

INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN GOVERNMENT
POLS 101-005
MWF 9:00 AM
MAYBANK 316

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There is never an uneventful time in American politics to take a course, but this semester is a particularly interesting time to critically evaluate our democracy. In Denver this week, the Democratic Party will nominate an African American man to be president. Next week in Minnesota, the Republicans will select a party “maverick” to be their standard bearer in November. At the same time, all seats in the House of Representatives and one-third of the seats in the Senate are up for grabs. Most experts predict that the Democrats will increase or at least maintain their majorities in Congress, so if Senator Barack Obama defeats Senator John McCain, the “Republican Revolution” of the 1990’s and 2000’s will have come to an abrupt halt...almost exactly one decade since the Republican-led Congress impeached Democratic president Bill Clinton. In American politics, these are interesting times indeed. Because the stakes are so high, we can expect an enormous amount of public attention and discussion devoted to the election throughout the semester.

This course is intended to introduce students to the central processes and institutions of the American federal government with a critical eye and an analytical frame of mind so you can make informed, intelligent judgments about this great public discussion. These skills are essential because, although it may not be immediately apparent, politics affects your lives directly. At this very moment, young women and men your age are deployed around the world to prosecute the global war on terror. Does the GWOT enhance your safety, or does it diminish the nation’s political, economic, and cultural influence in the world and your civil liberties right here in South Carolina? As you read this, the national, state, and local governments accumulate trillions of dollars in debt that you are certain to inherit. Is this irresponsible, or do the immediate benefits outweigh the long-term costs? Because we have (reasonably) free, open, and periodic elections, the nation is constantly debating policies that will determine such personal things as whom you may marry, what foods you eat, what cars you drive, which medical treatments you may receive, and what careers you are allowed to pursue. Politics matters to you. You can also matter to politics.

I have designed this course to provide you with the conceptual tools so you can matter to politics as you choose. To this end I have selected a text with a strong analytical inclination. Additionally, I encourage you to actively learn about politically-relevant current events. Though I am a fan, simply watching *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* and *The Colbert Report* does not count. Read the paper, listen to NPR, and watch cable news networks to hone your skills at critically analyzing American politics. The course WebCT site includes links to many news media outlets and political science resources.

Course Goals and Learning Objectives

This course is an introductory survey of the theoretical foundations, empirical observations, and real-world implications of American political behavior and institutions with an optional service-learning component. The topics of my lectures and discussions will coincide with the readings, but I will *not* simply regurgitate the material or summarize the text for you. I have designed my lectures with the assumption that you have completed the reading assignments, so I will engage you in discussion as well. So don't fall behind or what I say won't make any sense!

In addition to the critical political analysis skills that you will develop throughout the course, I expect you to be able to:

- Read for comprehension, critically analyze text, and write effectively in all assignments and examinations;
- Comprehend the political positions of others and defend your own views;
- Apply theories and concepts of democratic thought to new and varied settings;
- Appreciate to the methodologies and approaches to the study of politics;
- Understand the scope of political science as an academic discipline;
- Foster the communication, collaboration, and negotiation skills necessary to cooperate and compete with others in the public sphere;
- Develop the expectation of participation in public and community life;
- Cultivate an appreciation for the interaction of ideas in the public forum; and,
- Work, live, and learn comfortably in an increasingly diverse and global world.

Course Materials

The following texts are required and have been ordered through the College of Charleston Bookstore. If you choose to purchase these texts from other sources, be sure to buy the correct editions.

1. Lowi, Theodore J., Benjamin Ginsberg, and Kenneth A. Shepsle. 2008. *American Government: Power and Purpose*. 10th Edition. New York: WW Norton & Co. ISBN: 978-0-393-93082-5
2. Kingdon, John W. 1999. *America the Unusual*. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's. ISBN: 0-312-18971-0
3. Rimmerman, Craig A. 2005. *The New Citizenship: Unconventional Politics, Activism, and Service*. 3rd Edition. New York: Westview Press. ISBN: 0-8133-4309-7
4. Foy, Joseph J. 2008. *Homer Simpson Goes to Washington: American Politics Through Popular Culture*. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky. ISBN: 978-0-8131-2512-1

Additionally, periodically I will direct you to additional readings that will either be available on electronic reserve at Addlestone Library or publicly available on the Internet, or both.

Student Responsibilities

Conduct and Honor Code. I expect you to strictly adhere to the College's conduct and honor codes. When you entered the College, you signed an agreement that you understood and would

abide by these codes. I encourage you to re-acquaint yourself with the College's policies, but simply put...don't cheat. Period.

