

drop deadline

## COURSE SYLLABUS

### **Political Science 2 --American Government**

Schedule # 1218  
Reedley College--Fall 1998  
Mon., Wed., Fri. 7:00 - 7:50 a.m.

Mr. Turini

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HE 64, or by appointment

**Course Description:** When most Americans think about politics and government, their reactions are often based on common generalizations and stereotypes (i.e., "all politicians are crooks") or media messages that get forged into their brains as a result of constant repetition (the latest terrorist act, the most recent political scandal, etc.). As a result, most Americans have somewhat negative images of government and politics, are not terribly excited about the prospect of getting involved in the process (even to the extent of voting), and would like to believe they can live their lives without paying much attention to such a tedious topic.

In teaching this course, my goal is to demonstrate to you that these attitudes and beliefs are not only incorrect, but even dangerous, not only to those who hold them, but also to those political values that we, as a society, hold dear. It is my objective to help you ascertain enough information and insight into U.S. politics to realize that such knowledge is crucial, because politics, to one degree or another, for good or for ill, does effect every aspect of your life. I hope that you will appreciate that whether the political system affects you and/or your loved ones negatively or positively depends, in part, upon your actions toward, and reactions to, your own political opportunities. I also will attempt to aid in your development of the tools you can use to play an active, rather than passive, role in the politics of your day. What I expect from you, and what you will need to benefit from this course, is not necessarily a wealth of prior knowledge or experience in this arena, but rather an open mind that is willing to look at familiar things in new ways, to question those assumptions that everyone seems to share, and to be determined enough to critically evaluate the information and think your way through to your own conclusions.

More specifically, this course is designed as an introduction to the nation's governmental institutions and political processes. It will have four major foci. First, we will be examining the theoretical and constitutional basis of the American political system. Second, we will examine the institutional structure of our national government--Congress, the Executive, and the Supreme Court. Third, we will review the significant controversies that have contributed to the development of our individual rights and freedoms. Finally, we will be focusing on how Americans seek to transform their political aspirations and beliefs into governmental policy--the significance of political parties and interest groups, the role of both the mass media and public opinion, the consequence of "who votes," and the impact of elections in our political system as they function collectively as "policy inputs."

### **Required Reading:**

Schmidt, Shelley, and Bardes, American Government and Politics Today, 1998 - 1999 edition

### **Recommended Reading:**

Civil Liberties reader (on reserve in library)  
Civil Rights reader (on reserve in library)  
additional recommendations--to be announced

### **Grading:**

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Points Per Assignment</u>	<u>Total Points</u>
3 Examinations	200	600
1 Final	300	300
8 Ballot Initiative Analysis Papers	25 ea.	200
Participation / Conduct		100

**TOTAL POINTS POSSIBLE      1200**

**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. If you have questions on any of the material, ASK!!! I want to help you learn about American politics and government, but your questions may not be answered unless you ask them. Also, always expect to answer questions in class based upon the assigned readings for that day, and you should expect a few **unannounced short quizzes** over the reading assignments and current events--especially if it seems that few students are up to date.

**Final Note:** It is my belief that, pedagogically speaking, learning takes place best in a classroom environment in which students are active (rather than passive) participants in their own education. Also, in addition to offering an introduction to American government and providing a forum for assisting students in developing an understanding of and an appreciation for the diversity of the human community, another objective of this course is to provide students with an opportunity to sharpen their critical thinking skills, thus the rationale for the current events papers. Because one must have knowledge in order to think critically, in general, the exams will test your knowledge of the "facts" regarding American government, as presented in the class material. However, the exams also will move beyond basic knowledge and comprehension, and require students to exhibit more sophisticated skills such as application of knowledge, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Therefore, generally speaking, a "C" exam will show adequate command of the simple "nuts and bolts" regarding American government--the "facts." A "B" exam will offer a more sophisticated appreciation of the connections to be made between these facts and "reality." An "A" exam will additionally exhibit a well-reasoned personal response regarding the reality of government in the United States.

**Tentative Class Schedule:**

<u>WEEK</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>ASSIGNMENT</u>
Week 1 (Aug. 17 - 21)	.....Introduction .....Perspectives on the American political system	..... Schmidt, Shelley, Bardes --Ch. 1 --Appendix I, "A Citizen's Survival Guide"
Week 2 (Aug. 24 - 28)	.....The Constitution	..... Schmidt, Shelley, Bardes --Ch. 2 --Appendix A-- <u>The Declaration of Independence</u> --Appendix B-- <u>The Constitution</u> --Appendix D-- <u>Federalist 51</u> ..... <i>Paper #1 due <u>Aug. 24</u></i>
Week 3 (Aug. 31 - Sept. 4)	.....The Constitution (concluded) .....Federalism	..... Schmidt, Shelley, Bardes --Ch. 3
Week 4 (Sept. 07 - 11)	..... <b>HOLIDAY--Labor Day, Monday, Sept. 07</b> .....Federalism (concluded)	..... <i>Paper #2 due <u>Sept. 09</u></i>

**Week 15** (Nov 23 - 27) ..... Policy Inputs: Interest Groups  
(concluded)  
..... Policy Inputs: Mass Media..... Schmidt, Shelley, Bardes  
--Ch. 9, pgs. 326 - 344  
..... **HOLIDAY--Thanksgiving, Nov. 26, 27**

**Week 16** (Nov. 30 - Dec. 04).....Policy Inputs: Mass Media  
(concluded)  
..... Policy Inputs: Public Opinion..... Schmidt, Shelley, Bardes  
--Ch. 6  
..... *Paper #8 due Nov. 30*

**Week 17** (Dec. 07 - 11) ..... Policy Inputs: Voting Behavior  
Campaigns, Elections..... Schmidt, Shelley, Bardes  
--Ch. 9, pgs. 291-326

**Week 18** (Dec. 14 - 18) ..... **FINALS WEEK**

\*\*\*\*\***FINAL EXAMINATION, MONDAY, DEC. 14, 7 - 9 A.M.**\*\*\*\*\*