

AMERICAN GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS
POLITICAL SCIENCE 110
BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY
SPRING 2009

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Office Hours: MW 2-2:50 or by appointment

Course Meeting Times and Location
TTh 1:00-3:40
230 SWKT

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

“We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.”

One prominent political scientist and law professor recently called the Preamble “*the single most important part of the Constitution*” because it “announces the *point* of the entire enterprise.” Whether or not it’s the most important part of the document, the Preamble does invite a host of important questions. Just what is the “point of the entire enterprise”? What, for example, is the role of “the People” in our Constitutional structure? How democratic is – or isn’t – our system of government? And how do we know whether the Constitution has successfully achieved any of the lofty aims “the People” laid out for our nation? Are we closer to the kind of government and society the Framers envisioned in 1787 or farther from it? This semester, we will carefully examine the relationship between citizens and the Constitution in an effort to understand and evaluate political life in the United States.

The primary goal of this course is to provide an introduction to the basic principles of American government as well as to classic and contemporary political science research on American politics. The course is divided into four basic sections. We begin by reviewing some core principles of the Founding, including LDS perspectives on the nature of the Constitution. We then turn our focus to “the people themselves,” asking whether, in their attitudes and behaviors, they measure up to basic standards for a successful democracy. With an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the public in mind, we will then explore important institutions of American government, with special attention to whether features of our system that seem less democratic lead to better or worse forms of governance. Finally, we will investigate some of the policies and decisions that emerge from our institutions, including how our constitutional system has come to define and understand civil rights and liberties.

As we investigate the meaning and purpose of our Constitution as well as the ways in which political scientists study our system of government, I expect that you will learn to think rigorously about our constitutional structure, to ask questions you might not have considered before, and to develop new understandings of the obligations of citizenship. In the process of pursuing these goals, we will also seek to develop habits of work and mind central to higher education generally, including attentive reading, thoughtful questioning, rigorous moral

reasoning, and compelling writing. By the end of the semester, you should be practiced in the scholarly skills of critical reflection and persuasive reason-giving, and you should be able to craft an effective, insightful, and perhaps even eloquent college-level argument. I hope you will enrich your study of the American political system with insights from the restored Gospel. Our goal should be, as the scripture says, to diligently “seek learning, even by study and also by faith.”

William Butler Yeats famously wrote that “education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.” My job as your professor, then, is not simply to fill your pail through lectures, just as your job is to do much more than soak up the information given during lectures. This course will be a success if it develops in you the habits of work and mind that are central to college-level thought and argument and that will serve you well long after you have finished my course. I hope you will begin to become a producer of ideas, not just a consumer of them. By adding something new – your unique ideas and perspectives – to the intellectual life of the university, you will become an integral part of the BYU community. The course will be a success not simply because of what has been taught, but because of what you have learned.

Because learning college-level argument can mean abandoning trusted habits and replacing them with new abilities, university education can sometimes be difficult, scary, or frustrating. We are not in the business of rehashing ideas you have already mastered in high school; we are about challenging you to explore a terrain that appears unfamiliar. While this process can be demanding, it can also be exhilarating and extremely rewarding. Remember, too, that we are in this together – I expect our class to be an intellectual community in which we support and respect one another, giving each other constructive feedback and encouragement along the way.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The requirements for this course are rigorous but fair. I expect you to come to every class prepared. That means you should complete all reading assignments *before* class, and you should arrive at class having already made some notes and begun to think critically about what you have read. The reading assignments are heavy during the Spring Term, as we’re trying to cover almost a full week’s worth of work every class session.

Most of your grade will come from essays and exams. The final 20 percent comes from in-class quizzes and a group project. In computing final grades, assignments will be weighted as follows:

10%	In-class Assignments and Quizzes
10%	Group Project
25%	Essay
25%	Midterm Exam
30%	Final Exam

More information about group projects and writing assignments will be distributed later in the term.