Attendance, Preparation, and Quizzes. I require regular class attendance, on-time arrival, and careful preparation for each class. Though I have no hard definition of regular, on-time class attendance, a reasonable guide is a total of six excused or unexcused absences. Unless you have documentation from the College that you are experiencing extreme hardship, I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences. I count two late arrivals as one absence even though you are physically present. Though I may not always take formal attendance, I will know if you are chronically late or absent and will hold you accountable for your choices, so make them wisely. I will periodically administer unannounced quizzes in class to evaluate your reading comprehension.

Assignments. All reading and written assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date listed on the schedule. I have purposely scheduled assignment due dates to coincide with assignments in other courses or sections, so late assignments interfere with my ability to evaluate other students. Because that is unfair to students who do produce assignments on time, I will reduce every assignment by one +/- unit for every business day late regardless of the reason. The details of the term project will be discussed in class on Monday, September 1.

Classroom Technology Policy. All devices other than a laptop computer should be turned off during class. Laptops may only be used for purposes immediately related to the class such as taking notes. I will ask you to leave the room if you disrupt the class by texting, receiving a phone call, browsing the Internet, or any other reason. If I ask you to leave, I will count it as an absence. Doing so is rude, and I have no qualms about embarrassing you in front of your peers.

Special Circumstances. Please inform me immediately of any of special circumstances such as a diagnosed (or undiagnosed) disability, learning challenges, or team and club membership that requires travel during the semester. I am happy to accommodate you if we can agree on how to best meet your needs in the first week of class. If you are a SNAP student eligible for accommodations, you must provide me with a copy of the notification letter you have been given by the SNAP office well before the need for any accommodation arises.

Grading Policy

Attendance / Participation	10%
Reading Quizzes	10%
Term Project	30%
Mid-term Exam	25%
Final Exam	25%

Schedule

Week	Day	Date	Part	Reading	Due
1	Wednesday	08/27/08	Introduction & Syllabus		
	Friday	08/29/08	Foundations of Government	LGS 1	
2	Monday	09/01/08	Foundations of Government	Foy 1	
	Wednesday	09/03/08	Foundations of Government	Foy 2	
	Friday	09/05/08	Foundations of Government	Foy 3	
3	Monday	09/08/08	Constitution	LGS 2	
	Wednesday	09/10/08	Constitution	Articles of Confederation	
	Friday	09/12/08	Constitution		
4	Monday	09/15/08	Constitution	Constitution of the US	Term Project Topic
	Wednesday	09/17/08	Constitution	Federalist #10	
	Friday	09/19/08	Constitution	Federalist #51	
5	Monday	09/22/08	Federalism	LGS 3	
	Wednesday	09/24/08	Federalism		
	Friday	09/26/08	Federalism		
6	Monday	09/29/08	Civil Liberties	LGS 4	
	Wednesday	10/01/08	Civil Liberties	Foy 10-11	
	Friday	10/03/08	Civil Liberties	Kingdon 1-2	
7	Monday	10/06/08	Civil Rights	Kingdon 3-5	
	Wednesday	10/08/08	Civil Rights		Journal 1
	Friday	10/10/08	MID-TERM EXAM		
8	Monday	10/13/08	NO CLASS – FALL BREAK		
	Wednesday	10/15/08	Congress	LGS 5	
	Friday	10/17/08	Congress		
9	Monday	10/20/08	Congress		
	Wednesday	10/22/08	Presidency & Executive Branch	LGS 6	

	Friday	10/24/08	Presidency & Executive Branch	LGS 7	
10	Monday	10/27/08	Courts	LGS 8	
	Wednesday	10/29/08	Courts		
			Political Participation & Civic		
	Friday	10/31/08	Engagement	Rimmerman 1-3	
			Political Participation & Civic		
11	Monday	11/03/08	Engagement	Rimmerman 4-6	
	Wednesday	11/05/08	Political Parties & Elections		
	Friday	11/07/08	Political Parties & Elections	LGS 10	
12	Monday	11/10/08	Political Parties & Elections	LGS 11	
	Wednesday	11/12/08	Public Opinion & the News Media	LGS 9	
	Friday	11/14/08	Public Opinion & the News Media		
13	Monday	11/17/08	Public Opinion & the News Media	LGS 13	
	Wednesday	11/19/08	Interest Groups & Social Movements	LGS 12	
	Friday	11/21/08	Interest Groups & Social Movements	Foy 7	
14	Monday	11/24/08	Interest Groups & Social Movements		
	Wednesday	11/26/08		NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING BREAK	
	Friday	11/28/08		NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING BREAK	
15	Monday	12/01/08	Interest Groups & Social Movements		Journal 2 or Paper
	Wednesday	12/03/08	Public Policy		
	Friday	12/05/08	Public Policy		
16	Monday	12/08/08	Public Policy		
	Wednesday	12/10/08		FINAL EXAM	

This schedule is subject to change. Updated schedules will be posted on WebCT.