

Political Science 110 - American Government and Politics

Winter 2009

Professor Richard Davis

754 SWKT

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 1:30-3 pm, Fridays 2-4 p.m.

Teaching Assistants and Respective Office Hours (in 383 SWKT)

Amelia Fenn

Becca Jack

Tyler Nickl

Stephanie Pate

Alyson Paxman

Course Description

This course is designed as an introductory survey to American Politics and Government. During this semester we explore the roots of American democracy, including the U.S. Constitution and the early years of the Republic. We discuss how the Constitution is applied today in areas such as freedom of religion, freedom of speech, and other elements of the Bill of Rights. Then we turn our attention to the political culture, i.e. our shared political values, and how we acquire our political ideology. Next we discuss organizations affecting American politics - interest groups, political parties, and the news media.

We then move on to an analysis of the electoral process, particularly as it relates to presidential elections. The institutions of government come next - Congress, the presidency, the Supreme Court, and the bureaucracy. We examine how Congress is organized and the process of legislation occurs. We see how the president seeks to assert a leadership role over the Congress and the nation and how that role has changed during our history. The place of the judicial branch is the next subject with emphasis on the Supreme Court's policy making role today. The final institution we will cover is the bureaucracy. The last section of the course handles public policy issues, including domestic, defense, and foreign policy.

Course Objectives

As instructor, my intent is to do more than impart knowledge to you. I want you to develop your critical analysis skills, as well as your oral and written abilities. I want you to desire to learn more about American politics than you know now, so that much of what you learn about

this subject will not be what you take notes on in class or read in the texts, but instead will be the product of your own thirst for knowledge.

Another objective of this course is to stimulate your effort to learn. Learning requires effort on the part of both the teacher and the student. The teacher must be willing to show the way, but the student has to want to walk down the path. I will do my part to enlighten your mind about this subject and offer opportunities for you to learn independently. But you must walk down that path.

Also, it is my objective not only to equip you with knowledge for effective citizenship, but to encourage your participation in the political process as well. It is my expectation that this course will help equip you not only to follow American government in the future, but also to help shape it at the national, state, or local level.

Teaching Assistants/Review and Discussion Sections

The teaching assistants are here to assist you in learning. Use them as a means to help you understand the course material and get the most out of this course.

During their office hours, each TA will be available to answer questions and offer the opportunity for further discussion. These sections are particularly useful for those of you who speak up less in the large class, but feel more comfortable being vocal in a small group setting.

Whether you sign up for a discussion section, you will be assigned to a section and a TA. That person will be responsible for grading much of your work and tracking your progress through the semester.

There are certain things the teaching assistants will not do. They will not take or provide lecture notes for you. They are not expected to schedule times to see you outside their normal office hours. They are not expected to set course policy. If you have a question about class policy/procedure, come to me.

Required Texts

To start you on your study of American Government, I am assigning the following required texts:

Patterson, *The American Democracy*, 8th ed., 2008

McKenna and Feingold, *Taking Sides: Political Issues*, 16th ed, 2008

In addition, there will be a set of additional readings you will be expected to use. These will be available via Blackboard.

You are also expected to read a serious newspaper. I recommend one of the following for the period of this semester: *The New York Times* or *The Washington Post National Weekly Edition*. Subscription forms for the *New York Times* will be circulated in class the first day or two of class or can be picked up at the *New York Times* subscription desk. Sign up for the *Post* will be available in class shortly. If you prefer to read these online, you may do so.

This syllabus and other material relevant to the course are available on Blackboard. Please visit it frequently to view news of the class and complete assignments.

Course Requirements

1. Three Midterm Exams (15% each).....	45%
2. Short Essays.....	15%
3. Quizzes.....	15%
4. Final Examination.....	25%

1. **Midterm examinations** (See below for dates) The exams will include multiple choice and essay questions from the texts and the lecture.
2. **Short Essay** – Two short essays of no more than four pages each will be assigned during the semester. Essays must be double-spaced with one-inch margins using 10 or 12 point font. Essays can be submitted in paper or electronic form. If in electronic form they must be in a Word attachment, with page numbering, and have the same length as if they were in paper form. Essays are due by 5 p.m. on the due date designated below. If sending an essay by e-mail, **DO NOT SUBMIT IT TO PROFESSOR DAVIS**. Send it to your TA. If submitting paper, you can hand it in during class or at the Political Science office on the seventh floor of the SWKT. Essays will be graded down one letter grade for each day submitted late. Due dates are below.

