Course Overview and Objectives

This course is about American government institutions and processes. It is not restricted to political science majors and there are no prerequisites. During this course we will discuss various aspects of the American political system, introducing you to the institutions and processes of American government by covering topics such as the founding and the Constitution; Congress; the presidency; the judiciary; public opinion; elections and voting behavior; political parties; interest groups; and so on.

The objectives for this course are:

1. To obtain a general working knowledge of American government and politics, including the essential features of political institutions and processes. In particular, you should gain a greater appreciation for the importance of our constitutional structure and other rules and norms of American politics.
2. To obtain knowledge of broader theories of political science and how those theories apply to institutions and processes of American politics.
3. To develop greater facility in applying the concepts from #1 and #2 gained from the readings and lectures to current political events that will shape your future attempts to evaluate American politics.
4. To improve your ability to think, discuss, write, and otherwise express yourself effectively by providing opportunities to do so on topics in American politics.

Reading

Required Texts: To help you achieve course objectives #1 and #2 I have chosen three required books. They are available for purchase in the BYU Bookstore, but I have also provided ISBN numbers should you prefer to search for these titles elsewhere.

This is the main textbook for the course. It contains a solid introduction to all of the topics we will discuss in class and should be the starting point for your reading each week. There are helpful study materials for students on the textbook web site at: [http://www.pearsonhighered.com/fiorina5e](http://www.pearsonhighered.com/fiorina5e)


Other Required Readings: Any other required readings will be accessible via the course website on Blackboard under the “Course Materials” section in a folder labeled “Readings.” They will be accessible as Portable Document Files (PDF) and can be opened and read/printed using Adobe Acrobat Reader software available for free download and in campus computer labs. If you need help accessing these files, please ask the instructor or a teaching assistant.

Current Events/New York Times: To help you achieve course objective #3, we will apply what we are learning to the news of the day. Regularly following the news about American politics through a major national newspaper will be an important part of writing your essays as well as successfully responding to quiz and exam questions. Students are therefore required to read a major national newspaper each weekday. I strongly recommend taking advantage of the discounted rate to subscribe to the New York Times. See: [http://nytimes.com/student](http://nytimes.com/student) or [http://homedelivery.nytimes.com/HDS/StudentHome.do?mode=studHome](http://homedelivery.nytimes.com/HDS/StudentHome.do?mode=studHome)

You may also read it on the Internet at [http://www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com). However, keep in mind that some articles in the print edition are not available in the online edition. Other suggested newspapers with excellent coverage of American politics include: The *Washington Post* and The *Wall Street Journal*.

Reading a major national newspaper is required for this class because it will contain outstanding coverage of American national politics and government institutions that is not contained in local news sources. Quiz questions during the semester will draw upon current events covered in the national sections of major newspapers.

Course Requirements

Exams In order to assess your attainment of the course objectives, three exams will be administered. All three exams will be taken in the testing center as indicated in the course schedule. The final exam will be cumulative, but will place extra weight on the material covered in the last third of the semester.
Failing to take an exam within the scheduled time period without my prior permission will result in a zero on that exam. Make-up exams will only be arranged in cases of extreme hardship (e.g. a death in the family) or with an official university excused absence, so please be sure to clear it with me in advance if you are unable to take an exam at the scheduled time.

The final exam will be available during final exam period (December 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17) in the Testing Center. In accordance with university policy the final exam will only be given at this time. Under no circumstances will I give a final exam early. Please do not ask me to make an exception to this policy as I am not authorized to do so. Again, make-up exams can only be arranged in advance and cases of extreme hardship.

Written Assignments: To help you achieve course objective #4, you will produce three written assignments designed to help you integrate the supplemental readings and course assignments with the lectures and other course material. The first assignment will be a paper comparing and contrasting two views of the Constitution. The second assignment will be an op-ed style blog posting to address a national issue of importance to you. The third paper will focus exclusively on America, The Owner’s Manual and will deal with your plan to solve a problem involving government. Details about the expectations for each paper will be made available in the “Course Documents” section of Blackboard. Papers are due at the beginning of class on the due dates listed below in the course schedule.

Quizzes: To help you achieve objective #3, I will administer periodic quizzes to test your knowledge of current events. You can best prepare for these quizzes by regular class attendance, keeping up with the readings and by following the news about American politics in a major national newspaper. The quizzes will be short (about 5 questions). They are intended to provide you with some incentive to keep up on the reading and attend class as well as give you a sense for the types of questions you might see on exams so that you can be better prepared.

I will not give make-up quizzes for any reason. To account for illness and unavoidable or university excused absences, at the end of the semester I will drop your three lowest quiz scores. Sample quiz questions along with advice on reading the New York Times (and by extension other national newspapers) is located within a folder in the “Course Documents” section of Blackboard.

