

Political Science 110—American Institutions
Schedule # 52871 (TuTh 9:30 a.m.)
Term: Spring 2008
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Instructor: Mr. Turini
Office: Forum 7
Office Hours:
M 10:00 – 11:00 a.m.
Tu 11:00 – 12:30 p.m.
W 1:00 – 2:00 p.m.
Th 12:00 – 1:30 p.m.
F 10:00 – 11:00 a.m.
and by appointment

Course Description:

In this class, we will cover the basic structure and function of the American federal government with emphasis on the actual behavior of political institutions and participants. Topics to be covered include an examination of the three branches of the national government, the role and impact of interest groups and political parties, individual political behavior, and mass media. This course meets the Reedley College government and Constitution requirement for the Associate's degree. However, it does not satisfy U.S. Constitution, national, state, or local government requirements for transfer students seeking a Bachelor's degree.

Upon successful completion of this course, 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 (i.e., voting, letter-writing, demonstrations, etc.).
- explain the spectrum of American political ideology (liberal vs. conservative).
- 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 dictate our government's priorities.

Texts / Readings:

Required Text:

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

Recommended:

Collegiate dictionary
Subscription or regular access to any reputable newspaper or news magazine
Recommendations may be announced / distributed on occasion

Basis for Evaluation:

| <u>Assignment</u> | <u>Points Per Assignment</u> | <u>Total Points</u> |
|---|------------------------------|---------------------|
| 11 Chapter Proficiency assignments | 25 | 275 (27%) |
| 11 Examinations | 50 | 550 (55%) |
| Final Examination | 75 | 75 (8%) |
| <u>Participation / conduct / attendance</u> | | 100 (10%) |
| TOTAL POINTS POSSIBLE | | 1000 (100%) |

| <u>Point Range</u> | <u>Percentage</u> | <u>Final Grade</u> |
|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| 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 (Chapter Proficiency Assignments {CPA's}):

For this assignment, students are asked to complete the on-line "pre-tests" found on the textbook's "Companion Website"

(http://www.wadsworth.com/cgi-wadsworth/course_products_wp.pl?fid=M20b&flag=student&product_isbn_issn=9780495130697&disciplinenum=20).

There will be twelve (12) of these assignments with each being worth 20 points.

All materials are ***DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS ON THE SPECIFIED DEADLINE***. There will be no exceptions, and ***NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED***.

Examinations:

There will be twelve 40-point examinations and a 100-point ***COMPREHENSIVE*** final examination. All exam questions will be in multiple-choice format. ***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. ***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.

Participation and Conduct:

An important part of the course is student participation. *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* (i.e., the relationship between military intervention in the Middle East and the constitutional separation of powers doctrine). There are several credible and free news sources available on-line (i.e., The New York Times, The Washington Post, USA Today, The Sacramento Bee, The Fresno Bee, MSNBC, CNN, Fox News, etc.), and 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***. While no one will be forced to participate in class discussions, everyone is ***strongly encouraged*** to ask questions and offer input.

A guaranteed way to lower your grade is to conduct yourself in an inappropriate manner in the classroom. 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 California Education Code §s 76030-76033).

Attendance:

Attendance is another measure of participation, as one cannot participate in discussions if one fails to attend class. The message here is that it is unlikely that you will do well in the course if you fail to come to class regularly. Perfect attendance is best, and more than six absences is too many. ***Keep in mind, it is the policy of this college that an instructor may drop any student who has missed more than six hours of class.***

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 politics and government, but your questions may not be answered unless you ask them.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:

If you have special needs as addressed by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), please notify me immediately. All reasonable requests for assistance will be considered, and efforts will be made to accommodate your needs.

