Political Science 110 - American Government and Politics
Brigham Young University
Winter Semester 2012

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Office Hours: Tuesday 3:30-5:30 pm and by appointment

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TA Office Hours: TA office hours and contact information will be distributed during the second week of classes. Because I am teaching all of the 110 sections this semester, you may meet with any TA from any section of 110 for help.

Course Overview and Learning 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.

Below are the learning objectives for this course. Students will be able to:

1. Analyze current events in American politics using Political Science concepts.
2. Describe the most important constitutional provisions in American national government and how they have changed over time.
3. Explain the role individuals play in American government and what factors influence their behavior.
4. Assess the functions and interactions of American political institutions.
5. Evaluate how you as an individual can effectively participate in the political process.
6. Think, discuss, write, and otherwise express yourself effectively on topics in American politics.

Reading

Required Texts:
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.

Other required readings or materials will be distributed in class or via email.

**Current Events/Major National Paper:** To help you achieve course objective #1, 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 questions. Students are therefore required to read a major national newspaper each weekday.

I recommend reading the New York Times. Other possible options for excellent daily coverage of American politics include The Washington Post and The Wall Street Journal. Local newspapers contain valuable information but are not sufficient for the purposes of this class. You may read the paper on the Internet, for example at [http://www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com) or [http://www.washingtonpost.com/](http://www.washingtonpost.com/). However, keep in mind that print editions and online editions are not identical. You will miss important cues without the headline and story placement that you can observe in the actual paper edition. 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). Alternatively, a limited number of free copies of the New York Times are available on campus each morning in the David M. Kennedy Center (Herald R. Clark Building) on campus. A paper is also generally available to read in the political science department office each day (745 SWKT).

**Course Requirements**

**Exams:**

In order to assess your attainment of the course objectives (especially objectives 2, 3, 4, and 6) 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 at the scheduled time 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 on the scheduled day.

The final exam will be available during final exam period 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.

**Writing Assignments:**

To help you achieve course object #6, you are required to complete five short writing assignments (blog posts) throughout the course of the semester. Due dates are listed in the course schedule. Additional details about each blog assignment will be provided in a separate document.

**Quizzes and Participation:** To help you achieve objective #1, I will administer occasional quizzes to check your knowledge of current events. You can best prepare for these quizzes by following the news about American politics in a major national newspaper. The quizzes will be short (about 5 questions). They are intended to incentivize keeping up on current events and attending class.
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.

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 during office hours or by appointment to discuss the class (you may earn multiple points for multiple visits)
- Visiting with a teaching assistant during office hours or by appointment to discuss the class (you may earn multiple points for multiple visits)
- 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 the course gradebook. It is your responsibility to check 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.

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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing Assignments</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes and Participation</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm 1</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm 2</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The weighted average will then be calculated to assign a grade based approximately on the scale below. I do not strictly impose a curve on the class grades. I may deviate from the scale below if it works to your collective benefit.
Other Course Policies

Late Work: Late work will be penalized at a rate of ten percent of the points possible per working day that the assignment is late. For example, an essay worth 100 points that is due at the beginning of class on a Tuesday will be penalized 10 points if completed by class time on Wednesday (1 working day) and 20 points if completed by class time on Thursday. Exceptions to this policy are rare and must be cleared with me in advance.

Email Policy: 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.” Here you can specify a current email address. I will communicate important and time-sensitive class announcements via email. Email is also a good way to reach me with questions. I strongly encourage you to check your email daily throughout the semester. In any email, include the class name (PLSC 110), your name, and the assignment title or issue in the subject line of the email.

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 at http://honorcode.byu.edu/ by clicking on the tab labeled “Honor Code Statement.” This includes some examples of various forms of academic misconduct. If 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/directory/equal-employment-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:** In addition to the learning outcomes listed above for this course, the BYU Political Science Department has developed a set of expected student learning outcomes for political science majors. These will help you understand the objectives of the political science curriculum, including this class. See: http://learningoutcomes.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 will be distributed in class or via email.

**Week 1 (Jan. 5)**

- Course Overview and Introduction

**Week 2 (Jan. 10, 12)**

- The Founding and the Constitution
  - *America’s New Democracy (AND)*, ch. 2
  - The Constitution of the United States (*AND* Appendices)
  - Federalist 10 and 51 (*AND* Appendices)

**Week 3 (Jan. 17, 19)**

- Federalism
  - *AND*, ch. 3
  - *Owner’s Manual*, chp. 3

- Political Culture; Social and Economic Divisions
  - *AND*, ch. 4, pp. 71-84
Week 4 (Jan. 24, 26)
***Blog Post 1 due Thursday, Jan. 26 at noon. Comments due Saturday, January 28 at noon.
    Political Ideology
    AND, ch. 4, pp. 85-97

Week 5 (Jan. 31, Feb. 2)
    Political Parties
    AND, ch. 9, pp. 203-218

Week 6 (Feb. 7, 9)
***Blog Post 2 due Thursday, Feb. 9 at noon. Comments due Saturday, Feb. 11 at noon.
    Interest Groups
    AND, ch. 9, pp. 218-232
    Owner’s Manual, ch. 7

Week 7 (Feb. 14, 16)
*** Midterm 1 in the Testing Center class on Thursday and Friday, February 16 and 17. The exam will cover material through week 6 (interest groups).
    Public Opinion and Polling
    AND, ch. 5
    Owner’s Manual ch. 4

Week 8 (Feb. 23)
***Tuesday Feb. 21 is a Monday instruction day at BYU.
    Political Participation
    AND, ch. 7

Week 9 (Feb. 28, March 1)
***Blog Post 3 due Thursday, March 1 at noon. Comments due Saturday, March 3 at noon.
    Voting, Campaigns and Elections
    AND, ch. 8
    Owner’s Manual ch. 8

Week 10 (March 6, 8)
    The Media
    AND, ch. 6
    Congress
    AND, ch. 10
    Owner’s Manual chs. 5-6

Week 11 (March 13, 15)
*** Midterm 2 in the Testing Center class on Thursday and Friday, March 15 and 16. The exam will cover material from weeks 7 (public opinion) through 10 (Congress).
    The Presidency
    AND, ch. 11
Week 12 (March 20, 22)
  The Bureaucracy
    AND, ch. 12
    Owner’s Manual, chs. 9 and 10.

Week 13 (March 27, 29)
  ***Blog Post 4 due Thursday, March 29 at noon. Comments due Saturday, March 31 at noon.
    The Judiciary
      AND, ch. 13

Week 14 (April 3, 5)
  How to apply The Owner’s Manual to writing assignment #5
    Review Owner’s Manual chapters as needed.
    Civil Liberties
      AND, ch. 14

Week 15 (April 10)
  ***Blog Post 5 due Tuesday, April 10 at noon. Comments due Thursday, April 12 at noon.
    Civil Rights
      AND, ch. 15

  ***The final exam will be in the Testing Center during finals week.