

POLITICAL SCIENCE 206

AMERICAN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

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This course is structured around the questions of the distribution of power at the level of the national government and the policy consequences of that distribution. Special emphasis will be placed on linking the segments of American politics. We are especially interested in asking the question, *What difference does it make?* In other words, what are the implications of how Americans govern for what government produces in the way of public policy? Two more specific themes will pervade the course, themes focused on the two great questions of governing: *How should we govern?* and *What should government do?*

The texts for the course are:

Edwards, Wattenberg, and Lineberry, *Government in America, 11th Edition, Election update*
Robert A. Dahl, *How Democratic is the American Constitution?*, 2nd ed. (Yale University Press), paperback
Martin P. Wattenberg, *Where Have all the Voters Gone?* (Harvard University Press), paperback
You will also need to read the *New York Times* daily

Because this is an honors course, we will focus on two dimensions of learning in addition to absorbing information from lectures and the text. First, we will relate matters in the course to current matters of politics and policy. The *New York Times* will be most helpful in this regard. Second, the term paper is designed to help develop analytical skills to make you more effective consumers of information on politics and policy,

There will be three examinations. The first will come after the section on Civil Rights and will count 20% of the course grade. The second will come after the section on Congress and will also count 20% of the course grade. The final examination will be comprehensive (weighted toward the sections of the course following the second exam) and count 30% of the course grade. Attendance at examinations is mandatory and make-up examinations will be given only under the direst circumstances. The tests will cover all lectures and readings, inclusively, and will never be open-book. Test dates will be announced well in advance. Every exam will contain questions on current events.

Each student will write a 10-page, double-spaced, typewritten essay, due on April 25, 2005 (see the discussion of the paper). The paper will count 20% of the course grade. Students should expect to consult the instructor regarding the paper several times during the semester.

Ten percent of the course grade will be based on instructor points, which will be allocated on the basis of class participation and attendance. Attendance is mandatory and will be taken in every class. Any unauthorized absences beyond two will lead to a loss of grade points, 2 percentage points per absence, up to 10 percentage points off the final grade. I expect participation in class discussion to be continuous.

Good note taking is essential in this course, as we will always go beyond your reading assignments in class and much of the material will be presented exclusively in lectures. In addition to mastering what others have written, it is essential to think about the topics under discussion so that you understand the relationships the course is addressing.

The handouts used in this course are copyrighted. By “handouts,” I mean all materials generated for this class, which include but are not limited to syllabi, quizzes, exams, lab problems, in-class materials, review sheets, and additional problem sets. Because these materials are copyrighted, you do not have the right to copy the handouts, unless I expressly grant permission.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal antidiscrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Department of Student Life, Services for Students with Disabilities in Room 126 of the Koldus Building, or call 845-1637.

COURSE OUTLINE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

INTRODUCTION	<i>Government in America (GIA)</i> , Chapter 1
CONSTITUTION	<i>GIA</i> , Chapter 2 <i>Constitution</i> <i>Declaration of Independence</i> <i>Federalist Paper 51</i>
FEDERALISM	<i>GIA</i> , Chapter 3
ANALYSIS	Dahl, <i>How Democratic is the American Constitution?</i> , 2 nd ed., Chapters 1-3
CIVIL LIBERTIES	<i>GIA</i> , Chapter 4 <i>Zelman v. Simmons-Harris</i> (2002) handout
CIVIL RIGHTS	<i>GIA</i> , Chapter 5 <i>Gratz v. Bollinger</i> (2003) handout
EXAM	

**PUBLIC OPINION/
PARTICIPATION** *GIA*, Chapter 6
Poll data handout

ANALYSIS *Wattenberg, Where Have All the Voters Gone?*
*Each student will read the entire book, and specific Students will be assigned
to answer questions regarding the analysis in specific chapters*

**NOMINATIONS/
ELECTIONS** *GIA*, Chapters 9-10
Voting data handout

ANALYSIS *Dahl, How Democratic is the American Constitution?*, 2nd ed., Chapter 4