In this course, when computing your final course grade, I do not follow a curve or limit the number of students who can receive top marks in any way. If every student in the course

produces A-level work, every student in the course can receive an A. My expectations for your work will be high, however.

When grading, I evaluate only the words on the page before me. The effort you put into an essay or exam will most certainly be evident in what you submit. Please note that I expect your work to be free of grammatical, spelling, and formatting errors. (I am happy to explain any technical issues that seem confusing or obscure.) Failure to meet these expectations may result in a lowered final grade.

Due dates for assignments are **firm and final**. Personal extensions are not fair to other members of the class, including me. For this reason, there will be **no personal extensions** under any circumstances except documented illness or family emergency.

Because personal extensions are not allowed, **failure to meet assigned due dates will bring serious consequences**. For essay assignments, including drafts and final revisions, your assignment grade will be docked one full letter grade per 24-hour period beginning one minute after the deadline. Exams will be given in class and must be taken on the days indicated in the schedule. The date and time of the final exam are set by the university. Do not ask for extensions or changes; I am not allowed to give them.

COURSE TEXTS

Available at the BYU Bookstore:

- Morris Fiorina, Paul E. Peterson, D. Stephen Voss, and Bertram Johnson. *America's New Democracy*, (5th edition)
- Morris P. Fiorina et al., *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America*
- Martin P. Wattenberg, *Is Voting for Young People?*

Available by Other Means

- Peter Woll, ed., *American Government: Readings and Cases* (available online)
- Additional readings will be made available to you via Blackboard.

New York Times

One of the goals of this course is to help you apply what you are learning to the news of the day. Regularly following the news about American politics through a high-quality national newspaper that covers American national politics and government institutions will be an important part of writing one of your essays and will, I hope, become a lifelong habit for you (studies show that people who read a newspaper regularly are far more likely to be active, engaged, and informed citizens). Students are therefore *required to read the New York Times or the Washington Post each weekday*. (The *Daily Universe* does not count as a national newspaper.) I recommend taking advantage of the substantially discounted rate provided on campus to subscribe to the *New York Times*. This is available at the service desk on the third floor in the BYU Bookstore. You may also read it on the *Times* website at <http://www.nytimes.com>.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Note: Reading assignments are to be completed **before class** on the day indicated. The abbreviation *AND* stands for *America's New Democracy*, and *AG* stands for *American Government: Readings and Cases*. An asterisk (*) after the listing means that the reading is available through Blackboard. Detailed instructions for the writing assignments will be furnished during the semester.

Week 1

April 28

Introduction and Course Overview

Democracy and the Role of Elections

- Chapter 1, *America's New Democracy*

April 30

Revolutionary Ideas

- The Declaration of Independence (*AND*, p. 463)
- The Declaration of Sentiments (*)
- Martin Luther King, Jr., "I Have a Dream" (*)

Post-Revolutionary Problems and Constitutional Solutions

- Chapter 2, *America's New Democracy*

Week 2

May 5

The Constitution and Its Opponents

- The Constitution of the United States of America (*AND*, p. 467)
- Federalist No. 51 (*AND*, p. 492)
- The Anti-Federalist, Brutus No. 1 and Cato No. 3 (*)

Size, Power, and Factions

- Federalist No. 10 (*AND*, p. 486)

May 7

Federalism

- Chapter 3, *America's New Democracy*
- The Anti-Federalist Papers No. 17 (*AG*, p. 58)
- Federalist No. 45 and No. 39 (*AG*, p. 61 and p. 64)
- Begin reading Fiorina, *Culture War?*

Federalism and the Courts

- *McCulloch v. Maryland* (*AG*, p. 75)
- *Gibbons v. Ogden*, (*AG*, p. 79)
- *United States v. Morrison* (*AG*, p. 84 – also read “National Power Over the States: A Recurring Constitutional Debate”)
- Continue reading Fiorina, *Culture War?*