Essay Topics:

First Essay – Issue 3 or 9 (choose one)

Second Essay - Issue 7 or 8 (choose one)

Essay Guidelines

The essay should include an introduction, the main body, and a conclusion. The body should consist of a description of the arguments used by BOTH sides of the debate, a critique of both sets of arguments, and a conclusion where you side with one side or the other and why. Be sure you describe both sides of the debate, not just one. Be objective in presentation of the arguments. But in the critique and the conclusion you would be expected to take a position. However, make sure you defend your position.

A rule of thumb is to devote a paragraph or two to an introduction, a page or so for one side's arguments, another page or so to the other side's arguments, another page or so for critiques, and then a paragraph or two devoted to your views, and a conclusion of a paragraph or two.

A critique is where you find and state flaws in the essay due to the arguments and/or the evidence presented to sustain the author's claims. For example, the claim that abortion on demand should not be overturned by the Supreme Court typically is supported by the argument that there is a right of privacy in the Constitution. A critique could note that the Constitution does not enumerate a right of privacy. Another example would be if an author writes that the death penalty deters crime and offers evidence of a low rate of violent crime in states where executions (say, Texas) are common. An example of a critique is the retort that there are multiple factors causing a lower rate of violent crime.

How does the author know that the use of the death penalty is the cause?

The TAs are available during office hours to look over drafts of essays in advance of the due date.

3. **Quizzes.** Unannounced quizzes will be given at the beginning or end of class. These quizzes will cover the material since the last quizzes. They will be multiple choice quizzes. There will be no quiz make-up allowed. The lowest quiz grade will be dropped.
4. **Final examination** - The final examination will be held in-class during the final exam period. It will be comprehensive. Travel arrangements, weddings, vacations, etc. at the end of the semester will not be considered an acceptable excuse for missing the final. Please plan accordingly.

Plagiarism/Other Work

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. Work for other courses will not be accepted for assignments in this course.

Sexual Harassment

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.

People with Disabilities

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 Services for Students with Disabilities Office (378-2767). Reasonable academic accommodations are reviewed for all students who have qualified documented disabilities. Services are coordinated with the student and instructor by the SSD 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.

Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Assignments

Week of...

January 5	Introduction, Patterson, ch. 1; Framing of the Constitution, ch.2
January 12	Framing of the Constitution, Patterson, ch.2; <i>Taking Sides</i> , Issue 1, 2
January 19	Federalism/State and Local Government, Patterson, ch 3,18
January 26	Civil Liberties, Patterson, ch.4; <i>Taking Sides</i> , Issues 8, 10, 13, 15
February 2	Civil Rights, Patterson, ch.5; <i>Taking Sides</i> , Issues 9,
February 9	Public Opinion and Participation, Patterson, chs 6 and 7
February 16	Political Parties and Elections, Patterson, ch. 8, <i>Taking Sides</i> , Issues 3, 5
February 23	Interest Groups, Patterson, ch. 9
March 2	News Media, Patterson, ch.10; <i>Taking Sides</i> , Issue 4
March 9	Congress, Patterson, ch.11; <i>Taking Sides</i> , Issue 6
March 16	Presidency, Patterson, ch.12; <i>Taking Sides</i> , Issue 4, 7
March 23	Bureaucracy, Patterson, ch 13.
March 30	Judiciary, Patterson, ch.14; <i>Taking Sides</i> , Issue 5
April 6	Public Policy, Patterson, chs 13, 15-17; <i>Taking Sides</i> , Issues 11, 12, 14, 16-21
April 13	Where Do We Go From Here?

Midterm and Final Exam Dates:

- January 30
- February 27
- March 27
- Friday, April 17, 11 am

Essay Due Dates:

- First Essay: February 12
- Second Essay: March 12

Movie Night: March 17