Political Science 110 –
American Government and Politics

Fall 2010
Professor Richard Davis
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Office Hours: Monday – 9-10:00 am; Wednesday – 4:30-5:30 pm

Teaching Assistants and Respective Office Hours (in 168A SWKT)

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Thursday-3-4; Friday 9-9:50

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. 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 how Congress makes policy. 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. In addition, we study the politics of 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 communication 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 prepare 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. They can answer most of your questions about the course.

The review/discussion sections are not required. However, I strongly suggest you attend. Extra credit will be given for attendance. This is your opportunity to ask questions about course material and to discuss the course topics in a small group setting.

During the section period, 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.

Even if you will not attend, please sign up for one of them because that act assigns you to a teaching assistant who grades most of your work. If you do not 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. If you have a problem with a TA and feel you should be reassigned, please come talk to me.

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.

**Required Texts**

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


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 during the semester. I recommend one of the following: *The New York Times* or *The Washington Post National Weekly Edition*. We will explain how to subscribe. 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 Grading**

1. Three Midterm Exams (in the Testing Center) - 20 percent each  
   - 60%
2. Short Essays -  
   - 10
3. Pop Quizzes -  
   - 10
4. Final Examination -  
   - 20

1. **Midterm examinations** (See below for dates) The exams will include multiple choice and essay questions from the assigned readings (both online and the texts) and the lecture.
2. **Short Essays** – Two short essays of no more than three pages each will be assigned during the semester. Essays must be double-spaced with one-inch margins using 10 or 12 point font. Essays must be submitted at 745 SWKT (Political Science Office). Essays are due by 5 p.m. on the due date designated below. Essays will be graded down one letter grade for each day submitted late. Due dates are below.

   **Essay Topics:**
   - First Essay – Issue 9 or 10 (choose one)
Second Essay - Issue 3 or 6 (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 in both readings and a critique of both sets of arguments. Be sure you describe the arguments of both sides of the debate, not just one. Be objective in your presentation of the arguments and in the critique. Critique both sides equally.

A rule of thumb is to devote a paragraph to an introduction, a page or so for one side’s arguments, another page or so to the other side’s arguments, and a final page or so for critiques.

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. However, if you do have a TA look over a draft, make sure it is your own TA.

3. **Pop Quizzes** – Pop quizzes will be given at the beginning or the end of the class at selected class periods. These will not be announced in advance. They will cover the material since the preceding pop quiz or (for the first one) since the beginning of the semester.

4. **Final examination** - The final examination will be held on the assigned date and time in the Final Exam Schedule (see below). It will only cover the material from the last midterm.

**Extra Credit Opportunities** – There will be extra credit opportunities provided to you during the semester. I do not expect any student to be able to take advantage of all of them. No duplicate work will be offered since these opportunities are purely extra credit. You will be informed of them through the semester. These may include attendance at additional lectures, short essays or reports, etc. One opportunity will be attendance at section labs held by TAs. Another will be visiting Professor Davis during his office hours prior to the second midterm exam. These will be discussed later.
Learning Outcomes

1. be spiritually strengthened. In particular, students will
   • be able to articulate principles of faith in political analysis

2. be intellectually enlarged. In particular, students will
   • be exposed to ideas in American politics and possess a basic factual knowledge of American political processes

3. have stronger character. In particular students will:
   • bring honesty and integrity to daily life, public affairs, and professional activities
   • recognize plagiarism and write without plagiarizing

4. have a lifelong desire to learn and to serve. In particular students will:
   • participate effectively in political processes by having an appropriate knowledge of national politics and political thought.
   • want to serve the communities and organizations to which they belong

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
August 30 Introduction, Patterson, ch. 1 and ch.2
September 6 Framing of the Constitution, Patterson, ch.2; Taking Sides, Issue 1, 2
September 13 Federalism/State and Local Government, Patterson, ch 3,18
September 20 Civil Liberties, Patterson, ch.4; Taking Sides, Issues 8, 10, 13, 15
September 27 Civil Rights, Patterson, ch.5; Taking Sides, Issues 9; Graham, pp. 1-143
October 4 Public Opinion & Participation, Patterson, chs 6 & 7; Graham, pp. 144-258.
October 11 Political Parties and Elections, Patterson, ch.8, Taking Sides, Issues 3
October 18 Interest Groups, Patterson, ch. 9
October 25 News Media, Patterson, ch.10
November 1 Congress, Patterson, ch.11; Taking Sides, Issue 6
November 8 Presidency, Patterson, ch.12; Taking Sides, Issue 4, 7
November 15 Bureaucracy, Patterson, ch.13.
November 22 Judiciary, Patterson, ch.14; Taking Sides, Issue 5
November 29 Judiciary, Patterson, ch.14; Taking Sides, Issue 5
December 7 Public Policy, Patterson, chs 13, 15-17; Taking Sides, Issues 11, 12, 14, 16-21

Midterm and Final Exam Dates:
September 24, 25
October 22, 23
November 19, 20
Final Exam – Wednesday, December 15 – 2:30-5:30 pm

Essay Due Dates:
First Essay: October 12
Second Essay: November 9