

COURSE SYLLABUS

Political Science 2--American Government

Schedule # 81216

Reedley College--Fall Semester, 1999

Class Meetings:

Thursday, 6 - 9:30 p.m.

Saturday, 9 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Voice mail: 638-3641, ext. 3960

Mr. Turini

Room: Business 40

Office Hours: Tuesday 10 a.m.-noon,

Thursday 5 p.m.-5:30 p.m.

and by appointment

Office: Forum 7

e-mail: wpturini@aol.com

Course Description: When most Americans think about politics and government, their reactions are often based on common stereotypes ("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.

My goal in teaching this course is to demonstrate that these attitudes and beliefs are not only wrong, but even dangerous to those who hold them. It is my objective to help you ascertain enough insight into U.S. politics to realize that such knowledge is crucial to your intended career, as well as to 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 hope to help you develop some of the tools you can use, if you so choose, to play an active rather than a 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 politics, but an open mind willing to look at familiar things in new ways, to question the assumptions that everyone else seems to blindly accept, and to be stubborn enough to think your way through your own conclusions.

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 significant controversies that have contributed to our fundamental legal character (civil liberties and civil rights). Finally, we will be focusing on how Americans seek to translate their political aspirations and beliefs into governmental policy--the meaning of elections, the significance of political parties and interest groups, and the role of public opinion in our political system as "policy inputs," and what these factors mean in terms of foreign and domestic policy.

Required Text:

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
5 Current Event Analysis Papers	40 ea.	200
<u>Participation / Conduct</u>		100
<u>TOTAL POINTS POSSIBLE</u>		<u>1200</u>

Final Grading Scale:

<u>Point Range</u>	<u>Final Grade</u>
1200 - 1080	A
1079 - 960	B
959 - 840	C
839 - 720	D
719 and below	F

Examinations: There will be three 200 point examinations and one 300 point final examination. All will consist of short answer identification items and/or multiple choice and true/false questions, along with essay questions. Students will be allowed one 3"x5" index card as a note card on all examinations. **MAKE-UP EXAMINATIONS WILL ONLY BE GIVEN UNDER SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES.** As a general rule, with the exception medical emergencies, incapacity, or a death in the family, **make up exams will not be given.** Some official verification of the need to miss the exam will be required before a make-up exam is approved. The message here is that **YOU SHOULD PLAN TO TAKE THE EXAMS ON THE SCHEDULED DATES** or have a **VERY COMPELLING REASON** for missing one, and if at all possible, you should contact me **before** the exam regarding your absence.

Each examination will cover the following material:

EXAM 1: Introductory material, The Constitution, and Federalism

EXAM 2: American Institutions (Congress, The Executive and the Bureaucracy, and the Judiciary)

EXAM 3: Civil Liberties and Civil Rights

FINAL EXAMINATION: Policy "Inputs" (Political Parties, Interest Groups, Mass Media, Voting and Elections, etc.)

Current Event Analysis papers: There will be five papers due throughout the term. For this assignment, you will need to select an issue of policy or political significance which is currently being contested at either the local, state, national, or international level. You are to submit your topic to me on **Thursday, October 28** along with a 500-750 word (2 to 3 pages typed, double spaced, 1 inch margins, 12 point font) overview of what is currently taking place relative to that issue. Who are the interested parties / represented groups? What is the nature of the conflict? Who are the major "players?" What are various positions surrounding the issue that are causing the conflict? After this initial paper, you will have a 500-750 word analysis **due every third class meeting** (check the course calendar for the exact due dates) in which it will be your responsibility to relate any action that has taken place relative to your chosen issue since your last paper. In the event that your chosen topic reaches some sort of resolution before the end of the semester, you are charged in your next paper to discuss the resolution and the legitimacy of it, and finally submit a new issue which you will begin to follow from that point forward.

Papers will be graded *primarily* on content and completeness; however, a portion of your grade will be based on grammar, spelling, and presentation, so be sure to **proofread your work.** **THERE WILL BE AN AUTOMATIC 12 POINT DEDUCTION PER CLASS MEETING FOR PAPERS THAT ARE SUBMITTED LATE.** You are strongly encouraged to discuss your chosen issue with your classmates and/or with me, for in the political world, individuals do not live in isolation. It is only through discussion and understanding of others' viewpoints that we will be able to resolve those problems which now face us.