Participation: You will also be graded on participation during class and especially outside of regular class sessions. In such a large class, your participation during class sessions is often limited; therefore, to satisfy the participation component of the grade, students may earn up to five participation points during the semester for participation outside of class. Points may be earned by doing the following: visiting with the professor or a TA during office hours or by appointment to discuss the class (you may earn multiple points for multiple visits), attending an exam review or paper writing help session, or filling out the online course evaluation at the end of the semester. Other opportunities to earn participation points will be announced in class as campus events or other significant opportunities arise. To avoid an end-of-semester rush, you are required to complete at least two participation points before the second mid-term exam. The participation points will be posted to Blackboard. It is your responsibility to check this periodically throughout the semester and promptly inform your TA of any possible errors.
To receive participation credit for completing the end-of-semester course evaluation, you must “release your name” to the instructor. You can complete the evaluation by logging into Route Y and entering the “Student Ratings” section. After you have completed the evaluation for this course, a checkbox will appear on the course list allowing you to release your name. This allows me to know that you have completed your evaluation. Your name will only be shown if there are more than 5 people in the class that have completed the evaluation. Your name is never linked to your evaluation. In other words, after submitting my grades, I will see the evaluations as well as a list of who completed them, but I will never know who said what. I strongly encourage you to give thoughtful attention to the course evaluation. I carefully consider student comments as I revise the course, and I appreciate your constructive comments.

Exit Poll Participation (Extra Credit): You are invited to participate as an interviewer in the Utah Colleges Exit Poll (UCEP). The UCEP has been interviewing voters in Utah elections since 1982 and this year’s exit poll will focus on the midterm elections in Utah. Students who qualify will have the opportunity to interview voters for a half day at a voting precinct in Utah on Tuesday, November 2, 2010. More information as well as specific assignments for location and time will be made later in the semester. This is a rare opportunity to learn about the practice, conduct, and excitement that surround elections. The experience will also increase your understanding and appreciation of public opinion. In addition to the extra credit interviewing experience, if enough students participate, we will devote some class time before and after the election to synthesize your learning experience as well as to examine some of the data together as it relates to course topics in elections, public opinion, public policy, and state and local government.

Extra Credit is offered in exchange for your participation as an exit poll interviewer as well as your thoughtful reflection about the experience as it relates to the course material. In addition to completing a half day of exit poll interviewing, those who would like to receive the extra credit will write a brief (1-2 page) essay on their exit poll experience. In this essay discuss what you have learned about the state of public opinion and elections in America based on your exit polling experience.

**Grading**

Your grade will be determined by a combination of your performance on quizzes, class participation, writing assignments, and exams and will be computed using a weighted average as follows:

| Written Assignment 1 (Constitution) | 10 % |
| Written Assignment 2 (op-ed blog)   | 10 % |
| Written Assignment 3 (Owner’s Manual)| 10 % |
| Quizzes and Participation            | 5 %  |
| Midterm 1                            | 20 % |
| Midterm 2                            | 20 % |
| Final Exam                           | 25 % |
| **Total**                            | **100%** |
The weighted average will then be calculated to assign a grade based \textit{approximately} on the scale below. I do not “curve” the final grades or deviate from the scale below \textit{unless it works to your benefit}.

\begin{itemize}
  \item A > 93\% 
  \item A- = 90-93 \%
  \item B+ = 87-89 \%
  \item B = 83-86 \%
  \item B- = 80-82 \%
  \item C+ = 77-79 \%
  \item C = 73-76 \%
  \item C- = 70-72 \%
  \item D+ = 67-69 \%
  \item D = 63-66 \%
  \item E < 63 \%
\end{itemize}

\textbf{Other Course Policies}

\textbf{Late Work} Late work will be penalized at a rate of ten percent of the points possible per working day that the assignment or paper is late. For example, an essay worth 100 points that is due in class on a Wednesday will be penalized 10 points if turned in by class time on Thursday (1 working day) and 20 points if turned in by class time on Friday. Exceptions to this policy are \textit{rare} and must be cleared with me \textit{in advance}. \textit{When turning in late work, email a copy both to your TA and to the course instructor}. The date and time that the email is received will remove ambiguity in applying the late work policy.

\textbf{Email Policy}: All class members are \textit{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.” Here 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. The instructor and teaching assistants will communicate important and time-sensitive class announcements via email. Informational announcements or those that are not time-sensitive will be posted to Blackboard. Email is also a very good way to reach me (or the teaching assistants) with questions. I strongly encourage you to check your email daily throughout the semester.

\textbf{Academic Honesty}: All of the work you do in this course is expected to be your own. 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 regards to the internet, as well as deal with the stress and strain of college life without resorting to cheating. I will notice instances of cheating on exams or plagiarizing on papers. Cheating, plagiarism (using someone else’s words or ideas without proper citation), and other forms of academic misconduct will not be tolerated, and they will be handled according to university policy. The Honor Code can be found here: http://saas.byu.edu/catalog/2009-2010ucat/GeneralInfo/HonorCode.php#HCOfficeInvolvement.

