapers or news magazines on a regular basis in order to participate in in-class discussions relevant to the topic being covered. Most major newspapers can be accessed online and most are free of charge.

**Basis for Evaluation**

Assignment Points Per Assignment Total Points

15 CPAs 20 300

2 Simulations 75 150

3 Examinations 100 300

Research Paper 100 100

Final Examination 100 100

Participation/Attendance 50 50

**TOTAL POINTS POSSIBLE 1000**

**Point Range Percentage Final Grade**

**1000-900 100 – 90% A**

**899-800 89 – 80% B**

**799-700 79 – 70% C**

**699-600 69 – 60% D**

**599 and below 59% and below F**

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

**1. Reading Assignments:**

All reading assignments should be completed by the assigned date. This will facilitate your learning the course material as well as class discussions. Keep in mind, the readings and the lectures are intended to complement, not replace, one another. Some material covered in the lectures will not be covered in the text: conversely, information in the text may not be addressed directly in class. There may also be supplemental readings that I will give you that relate to the topic. If you have questions on any of the material, please ASK!!!

**2. Chapter Proficiency Assignments (CPAs)**: For these assignments the student will be asked to complete the on-line “Poli Prep Pre-Test” found on the “Companion” Website for the text book we are using. It can be accessed at:

http://www.wadsworth.com/cgiwadsworth/course\_products\_wp.pl?fid=M20b&product\_isbn\_issn=9780495130697&discipline\_number=20

There will be eleven (15) of these assignments with each worth 20 points. The CPAs should be printed and turned in at the beginning of class on the specified date.

**3. Simulations**: You will be required to complete 2 simulation activities throughout the course, which will be completed on the above website, along with a written analysis of the simulation. Simulations are worth 75 points each. The written analysis must be typed in font size of 10-12 with standard one (1) inch margins.

**4. Examinations**: There will be three exams worth 100 points each given on the dates listed below (dates are subject to change). The exams will be a combination of multiple choice and ID questions. The exam questions will be derived from both required readings and lecture. There are NO make-up exams. The exams will be administered at the beginning of class. If a student is not in the classroom 10 minutes after the exam start time, he/she will lose the right to take the exam. A study guide for each exam will be available prior to the exam date.

**5. Research Paper:** Each student will be required to write a 5 – 7 page research paper the topic of which will be chosen out of four possible choices given to you by me and worth 100 points. More information will be given as the semester progresses.

**6. Final Examination**: The final exam will be a multiple choice exam. The exam is worth 100 points. If a student fails to take the final exam, the final grade will result in an F. The final exam will be given on **Wednesday, May 20 10:00AM -11:50AM**.

**PARTICIPATION/ATTENDENCE:**

As this course is structured in a seminar setting student participation is extremely important. It should be noted that one measure of your participation will be your ability to discuss current events as they apply to topics we are covering in class. There are several credible and free news sources available on-line (e.g. New York Times - www.nytimes.com, The Washington Post, www.washingtonpost.com, USA Today, The Sacramento Bee - www.sacbee.com, Fox News – www.foxnews.com, etc.) In addition the library subscribes to several newspapers and periodicals that you can read and review. I strongly recommend that you read some news-based materials **DAILY**, in order to participate in classroom discussions of contemporary issues as they pertain to topics covered in class.

Attendance is extremely important and is critical to your success in this course as you will be responsible for material from the text as well as presented to you in class. Missing three (3) class sessions may result in a drop from the course. However, if you decide to drop the course, it is your responsibility to make the drop official in the Administrations and Records office or else possibly receive a grade of ‘F’.

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:**

If you have a verified need for an academic accommodation or materials in alternate media per the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, please contact me as soon as possible.

**Academic Dishonesty**

Students at Reedley College are entitled to the best education that the college can make available to them, and they, their instructors, and their fellow students share the responsibility to ensure that this education is honestly attained. Because cheating, plagiarism, and collusion in dishonest activities erode the integrity of the college, each student is expected to exert an entirely honest effort in all academic endeavors. Academic dishonesty in any form is a very serious offense and will incur serious consequences.

**Cheating** is the act or attempted act of taking an examination or performing an assigned, evaluated task in a fraudulent or deceptive manner, such as having improper access to answers, in an attempt to gain an unearned academic advantage.

Plagiarism is a specific form of cheating: the use of another’s words or ideas without identifying them as such or giving credit to the source. Plagiarism may include, but is not limited to, failing to provide complete citations and references for all work that draws on the ideas, words, or work of others, failing to identify the contributors to work done in collaboration, submitting duplicate work to be evaluated in different courses without the knowledge and consent of the instructors involved, or failing to observe computer security systems and software copyrights.