Participation and Conduct: An important part of the course is student participation, and a **guaranteed** way to lower your grade is to conduct yourself in an inappropriate manner in the classroom. Even though it may appear as though I am not taking notice, **inappropriate behavior** such as reading, talking, sleeping, writing letters, etc., during class, or failure to treat **everyone** in the classroom with respect **will definitely affect your grade negatively,** as will cheating on exams or instances of plagiarism in out-of-class writing assignments. Those who wish to practice such inappropriate behavior will likely be asked to leave the classroom, pursuant to Reedley College's Student Code of Conduct Policy (Board Policy 5410 and EC 760332, p. 29 of the college catalog). No one will be forced to participate in class discussions, but everyone is **strongly encouraged** to ask questions and offer input regarding the subject matter at hand and current events related to that subject matter.

Attendance: Attendance is one measure of participation, and you will not do well in the course if you fail to come to class regularly. Perfect attendance is best, and more than six hours of absences is definitely too many. It is the policy of this college that the instructor may drop a student who has missed more than six hours of class: it is my policy that after six hours of absences (just two class meetings in a short term class), I will want to schedule an appointment with you to try to determine the difficulty. **You are expected to be on time and stay until class is dismissed. You are expected to be in a seat, ready to begin class at the hour. I AM VERY SERIOUS ABOUT THIS, SO READ THIS SECTION CAREFULLY!!!!!!**

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, the exams will test your knowledge of the "facts" regarding American government, as presented in the class materials (lectures, discussions, and reading assignments). 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. 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>
Meeting 1 (October 21)	Introduction Perspectives on the American political system	Schmidt, Shelley, Bardes (a) Ch. 1 (b) Appendix I, "A Citizen's Survival Guide"
Meeting 2 (October 23)	The Constitution	Schmidt, Shelley, Bardes (a) Ch. 2 (b) Appendix A-- <u>The Declaration of Independence</u> (c) Appendix B-- <u>The Constitution</u> (d) Appendix D-- <u>Federalist 51</u>
Meeting 3 (October 28)	The Constitution (concluded) Federalism	Schmidt, Shelley, Bardes (a) Ch. 3 <i>Current Event Analysis paper #1 due</i>
Meeting 4 (October 30)	EXAMINATION I--SATURDAY, OCTOBER 30 Institutions: The Congress	Schmidt, Shelley, Bardes (a) Ch. 10 (b) Appendix B, review Art. I

Meeting 5 (November 04)	Institutions: The Congress (concluded) Institutions: The Presidency and The Bureaucracy	Schmidt, Shelley, Bardes (a) Chs. 11 and 12 (b) Appendix B, review Art. II
Meeting 6 (November 06)	Institutions: The Presidency and The Bureaucracy (concluded) Institutions: The Judiciary	Schmidt, Shelley, Bardes (a) Ch. 13 (b) Appendix B, review Art. III <i>Current Event Analysis paper #2 due</i>
Meeting 7 (November 11)	<i>Holiday--Veterans Day</i>	
Meeting 8 (November 13)	Institutions: The Judiciary (concluded)	
Meeting 9 (November 18)	EXAMINATION II--THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 18 Civil Liberties	Schmidt, Shelley, Bardes (a) Ch. 4 <i>Current Event Analysis paper #3 due</i>
Meeting 10 (November 20)	Civil Liberties (concluded) Civil Rights	Schmidt, Shelley, Bardes (a) Ch. 5
Meeting 11 (November 25)	<i>Holiday--Thanksgiving Day</i>	
Meeting 12 (November 27)	<i>Holiday--Thanksgiving Holiday</i>	
Meeting 13 (December 02)	Civil Rights (concluded) Policy Inputs: Political Parties	Schmidt, Shelley, Bardes (a) Ch. 8 (b) Appendix D, <u>Federalist 10</u> <i>Current Event Analysis paper #4 due</i>
Meeting 14 (December 04)	EXAMINATION III--SATURDAY, DECEMBER 04 Policy Inputs: Political Parties (concluded) Policy Inputs: Interest Groups	Schmidt, Shelley, Bardes (a) Ch. 7 (b) Appendix D, <u>Federalist 10</u>
Meeting 15 (December 09)	Policy Inputs: Mass Media	Schmidt, Shelley, Bardes (a) Ch. 9, pgs. 326 - 344
Meeting 16 (December 11)	Policy Inputs: Public Opinion, Voting, and Elections	Schmidt, Shelley, Bardes (a) Chs. 6 and 9 (pgs. 291 - 326) <i>Current Event Analysis paper #5 due</i>
Meeting 17 (December 16)	FINAL EXAMINATION, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 16, 6 - 8 P.M.	