• **ESSAY ASSIGNMENT DISTRIBUTED**

- Read Gordon Harvey, “Elements of the Academic Essay” (*)

Week 3

May 12

Federalism and Public Policy

- Steve Sanders, “Same-Sex Marriage and Federalism” (*)
- Michael S. Greve, “Same-Sex Marriage: Commit It to the States” (*)
- Online NewsHour, “The Battle Over Same-Sex Marriage” (available at http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/law/gay_marriage/index.html). Spend some time reading the site, with special attention to “The States and Marriage” sections and “Expert Debate.”
- Donald F. Kettl, “Federalism: Battles on the Front Lines of Public Policy” (*)

Rights and Divine Inspiration

- The Anti-Federalist, Brutus No. 2 (*)
- Dallin H. Oaks, “The Divinely Inspired Constitution,” *Ensign*, February 1992, pp. 68-74. (*)
- Continue reading Fiorina, *Culture War?*

May 14

American Political Culture

- Chapter 4, *America's New Democracy*
- Robert D. Putnam, “E Pluribus Unum: Diversity and Community in the 21st Century” (*)

Discussion of Fiorina’s *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America*

- Finish reading Fiorina’s *Culture War?*
- Alan Abramowitz, “Is Polarization a Myth?” (*)

- **GROUP PROJECT ASSIGNMENT DISTRIBUTED**

Week 4

May 19

Public Opinion

- Chapter 5, *America's New Democracy*
- Herbert Asher, “Analyzing and Interpreting Polls” (*)
- Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee, “Democratic Practice and Democratic Theory” (AG, p. 205)
- V.O. Key, Jr., “The Responsible Electorate” (AG, p. 213)

The Media

- Chapter 6, *America's New Democracy*
- Wattenberg, *Is Voting for Young People?*, Chs. 1-3
- Markus Prior, “News vs. Entertainment: How Increasing Media Choice Widens Gaps in Political Knowledge and Turnout” (*)

May 21

Individual Participation

- Chapter 7, *America's New Democracy*
- McDonald and Popkin, “The Myth of the Vanishing Voter” (*)
- Wattenberg, *Is Voting for Young People?*, Chs. 4-7
- APSA Task Force on Inequality and American Democracy, “American Democracy in an Age of Rising Inequality” (*)

May 22-May 26: **MIDTERM EXAM (AVAILABLE IN THE TESTING CENTER)**

Week 5

May 26

National Elections

- Chapter 8, *America's New Democracy*
- Fiorina, "Theories of Retrospective Voting" (*)
- Achen and Bartels, "Blind Retrospection: Electoral Responses to Droughts, Floods, and Shark Attacks" (*)
- Samuel L. Popkin, *The Reasoning Voter: Communication and Persuasion in Presidential Campaigns* (*)

May 28

Political Parties and Interest Groups

- Chapter 9, *America's New Democracy*
- V.O. Key, *Southern Politics in State and Nation*, Ch. 14 (*)
- Jeffrey M. Berry, "Madison's Dilemma" (AG, p. 220)
- Mark J. Rozell and Clyde Wilcox, "Interest Groups and the American Political System" (AG, p. 241)

Recommended (but not required) reading:

- Report of the Committee on Political Parties, American Political Science Association, "Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System" (AG, 181)

- **ESSAY DRAFT DUE TO BLACKBOARD AND WRITING GROUP BY MAY 28 AT 11:59PM**

Week 6

June 2

Congress

- Chapter 10, *America's New Democracy*
- Edmund Burke, "Speech to the Electors of Bristol" (AG, p. 355)
- Richard Fenno, "If, as Ralph Nader Says, Congress Is 'The Broken Branch,' How Come We Love Our Congressmen So Much?" (AG, p. 358)
- David R. Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection* (AG, p. 372)
- Richard Fenno, "Home Style and Washington Career" (AG, p. 377)