Overview of Important Dates:

Institutional:

- Last day to drop and receive a refund—Friday, January 19
- Last day to drop and avoid a “W”—Friday, January 26
- Last day to add— Friday, January 26
- Last day to change a class to or from a CR / NC grading basis—Friday, February 09
- Last day to drop—Friday, March 09
- Summer 2007 / Fall 2007 registration for *continuing* students begins—Friday, March 16
- Summer 2007 registration for *new* students begins—Monday, April 09
- Fall 2007 registration for *new* students begins—Monday, May 14
- FINAL EXAMINATION WEEK—Monday, May 14 – Friday, May 18

Holidays:

- Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday—Monday, January 15
- President A. Lincoln’s birthday (observed)—Friday, February 16
- President G. Washington’s birthday (observed)—Monday, February 19
- Spring Break—Monday, April 02 to Friday, April 06

Tentative Course Schedule:

➤ Topic 1 (January 08 – January 17)—The Political Development of the United States of America

READINGS:

Chapter 1—The Foundations of American Government (pgs. 1-8)

ASSIGNMENTS:

CPA of Chapter 1, pgs. 1-8 **DUE Tuesday, January 15**

EXAMINATION 1~~Thursday, January 17

➤ Topic 2 (January 22 – January 29)—Constitutional Government in the United States

READINGS:

Chapter 2—Forging a New Government: The Constitution

ASSIGNMENTS:

CPA of Chapter 2 **DUE Tuesday, January 22**

EXAMINATION 2~~Tuesday, January 29

➤ Topic 3 (January 31 – February 07)—The Federal Principle in the United States

READINGS:

Chapter 3—Federalism

ASSIGNMENTS:

CPA of Chapter 3 **DUE Thursday, January 31**

EXAMINATION 3~~Thursday, February 07

➤ **Topic 4 (February 12 – February 19)—The United States Congress**

READINGS:

Chapter 9—Congress

ASSIGNMENTS:

CPA of Chapter 9 **DUE Tuesday, February 12**

EXAMINATION 4~~Tuesday, February 19

➤ **Topic 5 (February 21 – February 28)—The American President**

READINGS:

Chapter 10—The Presidency

ASSIGNMENTS:

CPA of Chapter 10 **DUE Thursday, February 21**

EXAMINATION 5~~Thursday, February 28

➤ **Topic 6 (March 04 – March 11)—The Federal Courts**

READINGS:

Chapter 12—The Judiciary

ASSIGNMENTS:

CPA of Chapter 12 **DUE Tuesday, March 04**

EXAMINATION 6~~Tuesday, March 11

➤ **Topic 7 (March 13 – March 27)—Policy Inputs: The Citizen as A Political Force**

READINGS:

Chapter 1—The Foundations of American Government (pgs. 9 – 14)
Chapter 6—Public Opinion, Political Socialization, and the Media

ASSIGNMENTS:

CPAs of Chapters 1 and 6 **DUE Thursday, March 13**

EXAMINATION 7~~Thursday, March 27

➤ **Topic 8 (April 01 – April 08)— Policy Inputs: The Citizen as A Political Force, PART 2**

READINGS:

Chapter 8—Campaigns, Elections, and Voting Behavior

ASSIGNMENTS:

CPA of Chapter 8 **DUE Tuesday, April 01**

EXAMINATION 8~~Tuesday, April 08

➤ **Topic 9 (April 10 – April 17)—Policy Inputs: The Influence of Group Behavior**

READINGS:

Chapter 7—Interest Groups and Political Parties

ASSIGNMENTS:

CPA of Chapter 7 **DUE WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 07**

EXAMINATION 9~~Friday, November 16

➤ **Topic 10 (April 22 – April 29)—Policy Outputs: Civil Liberties in the United States**

READINGS:

Chapter 4—Civil Liberties

ASSIGNMENTS:

CPA of Chapter 4 **DUE Tuesday, April 22**

EXAMINATION 10~~Tuesday, April 29

➤ **Topic 11 (November 30 – December 07)—Policy Outputs: Civil Rights in the United States**

READINGS:

Chapter 5—Civil Rights

ASSIGNMENTS:

CPA of Chapter 4 **DUE FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 30**

EXAMINATION 11~~Friday, December 07

➤ **FINALS WEEK (December 10 – December 14)**

**FINAL EXAMINATION—Tuesday, May 13
9:00 – 10:50 a.m.**