
Political Science 110—American Institutions

Schedule # 52871—MWF 11:00 a.m.
Term: Spring 2012
Office phone: (559) 638-3641, ext. 3798
e-mail: william.turini@reedleycollege.edu

Instructor: Mr. Turini
Office: SOC 30
Office Hours:
M 10:30 – 11:30 a.m.
Tu 12:30 – 1:30 p.m.
W 1:30 – 2:30 p.m.
Th 9:30 – 10:30 a.m.
F 10:30 – 11:30 p.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, 2010-2011 brief edition

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>
12 Chapter Proficiency assignments	20	240 (27%)
12 Examinations	40	480 (53%)
Final Examination	100	100 (11%)
Participation / Conduct		80 (9%)
<u>TOTAL POINTS POSSIBLE</u>		<u>900 (100%)</u>

<u>Point Range</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Final Grade</u>
900 – 810	100 – 90%	A
809 – 720	89 – 80%	B
719 – 630	79 – 70%	C
629 – 540	69 – 60%	D
539 and below	59% and below	F

Assignments (Chapter Proficiency Assignments {CPA's}):

For this assignment, students are asked to:

- (a) complete the on-line “tutorial quizzes” found on the textbook’s “Companion Website” and e-mail them to the instructor prior to the beginning of class on the assigned due date, and
- (b) outline the assigned chapter.

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 the current health care debate 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.

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.**

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 §§ 76030-76033).

Cheating or instances of plagiarism are the most severe of conduct violations.

- **Cheating** is defined as “the willful and intentional practice of fraudulent and deceptive acts for the purposes of improving a grade or obtaining course credit.” Cheating is NOT limited to examinations only. It includes any act in which you engage for the purposes of obtaining unearned academic credit. For further discussion of this concept, please refer to the Reedley College Catalog.
- **Plagiarism** is defined as “fraudulently representing someone else’s writing or other scholarly material as your own.” In other words, plagiarism is when you try to receive credit for someone else’s work, including, but not limited to, any source you use for a paper or submitting a fellow student’s homework while representing it as your own work. For further discussion of this concept, please refer to the Reedley College Catalog.

As these are the most severe of conduct violations, they will be met with the most extreme of consequences. Any student caught in one of these activities will (a) receive a 0 on the assignment/examination in question, (b) sacrifice **all** participation/conduct points available in this class, and (c) will not be eligible to earn any extra credit in the class. **In short, such actions will be met with a penalty potentially in excess of 180 points—over two full letter grades—in the course.**

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.