MEDIA *GIA*, Chapter 7
Videos on media

**POLITICAL
PARTIES** *GIA*, Chapter 8

**INTEREST
GROUPS** *GIA*, Chapter 11
Federalist Paper 10

EXAM

CONGRESS *GIA*, Chapter 12

PRESIDENCY *GIA*, Chapter 13

BUDGETING *GIA*, Chapter 14
Budget data handout

**FEDERAL
BUREAUCRACY** *GIA*, Chapter 15

**FEDERAL
COURTS** *GIA*, Chapter 16

**RATIONAL
DECISIONMAKING** Lecture

ANALYSIS *Dahl, How Democratic is the American Constitution?*, 2nd ed., Chapters 5-7

FINAL EXAM

TERM PAPER

LENGTH: 10 typed, double-spaced pages plus any footnotes, references, bibliography, and tables.

DUE DATE: 25 April 2005

STYLE: I will include the quality of your writing in your grade and will give you a detailed evaluation of your writing.

- Footnotes may be in traditional or scientific style.
- There is no excuse for a misspelled word.
- Pay particular attention to the proper use of commas and semicolons.
- Avoid the use of passive construction.
- Always have a referent to “this,” “these,” and “those.”
- If your paragraphs occupy most of a page, they are probably too long.
- Feel free to use subheadings.

SUBJECT: You will select a topic that poses a *question* regarding a topic of current public policy debate (politics and/or policy). The question can be as straightforward as “Should we amend the Constitution to have direct election of the president?” Examples of relevant topics include civil liberties and the war on terrorism, affirmative action, campaign finance reform, bureaucratic reorganization, the electoral college, presidential war powers, implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act, and the system of presidential primaries.

The instructor must approve the topic of the essay. *Any student who does not have a topic approved by February 25, 2004, will lose five percentage points of the paper grade.*

CONTENT: The paper should be a balanced, rigorous analytical effort. Do not begin with a thesis, since there is no reason to write a paper if you already know the answer to the question you are investigating. You should deal with all the relevant alternatives to your conclusions. The paper is to be an exercise in analysis as well as description, with the emphasis on the former.

SOURCES: I will be happy to provide advice on relevant sources. You should expect to read widely rather than trying to satisfy a minimum requirement. Sources for the paper should include the following: the *New York Times* and other contemporary sources for up-to-date information and traditional library sources such as books, periodicals, and government documents for background information. Some of these may be found on the internet. Do not rely primarily on the internet for most of the information for your paper. It generally does not contain the best work on a subject and is not a substitute for scholarly research. I require that the majority of your sources come from other than the internet.

Pay careful attention to citations. Quoting material without citation is plagiarism and will subject you to the harshest penalties allowed by the University. Less understood is the fact that *all* material that is not either common knowledge or your own ideas must be cited, *whether quoted directly or not!* In other words, paraphrasing does not lessen your responsibility to cite information that you have gotten from someone else. You may cite

such information using either footnotes (or endnotes) or parenthetical citations. Whether footnotes or parenthetical cites are used, a complete bibliography must accompany your paper.

As commonly defined, plagiarism consists of passing off as one's own the ideas, words, writings, etc. which belong to another. In accordance with this definition, you are committing plagiarism if you copy the work of another person and turn it in as your own, even if you should have the permission of that person. Plagiarism is one of the worst academic sins, for the plagiarist destroys the trust among colleagues without which research cannot be sagely communicated. If you have any questions regarding plagiarism, please consult the latest issue of the Texas A&M University Student Rules, under the section "Scholastic Dishonesty." You can also find useful information on the TAMU honor system at <http://www.tamu.edu/aggiehonor/>

EVALUATION: You will be graded on the rigor and content of your argument and the clarity of your presentation. Five percentage points will be deducted for each day a paper is late after 5 P.M. on April 25, 2005.