Recommended (but not required) reading:

- Federalist No. 53, 56, 57, 58, 62, 63 (AG, p. 322)

June 4

The Presidency and the Bureaucracy

- Dahl, *How Democratic Is the American Constitution?*, Ch. 4 (*)
- Chapter 11, *America's New Democracy*
- Federalist No. 70 (AG, p. 256)
- Richard Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents* (AG, p. 264)
- Fred I Greenstein, *The Presidential Difference* (*)
- Chapter 12, *America's New Democracy*

Recommended (but not required) reading:

- Peter Woll, "Constitutional Democracy and Bureaucratic Power" (AG, p. 308)

- **ESSAY FINAL REVISION DUE TO BLACKBOARD BY JUNE 5 AT 11:59PM!**

Week 7

June 9

The Judiciary

- Chapter 13, *America's New Democracy*
- Federalist No. 78 (AG, p. 386)
- Marbury v. Madison (AG, p. 391)
- Christopher Eisgruber, *Constitutional Self-Government*, Ch. 2 (*)

Constitutional Interpretation

- Griswold v. Connecticut (*)
- Antonin Scalia, "Liberty and Abortion: A Strict Constructionist's View" (AG, p. 418)
- William Brennan, "Address before the Text and Teaching Symposium" (*)
- Stephen Breyer, *Active Liberty: Interpreting Our Democratic Constitution* (*)

June 11

Civil Liberties: Free Speech and Religion

- Chapter 14, *America's New Democracy*
- Brandenburg v. Ohio (*)
- Lee v. Weisman (*)
- Santa Fe Independent School District v. Doe (*)
- Wisconsin v. Yoder (*)

Civil Rights and Your Responsibilities

- Chapter 15, *America's New Democracy*
- Plessy v. Ferguson (AG, p. 134)
- Brown v. Board of Education (AG, p. 137)

Wednesday, June 17: **FINAL EXAM, 7pm – 10pm**

POLICIES

It is your responsibility to read and follow these policies. Their presence in writing here constitutes fair notice to you. Please pay careful attention and follow each one!

• **Attendance and Participation:** In order to succeed in this course, your consistent attendance and regular participation in class discussions is essential. You are responsible for all material presented in lecture. Multiple unexcused absences are grounds for a significantly lower participation grade.

While some portion of each class period will be devoted to lecture, we will also discuss together the topics under consideration. I expect everyone to participate meaningfully in our discussions. If you find that such participation is a special challenge for you, please come see me so we can talk about how you can most effectively join the conversation.

• **Communication.** My door is always open to you, and I hope you will feel free to contact me about issues that arise during the course of the semester. I'm happy to meet with you during office hours or by appointment to discuss any aspect of this course. Just ask or e-mail me, or drop by my office during my regularly scheduled office hours.

Because it is the best way for us to communicate with each other outside of class, all class members are *required* to maintain an active email account. It is your responsibility to ensure that the email address that is listed for you in the BYU directory is accurate. To update your email address, log in to Route Y and select "Update Personal Information." There you can specify a current email address if you are not using the one assigned to you by BYU, or you can have your BYU email forwarded to the account you plan to use. I will relay important or time-sensitive class announcements via email. I **strongly** encourage you to check your email daily throughout the semester. You are responsible for any information that I pass along via this medium.

• **Extensions: All deadlines in this course are firm.** Except in the case of medical or family emergency, I give no individual extensions. If, due to such an emergency, you cannot meet a deadline, please contact me as soon as possible. In the event of a medical emergency, you must produce a note from a doctor or from the Student Health Center (or bring me pictures of your newly born baby). Late written work will be marked down one full letter grade for each day late, beginning one minute after the assignment is due.

