

**Winter 2009**

**American Government 202**

**Instructor: Dr. Leena Shah**

**Credits 5**

**Hybrid**

Office A100A - Office Hours by appointment only

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### **Course Description**

This is an introductory course in American government. The course is designed to familiarize you with the basic elements of the American system. We will look at the three branches of government, the legislature or Congress, the President or the Executive branch and the Judiciary. We will study their powers and role in American government. We will also discuss federalism, civil rights and liberties. What is the difference between them and what are the impacts of these rights and liberties on the individual. In addition to this we will try and gain an understanding of the Media and its role as well as the impact of the bureaucracy and Interest groups. We will also briefly study American foreign policy. Together with this, we will apply everything to current events. Thus making it easier for us to understand how politics works in the daily context.

### **Course objectives**

By the end of the quarter students should be able to:

1. Identify the three branches of government
2. Analyze the concept of democracy and the role and influence of the interest groups
3. Integrate this knowledge for a personal understanding of how the political process works.
4. Discuss the role of the media and public opinion
5. State the differences between civil rights and civil liberties
6. Evaluate current events

### **Required Text**

**Understanding American Politics and Government by Coleman, Goldstein and Howell**

**Any newspaper of your choice**

### **Course Requirements**

Students are required to do the prescribed reading everyday. This will help us understand not only what the author is talking about but also what we have been discussing in class. Thus making it easier for you to stay abreast of class discussions. Good computer skills. Please make sure you check the website for any changes.

### **Class Expectations**

Please make sure you have read the assigned chapter and done the required research that will be announced in class from time to time.

This is a hybrid class and therefore part of the credits will be based on online discussions .

### **Assignment**

**You will be asked to critique two editorials for the quarter. I will announce the article in class and post the title of the articles online. This will be worth 10 points. You can access these articles by either going through Pro Quest (library) or searching them on Google.com. The dates will be announced in class.**

What I will be looking for

*Clarity:* How clearly the student handled the subject without getting confused

*Structure:* The topic should be dealt in a step by step manner so that it is easy to understand the subject rather than jumping from one aspect to another.

*Creativity:* It should be interesting with facts that are unique.

Guidelines for writing the papers

The FIRST part of the assignment is to summarize the author's basic ideas. This should be about one page. Do not quote from the article, do not simply paraphrase the article, INSTEAD take the main arguments and ideas and explain what they are writing and attempting to communicate. Instead identify and summarize three or four points and explain them in your own words.

The SECOND PART of the assignment is to evaluate the arguments you identified in your first section and this too should be one page. Examine the article's logic and explain if you think the author is making a solid case. Is the article logical and easy to understand? Do you think the explanations support the main ideas. Can you identify arguments and conclusions you think are right? Wrong? You are also welcome to research other writers who have worked on the same topic. What do they say? Make sure you cite them in your references if you have researched them or are using their quotes.

The paper should be double spaced and about 2 pages long.

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### **Class discussions**

I will post a topic for the week and you will be required to discuss this on a weekly basis. You are also, in addition to this required to post one topic which is pertinent to politics per week which will evoke discussion. This can be selected from any newspaper but should be a valid source. Please make sure you give the link for that article. The class discussions will be worth 20 points.

### **Class Participation**

I strongly recommend class participation.. This will include online attendance through discussions and the interest you have shown in the course even though you may be too shy to speak up in class.

### **Make-Up Exams**

Make-up exams will be only given if there is an emergency or if the student has informed me in advance of their inability to take it.

### **How to get in touch**

The best way of getting in touch with me is through email. I will check it twice daily.

### **Exams**

There will be 3 exams in the quarter. They will be worth 25 points each. Tests will be based on lectures, readings from the book and other readings that may be assigned. Tests will consist of multiple choice true and false and an essay question. Blue Books, Scantrons and no.2 pencils will be required for the exams. These are available in the bookstore. The exams will be given in class.

## Grades

grades will be broken up as follows:

1 <sup>st</sup> Exam	20 points
2 <sup>nd</sup> exam	25
3 <sup>rd</sup> exam	25
Assignment	10
Class discussions	20 points
Total	100 points

## Grading scale

A 95 and above (4.0)	C 74-76(2.0)
A- 90-94 (3.7)	C- 71-73 (1.7)
B+ 87-89(3.3)	D+ 67-70 (1.3)
B 84-86 (3.0)	D 64-66 (1.0)
B- 80-83 (2.7)	F below 64 (0.0)
C+ 77-79 (2.3)	

## Readings

Chapter 1 Thinking about Politics  
Chapter 2 Political Culture  
Chapter 3 The Constitution  
Chapter 4 Federalism  
Chapter 5 Civil Liberties (part of chapter 5 will be on the test)

### Exam 1 29<sup>th</sup> January

(Rest of chapter 5)  
Chapter 6 Civil Rights  
Chapter 7 Public Opinion  
Chapter 8 Political Participation  
Chapter 9 Voting Elections and Campaigns  
Chapter 10 Media and Politics

### Exam 19<sup>th</sup> February

Chapter 11 Political Parties  
Chapter 12 Interest Groups  
Chapter 13 Congress  
Chapter 14 Presidency  
Chapter 15 The Federal Court System  
Chapter 18 Foreign Policy

### Exam 3 17<sup>th</sup> March

**Please note that this is the last day of classes. The duration of the test will be the same as a regular class, which is 50 minutes**

**No classes on  
19<sup>th</sup> Jan  
16th Feb**

*Please read the attached procedures and guidelines of the Social Science Division.*