

Winter 2008

American Government 102

Instructor: Dr. Leena Shah

Credits 5

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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

Shelly, Bardes, Schmidt: American Government: The essentials.

Newspaper articles

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.

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.

Class should be attended on a regular basis. Attendance will be taken on Mondays and Wednesdays.

Presentations should be timely and well organized.

Class Debate

Students will debate an issue of their choice in class. This can be on any topic relating to American government. However the topic needs to be decided in class so that it does not overlap with another presentation. I will give you a list of topics and you can choose from that. Two students will debate each other for about 7 minutes or so. They will look at the issue in depth and from both sides, so that it is easy for a layperson to get a good understanding of the topic. Look at the pros and cons of the issue and what is your understanding of it. The debate will be worth 5 points. The grading will be done on the basis of clarity, structure and creativity. Be sure to inform the class about the issue. Give a general outline. There will be time for Q and A after the debate. The rest of the class can ask questions.

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.

The Presentation will be every Monday starting January 14th. There are 7 Mondays. If there is a need, we will add a Friday in the week that Mondays are a holiday. The dates will be decided in class.

Class discussions

On every Wednesday, we will discuss current events. Students are asked to bring a newspaper article. We will discuss the article as a group and then each group will discuss their best article with the rest of the class. We will take attendance on Wednesdays and for every two missed Wednesdays a point will be taken and so forth.

Assignment

There will be two critical evaluation assignments that I will announce in class. These will be from newspapers or journals. These can be accessed through Pro Quest (Bcc library site). These will be worth 5 points each. The guidelines for this assignment are on the last page of the syllabus.

Class Participation

I strongly recommend class participation and have valued it at 5 points. This will include attendance and the interest you have shown in the course even though you may be too shy to speak up.

Pop quizzes/Extra credit

There will be pop quizzes of extra credit from the text book readings and the debates. This can be from any chapter of the book that is covered up till the quiz date. This will test whether or not students are keeping up with the readings.

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 3 exams in the quarter. The first two will be worth 25 points each. The last test will be worth 30 points. 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.

Grades: The grades will be broken up as follows:

1 st Exam	25 points
2 nd exam	25
3 rd exam	30
Assignment	10
Class presentation	5 points
Class participation	5 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 Forces of Political Change
Chapter 2 The Constitution (Chap 1 from Critical thinking)
Chapter 3 Federalism (chap 2 from CT)
Chapter 4 Civil Liberties (part of chapter 4 will be on the test)
(CT Chapter 12)

Exam 1 January 25th

(Rest of chapter 4)
Chapter 5 Civil Rights (chap 11 from CT)
Chapter 6 Public Opinion (chap 3 from CT)
Chapter 7 Interest Groups (Chap 6 from CT)
Chapter 8 Political Parties (Chap 5 from CT)
Chapter 9 Campaigns, Elections and Media (Chap5 from CT)

Exam 2 February 15th

Chapter 10 Congress (Chap 7 from CT)
Chapter 11 Presidency (Chap8 from CT)
Chapter 12 Bureaucracy (Chap9 from CT)
Chapter 13 The Judiciary (Chap10 from CT)
Chapter 14 Public Policy (Chap13 from CT)
Chapter 15 Foreign Policy

Exam 3 March 12th

Please note that the duration of the test will be the same as a regular class, which is 50 mins.

No class on

January 21st

February 18th

February 29th

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