

POSC 120: Introduction to American Government

Spring 2017

Mon., Wed., & Fri. at 10am

Chase B. Meyer

Office Hours: Mon. & Wed. 11:30-1:30 CHBS 5500/5600

Email: chasebm@uga.edu

Course Description:

This introductory course is designed to examine the role that American government and politics plays in our lives and provide a better understanding of the functions and responsibilities of our governmental system. To learn more about the nature of American political institutions, we will examine features of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches as well as the role of political parties, election laws, the media and the bureaucracy in our political system, as well as how the Founders envisioned such a system. We will also discuss each of these topics from a historical perspective while simultaneously placing them in the context of contemporary political debates.

Required Texts:

The Logic of American Politics. 7th edition. by Samuel Kernell, Gary Jacobson, Thad Kousser and Lynn Vavrek. CQ Press.

Other readings will be posted on my website www.chasebmeyer.com

Course Expectations:

I expect all students to behave professionally in this class. I will not tolerate disruptive behavior in the classroom, including (but not limited to) talking during lectures, reading newspapers, the ringing of cell phones or pagers, leaving class early, inappropriate or offensive remarks, and personal attacks against other students or the instructor. Although class attendance is not mandatory, you will be held responsible for all material in the textbooks and in lectures, even if you miss a class. If you are absent, be sure to get the notes from a fellow classmate.

Grades and Requirements:

Your grade in this course will be based on the following components:

1. Participation/HW (10%)
2. Quizzes (10%)
3. Exam #1 (15%)
4. Exam #2 (15%)
5. Exam #3 (15%)
6. Final Exam (35%)

Final grades will be assigned as follow: 100-93 = A, 90-92 = A-, 87-89 = B+, 83-86 = B, 80-82 = B-, 77- 79 = C+, 73-76 = C, 70-72 = C-, 60-69 = D, and 60-0 = F. There is no curve in this course. An extra credit opportunity will be presented at a later time in the semester.

Attendance and Participation:

Attendance for this course is not mandatory, but I strongly urge you to come to class. It will be incredibly difficult to do well in this course without showing up and paying attention. A full 10% of your grade will be determined based on participation in class, I will keep track of how often each student participates. Also there will be occasional home works assigned throughout the semester, these will be added in to the participation grade.

Quizzes and Exams:

Quizzes:

Several unannounced pop-quizzes will be given during the semester. These quizzes will cover the readings assigned for the day and will be given at the beginning of class. Students who show up late or who do not attend class will not be given an opportunity to retake a quiz. The only way to get points on the quizzes is to show up, be on time, and do the readings.

Exams:

There will be four exams in this course, including a final exam given during the scheduled examination period at the end of the semester. Examinations will consist of multiple choice and essay questions. While the first three exams are non-cumulative, the final exam will cover material from the lectures and the assigned readings for the *entire* course. The exam dates are:

Exam 1: Fri. Feb. 17th

Exam 2: Fri. Mar. 24th

Exam 3: Mon. Apr. 24th

Final Cumulative Exam: TBD

Grade Appeals, Make-up Policy, and Incompletes:

Formal grade appeals must be made in writing, and in the case of an exam, I will re-grade your entire test. Therefore, your grade can go up or down. A final grade of “Incomplete” will only be given in this course under exceptional circumstances and is solely at the discretion of the instructor. If an incomplete is given, it is the student’s responsibility to complete the necessary requirements as early in the following semester as possible. Legitimate excuses for absence from an exam (e.g., religious holiday, medical emergency, or illness) must be presented to me and accepted prior to the exam when feasible.

Office Hours and Availability:

If you would like to speak with me outside of class time, feel free to stop by my office (CHBS 5500/5600 on Monday and Wednesday from 11:30 to 1:30). Keep in mind that occasionally I may have another scheduled meeting during this time and may be unavailable. If you want to ensure that I am available on a given day, email me ahead of time to set up a specific time to meet. I also strongly encourage you to come to office hours, I am happy to help you out in the class anyway I can, but I can only help you if you come by to ask for help.

Academic Integrity:

All students are responsible for maintaining the highest standards of honesty and integrity in every phase of their academic careers. The penalties for academic dishonesty are severe and ignorance of the policy is not an acceptable defense.