This site includes some examples of various forms of academic misconduct. Because our exams are in the testing center, you should be especially vigilant to refrain from discussing the contents of an exam with \textit{anyone} except the instructor or TAs until after the exam period has ended. If

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you have any doubt about your academic conduct, I encourage you to consult this web page and come speak with me.

Disability: I am committed to providing a learning atmosphere that reasonably accommodates qualified persons with disabilities. If you have any disability that may impair your ability to complete this course successfully, you are responsible for making your needs known to me and seeking available assistance from the university in a timely manner. In addition to notifying me, you must contact the University Accessibility Center (UAC) at 801-422-2767, 2170 WSC. The UAC reviews requests for reasonable academic accommodations for all students who have qualified documented disabilities, and any accommodations for this class must be coordinated with the UAC office. See http://uac.byu.edu/ for more information.

Discrimination/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 discrimination and sexual harassment extends not only to employees of the university but to students as well (see: http://www.byu.edu/hr/human-resource-services/equalemployment-opportunity) If you encounter sexual harassment or discrimination, please talk to me; contact the Equal Employment Office in D-282 ASB or by telephone at 801-422-3863 or 367-5689 (24-hours); or contact the Honor Code Office at 801-422-2847.

Learning Outcomes: The BYU Political Science Department has developed a set of expected student learning outcomes. These will help you understand the objectives of the political science curriculum, including this class. See: https://learningoutcomes.byu.edu/wiki/index.php/Political_Science. Feedback on the expected student learning outcomes can be given to me or sent to FHSS@byu.edu.

Course Schedule and Reading Assignments

Reading assignments are listed by topic in the order the topics will be covered in class. I suggest dividing the reading assignments listed for each week so that they are more or less evenly distributed throughout the week. For each topic, start with the reading in America’s New Democracy (AND) and then move to any supplementary reading material that is listed. Readings marked with a “♦” indicate that the material is posted on Blackboard (http://blackboard.byu.edu) as a PDF file.

Week 1 (Aug. 30, Sept. 1)
  Course Introduction
  The Founding
    AND, ch. 2
  The Constitution of the United States (AND Appendix pp. 453-471)

Week 2 (Sept. 8)
  The Founding, continued
  Federalist 10 and 51 (AND Appendix pp.472-481)

***No class on Monday, September 6th due to the Labor Day holiday.***

Week 3 (Sept. 13, 15)
Federalism
*AND, ch. 3
Owner’s Manual, chp. 3*

Week 4 (Sept. 20, 22)
Political Culture; Social and Economic Divisions
*AND, ch. 4, pp. 71-84
Political Ideology
*AND, ch. 4, pp. 84-97
Owner’s Manual, Prologue, Introduction, chs. 1 and 2
***essay #1 due Wednesday, September 22nd in class.***

Week 5 (Sept. 27, 29)
Political Parties
*AND, ch. 9, pp. 202-217*

Week 6 (Oct. 4, 6)
Interest Groups
*AND, ch. 9, pp. 217-233
Owner’s Manual, ch. 7*

Week 7 (Oct. 11, 13)
Public Opinion and Polling
*AND, ch. 5
Owner’s Manual ch. 4
***Midterm 1 in the Testing Center on Wednesday, October 13th and Thursday, October 14th. There is no late day for this exam. The exam will cover material from weeks 1-6.***

Week 8 (Oct. 18, 20)
Political Participation
*AND, ch. 7
***essay #2 due on Wednesday, October 20th in class.***

Week 9 (Oct. 25, 27)
Voting, Campaigns and Elections
*AND, ch. 8*
The Media
*AND*, ch. 6
*Owner’s Manual* ch. 8

Week 10 (Nov. 1, 3)
Congress
*AND*, ch. 10
*Owner’s Manual* chs. 5-6

Week 11 (Nov. 8, 10)
The Presidency
*AND*, ch. 11
*Spying Blind*, chs. 1-4 (pp. 1-100)

*** Midterm 2 in the Testing Center on Wednesday, November 10th and Thursday, November 11th. There is no late day for this exam. The exam will cover weeks 7-10

Week 12 (Nov. 15, 17)
The Bureaucracy
*AND*, ch. 12
*Spying Blind*, chs. 5-8 (pp. 101-197)

Week 13 (Nov. 22)
Making Government Work for You (Paper #3 discussion)
*Owner’s Manual*, chs. 9 and 10. Review other chapters as needed.
The Judiciary
*AND*, ch. 13

*** No class on Wednesday, November 24th due to the Thanksgiving holiday.

Week 14 (Nov. 29, Dec. 1)
Civil Liberties and Civil Rights
*AND*, chs. 14 and 15

***essay #3 due Wednesday, December 1st in class.

Week 15 (Dec. 6, 8)
Final Lecture
Reading Days, December 10th

***Final Exam, December 13th – December 17th in the Testing Center.