• **Honor Code:** I expect that you will live by the university's academic honesty policy, which you have already signed: BYU students should seek to be totally honest in their dealings with others. They should complete their own work and be evaluated based upon that work. They should avoid academic dishonesty and misconduct in all its forms, including plagiarism, fabrication or falsification, cheating, and other academic misconduct. Students are responsible not only to adhere to the Honor Code requirement to be honest but also to assist other students in fulfilling their commitment to be honest.

• **Plagiarism:** While all students sign the honor code, there are still specific skills most students need to master over time in order to correctly cite sources, especially in this new age of the internet; as well as deal with the stress and strain of college life without resorting to cheating. Please know that as your professor I will notice instances of cheating on exams or plagiarizing

on papers. See <http://www.byu.edu/honorcode> for specific examples of intentional, inadvertent plagiarism, and fabrication, falsification.

Writing submitted for credit at BYU must consist of the student's own ideas presented in sentences and paragraphs of his or her own construction. The work of other writers or speakers may be included when appropriate (as in a research paper or book review), but such material must support the student's own work (not substitute for it) and must be clearly identified by appropriate introduction and punctuation and by footnoting or other standard referencing. The substitution of another person's work for the student's own or the inclusion of another person's work without adequate acknowledgment (whether done intentionally or not) is known as plagiarism. It is a violation of academic, ethical, and legal standards and can result in a failing grade not only for the paper but also for the course in which the paper is written. In extreme cases, it can justify expulsion from the University. Because of the seriousness of the possible consequences, students who wonder if their papers are within these guidelines should visit the Writing Lab or consult a faculty member who specializes in the teaching of writing or who specializes in the subject discussed in the paper. Useful books to consult on the topic include the current *Harbrace College Handbook*, the *MLA Handbook*, and James D. Lester's *Writing Research Papers*.

You should be careful to avoid the following examples of plagiarism: (1) Turning in work or portions of work that are identical to work submitted by another student. If two paragraphs of different papers are identical, we will assume that plagiarism occurred and will treat the incident as a serious violation of the Honor Code. (2) Using work from past semesters as anything other than a guide or supplement. If work is submitted for this semester which follows the format or instructions of a previous semester, we will assume that plagiarism occurred. We encourage you to work with other students and even consult work done in previous semesters. However, the work you turn in must be entirely your own work. Because of the simplicity of "cut and paste," it is easy to pass off another person's work as your own. It is your responsibility to make sure that your work is entirely your own.

- **Honor Pledge:** As a way of reinforcing the importance of academic honesty, I am adopting a tradition from Princeton University for the essays you turn in this semester. You should write the following pledge at the end of all drafts and revisions, and then sign it (or, if the paper is submitted electronically, type your name, which will count as your signature): "This paper represents my own work in accordance with University regulations."

- **Discrimination:** Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits sex discrimination against any participant in an educational program or activity that receives federal funds. The act is intended to eliminate sex discrimination in education. Title IX covers discrimination in programs, admissions, activities, and student-to-student sexual harassment. BYU's policy against sexual harassment extends not only to employees of the university but to students as well. If you encounter unlawful sexual harassment or gender based discrimination, please talk to your professor; contact the Equal Employment Office at 378-5895 or 367-5689 (24-hours); or contact the Honor Code Office at 378-2847.

- **Access:** Brigham Young University is committed to providing a working and learning atmosphere which reasonably accommodates qualified persons with disabilities. If you have any disability which may impair your ability to complete this course successfully, please contact the

University Accessibility Center (422-2767). Reasonable academic accommodations are reviewed for all students who have qualified documented disabilities. Services are coordinated with the student and instructor by the UAC office. If you need assistance or if you feel you have been unlawfully discriminated against on the basis of disability, you may seek resolution through established grievance policy and procedures. You should contact the Equal Employment Office at 378-5895, D-282 ASB.

WHAT TO DO NOW

When you get to this point in the syllabus, please e-mail Dr. Karpowitz to say that you read it, and tell me something about yourself and about your goals for the semester. Feel free to ask any questions that you may have about the course.