Special Needs:

Students with special needs that require accommodation should notify me and the Disability Resource Office in the first two weeks of the course so appropriate arrangements can be made. All information and documentation of special needs is confidential.

Course Schedule: (Subject to Change)

Wed. Jan. 18th: Syllabus Day and Class Introduction

Readings: None

Fri. Jan. 20th: Introduction to the Logic of American Politics

Readings: Kernell et al. Chapter 1

Mon. Jan. 23rd: The U.S. Constitution

Readings: Kernell et al. Chapters 2, the Articles of Confederation

Wed. Jan. 25th: The U.S. Constitution

Readings: Kernell et al. Chapter 2 cont., the U.S. Constitution

Fri. Jan. 27th: The Federalist Papers

Readings: Federalist #10 & #51

Mon. Jan. 30th: Federalism

Readings: Kernell et al. Chapter 3

Wed. Feb. 1st: Federalism

Readings: Kernell et al. Chapter 3 cont.

Fri. Feb. 3rd: State of the Union Addresses

Readings: TBD

Mon. Feb. 6th: Civil Liberties

Readings: Kernell et al. Chapter 5

Wed. Feb. 8th: Civil Liberties

Readings: Kernell et al. Chapter 5 cont.

Fri. Feb. 10th: Virginia State Government (and other states)

Readings: The Virginia Constitution (current and original from 1776)

Mon. Feb 13th: Civil Rights

Readings: Kernell et al. Chapter 4

Wed. Feb. 15th: Civil Rights
Readings: Kernell et al. Chapter 4 cont.

Fri. Feb. 17th: **EXAM #1**
Readings: None

Mon. Feb. 20th: The U.S. Congress
Readings: Kernell et al. Chapter 6

Wed. Feb. 22nd: The U.S. Congress
Readings: Kernell et al. Chapter 6 cont.

Fri. Feb. 24th: How a Bill Becomes a Law
Readings: Rivals for Power – selected chapters

Mon. Feb. 27th: The Judiciary
Readings: Kernell et al. Chapter 9

Wed. Mar. 1st: The Judiciary
Readings: Kernell et al. Chapter 9 cont.

Fri. Mar. 3rd: The Bureaucracy
Readings: Kernell et al. Chapter 8

SPRING BREAK

Mon. Mar. 13th: The Presidency
Readings: Kernell et al. Chapter 7

Wed. Mar. 15th: The Presidency
Readings: Kernell et al. Chapter 7 cont.

Fri. Mar. 17th: Predicting Presidential Elections
Readings: Forecasting the 2012 American National Elections, Obama's Reelection Prospects Under "Bread and Peace" Voting in the 2012 US Presidential Election

Mon. Mar. 20th: Public Opinion
Readings: Kernell et al. Chapter 10

Wed. Mar. 22nd: Public Opinion
Readings: Kernell et al. Chapter 10 cont.

Fri. Mar. 24th: **EXAM #2**
Readings: None

Mon. Mar. 27th: Voting and Campaigns
Readings: Kernell et al. Chapter 11

Wed. Mar. 29th: Voting and Campaigns
Readings: Kernell et al. Chapter 11 cont.

Fri. Mar. 31st: Who Runs and Wins Public Office?
Readings: Why Are Women Still Not Running for Public Office?

Mon. Apr. 3rd: Interest Groups
Readings: Kernell et al. Chapter 13

Wed. Apr. 5th: Interest Groups
Readings: Kernell et al. Chapter 13 cont.

Fri. Apr. 7th: DISTRICT WORK PERIOD
Readings: None

Mon. Apr. 10th: Political Parties
Readings: Kernell et al. Chapter 12

Wed. Apr. 12th: Political Parties
Readings: Kernell et al. Chapter 12 cont.

Fri. Apr. 14th: Voting Behavior in US Elections
Readings: Who Votes Now? Selected chapters

Mon. Apr. 17th: The Media
Readings: Kernell et al. Chapter 14

Wed. Apr. 19th: The Media
Readings: Kernell et al. Chapter 14 cont.

Fri. Apr. 21st: American Government Today
Readings: TBD

Mon. Apr. 24th: **EXAM #3**
Readings: None

Wed. Apr. 26th: TBD – Students pick topic
Readings: TBD

Fri. Apr. 28th: Conclusion and review for final exam
Readings: None

FINAL EXAM: Date and time TBD