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 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 consist of between 100 and 175 pages per week.

The majority of your final grade (90%) comes from your essays and exams. The final 10% comes from your participation in class. Here is the grade breakdown:

- 10% Essay #1
- 25% Essay #2
- 25% Midterm Exam
- 30% Final Exam
- 10% Participation

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. Because this is an honors section, my expectations for your work will be high.

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:**
- Meena Bose and John J. DiIulio, Jr., eds., *Classic Ideas and Current Issues in American Government*
- Robert Dahl, *How Democratic Is the American Constitution?*
- Morris P. Fiorina et al., *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America*
- Stephen Macedo et al., *Democracy at Risk: How Political Choices Undermine Citizen Participation, and What We Can Do About It* (RECOMMENDED, NOT REQUIRED)

**Available by Other Means**
- A few 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 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](http://www.nytimes.com).
Note: Reading assignments are to be completed before class on the day indicated. 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

September 5: Introduction and Course Overview

September 7: “We the People” and Our Democracy

- Chapter 1, *America's New Democracy*
- The Declaration of Independence (*AND*, A-3)
- The Declaration of Sentiments (*CICI*, 1.6)
- Martin Luther King, Jr., "I Have a Dream" (*CICI*, 1.7)

Week 2

September 12: The Constitution

- Chapter 2, *America's New Democracy*
- Federalist No. 10 (*AND*, A-25)
- Federalist No. 51 (*AND*, A-31)
- The Anti-Federalist, Cato No. 3 and Brutus No. 2 (*CICI*, 1.5)

September 14: The Constitution (cont’d)

- Dahl, *How Democratic Is the American Constitution?* (Introduction, Chapters 1-2, Appendix A)
- Ralph Hancock, "Introduction," *Just and Holy Principles: Latter-day Saint Readings on America and the Constitution*, p. ix-xiv. (*)

Week 3

September 19: Federalism

- Chapter 3, *America's New Democracy*
- Federalist No. 39 (*CICI*, 2.1)
- McCulloch v. Maryland (*CICI*, 2.2)

September 21: Federalism (cont’d)

- Richard P. Nathan, “Hard Road Ahead” (*CICI*, 2.3)
- Martha Derthick, “Keeping the Compound Republic: How Many Communities?” (*CICI*, 2.4)
Week 4

September 26: American Political Culture

- Chapter 4, *America's New Democracy*
- Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (*CICI*, 3.1)
- Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone* (*CICI*, 3.2)
- Constitution Day Address by Robert Putnam at 11am *(ATTENDANCE REQUIRED)*

September 28: Public Opinion

- Chapter 5, *America's New Democracy*
- Walter Lippmann, “The Phantom Public” (*CICI*, 4.1)
- Begin reading Fiorina, *Culture War?*

Week 5

October 3: Public Opinion (cont’d)

- Larry Bartels, “Democracy with Attitudes” (*)
- Stanley Feldman, “Structure and Consistency in Public Opinion: The Role of Core Beliefs and Values” (*)
- Page and Shapiro, *The Rational Public*, Chapter 1 (*)

October 5: The Media

- Martin Gilens, *Why Americans Hate Welfare*, Chs. 5-6 (*)
- *Essay #1 Assignment Distributed*

Week 6

October 10: Individual Participation

- Chapter 6, *America's New Democracy*
- V.O. Key, “The Responsible Electorate” (*CICI*, 5.2)
- APSA Task Force on Inequality and American Democracy, “American Democracy in an Age of Rising Inequality” (*)
- Macedo et al., *Democracy at Risk*, Ch. 1 (*)

October 12: Individual Participation (cont’d)

- McDonald and Popkin, “The Myth of the Vanishing Voter” (*CICI*, 5.2)
- Macedo et al., *Democracy at Risk*, Chs. 2-3 (*)
Week 7

October 17: Discussion of Fiorina’s *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America*

- Finish reading Fiorina’s *Culture War?*
- Alan Abramowitz, “Is Polarization a Myth?” (*)
- **ESSAY #1 DRAFT DUE**