Incidents of cheating and plagiarism may result in any of a variety of sanctions and penalties, which may range from a failing grade on a particular examination, paper, project, or assignment in question to a failing grade in the course, at the discretion of the instructor and depending on the severity and frequency of the incidents.

**Important Dates**:

January 23 – Last day to drop a semester length course and qualify for a refund

January 30 – Last day to register for Spring 2009 full-length class or drop full-length class to avoid a “W”

February 13 – Last day to change class to or from Credit/No Credit grading option

March 13 – Last day to drop a semester length course (letter grade assigned after this date)

May 18-22 – Final Exam Week

**Holidays:**

January 19 – Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday

February 13 – Lincoln’s Birthday

February 16 – Washington’s Birthday

April 6-11 – Spring Recess

**TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE**

**1. Week One (January 12-16) – The Political Development of the United States**

Readings: Chapter 1 The Foundations of American Government

Chapter 1 CPA due Wednesday, January 21

**2. Week Two (January 19-23) – Constitutional Government in the United States**

**!!! NO CLASS JANUARY 19 !!!**

Readings: Chapter 2 Forging a New Government: The Constitution

Chapter 2 CPA due Monday, January 26

**3. Week Three (January 26-30) – The Federalism Principle**

Readings: Chapter 3 Federalism

Chapter 3 CPA due Monday, February 2

**4. Week Four (February 2-6) – The United States Congress**

Readings: Chapter 9 The Congress

Chapter 9 CPA due Monday, February 9

**FIRST EXAM - FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 6 – CHAPTERS 1, 2, 3, 9**

**5. Week Five (February 9-13) – The American President**

**!!! NO CLASS FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 13 !!!**

Readings: Chapter 10 The Presidency

Chapter 10 CPA due Wednesday, February 18

**6. Week Six (February 16-20) – The United States Judiciary**

**!!! NO CLASS FEBRUARY 16 !!!**

Readings: Chapter 12 The Judiciary

Chapter 12 CPA due Monday, February 23

**7. Week Seven (February 23-27) – Bureaucratic Institutions**

Readings: Chapter 11 The Bureaucracy

Chapter 11 CPA due Monday, March 2

**8. Week Eight (March 2-6) – Political Socialization and Public Opinion**

Readings: Chapter 6 Public Opinion, Political Socialization, and the Media **(pgs. 126-139)**

Chapter 6 CPA due Monday, March 9

**9. Week Nine (March 9-13) – The Citizen as A Political Force**

Readings: Chapter 7 Interest Groups and Political Parties

Chapter 7 CPA due Monday 16

**SECOND EXAM - FRIDAY, MARCH 13 CHAPTERS – 10,12,11,6,7**

**10. Week 10 (March 16-20) – Voters, Voting and Political Parties**

Readings: Chapter 8 Campaigns, Elections, and Voting Behavior

Chapter 8 CPA due Monday, March 23

**11. Week 11 (March 23-27) – Civil Liberties**

Readings: Chapter 4 Civil Liberties

Chapter 4 CPA due Monday, March 30

**12. Week 12 (March 30- April 3) – Civil Rights**

Readings: Chapter 5 Civil Rights

Chapter 5 CPA due Monday, April 13

**13. Week 13 (April 6-10) SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS**

**14. Week 14 (April 13-17) – The Media, Conglomeration and Political Socialization**

Readings: Chapter 6 Public Opinion, Political Socialization, and the Media **(pgs. 139-153)**

No CPA due for Chapter 6

**THIRD EXAM - FRIDAY, APRIL 17 CHAPTERS – 8,4,5,6**

**15. Week 15 (April 20-24) – U.S. Government Policy**

Readings: Chapter 13 Domestic and Economic Policy

Chapter 13 CPA due Monday, April 27

**16. Week 16 (April 27-May 1) – Foreign Policy and the Obama Administration**

Readings: Chapter 14 Foreign Policy

Chapter 15 CPA due Monday, May 4

**17. Week 17 (May 4-8) – California Politics**

Readings: Handouts and Lecture

**18. Week 18 (May 11-15) – California Politics**

Readings: Handouts and Lecture

**19. FINALS WEEK (May 18-22) FINAL FOR THIS CLASS WILL BE GIVEN ON WEDNESDAY, MAY 20 10:00AM – 11:50AM**

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