October 19: **IN-CLASS MIDTERM**

Week 8

October 24: Political Parties and Interest Groups

- Chapter 8, *America’s New Democracy*
- V.O. Key, *Southern Politics in State and Nation*, Ch. 14 (*)

October 26: Political Parties and Interest Groups (cont’d)

- Birnbaum and Murray, *Showdown at Gucci Gulch: Lawmakers, Lobbyists, and the Unlikely Triumph of Tax Reform* (*CICI*, 6.5)

Week 9

October 31: National Elections

- Chapter 7, *America’s New Democracy*
- Fiorina, “Theories of Retrospective Voting” (*CICI*, 7.1)
- Stokes and DiIulio, “The Setting: Valence Politics in Modern Elections” (*CICI*, 7.2)
- **ESSAY #1 FINAL REVISION DUE**

November 2: National Elections (cont’d)

- Fiorina, “Theories of Retrospective Voting” (*CICI*, 7.1)
- Achen and Bartels, “Blind Retrospection: Electoral Responses to Droughts, Floods, and Shark Attacks” (*)
- **Essay #2 Assignment Distributed**

Week 10

November 7: Congress (**ELECTION DAY!**)

- Chapter 9, *America’s New Democracy*
- Federalist No. 57 (*CICI*, 9.1)
- David R. Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection* (*CICI*, 9.3)
November 9: Congress (cont’d)
- Federalist No. 63 (CICI, 9.2)
- Policymaking in Congress (CICI, 9.5)
- Keith Krehbiel, *Pivotal Politics*, Chapter 2 (*)

Week 11

November 14: The Presidency
- Chapter 10, *America's New Democracy*
- Federalist No. 70 (CICI, 10.1)
- Dahl, *How Democratic Is the American Constitution?*, Chs. 3-4

November 16: The Presidency (cont’d)
- Richard Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents* (CICI, 10.2)
- Fred I Greenstein, *The Presidential Difference* (CICI, 10.3)
- Aaron Wildavsky, “The Two Presidencies” (CICI, 10.4)

Week 12

November 21: *NO CLASS* (Attend your Friday courses)
- **ESSAY #2 DRAFT DUE TO BLACKBOARD BY 5pm**

November 23: *NO CLASS – HAPPY THANKSGIVING!*

Week 13

November 28: The Bureaucracy
- Chapter 11, *America's New Democracy*
- John Dilulio, “Government by Proxy: A Faithful Overview” (CICU, 11.3)
- James Q. Wilson, *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It* (CICU, 11.4)
- **Schedule writing group meetings to discuss Essay #2**

November 30: The Judiciary
- Chapter 12, *America's New Democracy*
- Federalist No. 78 (CICU, 12.1)
- Marbury v. Madison (CICU, 12.2)

Week 14

December 5: The Judiciary (cont’d)
- Stephen Breyer, *Active Liberty: Interpreting Our Democratic Constitution* (CICU, 12.4)
- Christopher Eisgruber, *Constitutional Self-Government*, Ch. 2 (*)
December 7: Civil Liberties

- Chapter 13, *America's New Democracy*
- Brandenburg v. Ohio (*CICU*, 13.1)
- Santa Fe Independent School District v. Doe (*CICU*, 13.2)
- **ESSAY #2 FINAL REVISION DUE**

Week 15

December 12: Civil Rights

- Chapter 14, *America's New Democracy*
- Brown v. Board of Education (*CICU*, 13.3)
- Lawrence v. Texas (*)

December 14: Conclusion and Wrap-Up

- Chapter 15, *America's New Democracy*
- Dahl, *How Democratic Is the American Constitution?*, Chs. 5-7
- James L. Sundquist, “Constitutional Reform and Effective Government” (*CICI*, 1.8)

December 20: **FINAL EXAM, 11am – 2pm**

**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](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, print 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 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.

**WHAT TO DO NOW**

When you get to this point in the syllabus, please e-mail me 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.