

American Politics

Professor Julia Azari

Political Science 020

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Fall 2008

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“Every two years the American politics industry fills the airwaves with the most virulent, scurrilous, wall-to-wall character assassination of nearly every political practitioner in the country - and then declares itself puzzled that America has lost trust in its politicians. “ - Charles Krauthammer

“Politics is the art of looking for trouble, finding it whether it exists or not, diagnosing it incorrectly, and applying the wrong remedy.” - Ernest Benn

“Politics is the art of the possible.” - Otto von Bismarck

“We are not afraid to entrust the American people with unpleasant facts, foreign ideas, alien philosophies, and competitive values. For a nation that is afraid to let its people judge the truth and falsehood in an open market is a nation that is afraid of its people.” - John F. Kennedy

Course Description: The purpose of this course is to develop an understanding of the basic ideas, institutions, and issues in American politics. We will cover a variety of material ranging from political thought to political behavior. The first objective of this course is to impart information about the fundamental aspects of American politics, including (but not limited to): how American political institutions work; what trends have emerged in voting behavior; and what ideas were behind the formation of the federal system. The second objective of the course is to improve your critical reading, writing and thinking skills. You will be expected to demonstrate your knowledge of American politics concepts and ideas, as well as to link concrete events to abstract ideas. Finally, you will be expected to engage critically with the analysis presented in the readings.

Political Science 020 falls under the “Individual and Social Behavior” section of Marquette’s Course of Common Studies. As such, included among the aims of this course is to enhance your ability to understand concepts, theories, and methods used to explain individual and social behavior in the context of American politics and to use this theoretical knowledge to analyze examples of individual and social behavior.

Grading Breakdown:

Attendance and Participation: 10%

Midterm: 25%

Written assignments: 30%

Final Exam: 35%

Assignments and Expectations

While this is a large introductory course, your participation is still integral to your success in the course. You are expected to show up in class, on time and prepared to discuss the assigned readings, as well as to participate in class activities, which may require you to collaborate with your colleagues from time to time.

There will be three written assignments for the course. Instructions for these assignments will be handed out in class. Written assignments should be typed and conform to high standards of grammar and spelling. Successful written assignments will be clear, will fulfill the prompts included in the instructions, and will represent an effort at original, clear, and critical thinking. There is no term paper in this course.

The most important and fundamental expectation is that all work will be your own. Academic dishonesty dishonors the learning process, your classmates, yourself, and your university. It also makes your professor mad. I will assign a failing grade on the assignment, if not the entire course, in the event of academic dishonesty. Avoiding cheating is pretty easy, really. Make sure you attribute all ideas that are not your own. When in doubt, include a citation.

Textbooks

Two textbooks will be available for purchase at the BookMarq.

David T. Canon, John J. Coleman, and Kenneth R. Mayer, *The Enduring Debate: Contemporary and Classic Readings in American Politics*

Kent M. Brudney and Mark E. Weber, *Critical Thinking and American Government*.

All other readings will be available on D2L or online.

Summary of Important Dates:

September 23: Assignment 1 due

October 14: Midterm Exam

November 13: Assignment 2 due

December 4: Assignment 3 due

December 8: Final Exam

Semester Schedule

August 26 : Introductory Meeting

Unit One: The American Founding and the Structure of the Constitution

August 28 - Writing Assessment

September 2 The study of politics and designing the US constitution

Reading: "The Logic of American Politics," 3-6 (D2L), Constitution of the United States (p. 323-336)

September 4 - Ideas in American Politics: How Democratic Should We Be?

Readings: Brudney and Weber, Chapter 1 (bring book to class for discussion)

September 9- Federalism, part one

Reading: TED 82-87 (5th) +D2L

69-85 (4th)

Brudney and Weber, Chapter 2

September 11 - Constitutional amendments

Reading: same

Amendment exercise part 1 handed out

September 16 - Finishing up federalism

Hand out Amendment exercise part 2

Unit Two: Governing Institutions

September 18 - Legislative process

Amendment exercise due, discussion

Reading: Brudney and Weber, Chapter 6

TED- Hibbing and Theiss-Morse , page 151-157 (4th)

178 (5th)

September 23 - Congress (procedures)

Reading: same

Assignment 1 due

September 25 - Congress continued (representation)

Reading: same

September 30 - Presidency (basics)

Reading: Brudney and Weber, Chapter 7

TED - 175-184, 193-199 9 (4th)

206-end of article, D2L piece entitled “Why Bush Won” (5th)

October 2 - Presidency continued (war powers and discussion, bring books for discussion of presidential performance)

Reading: same

October 7- Judiciary - Judicial review

Reading: Brudney and Weber- Chapter 9

October 9- Judiciary continued - The politics of Supreme Court nominations

Reading: TED: 268-276 (4th)

305-313 (5th)

October 14 - MIDTERM

Unit Three: Culture and Ideas

October 16 - fall break, NO CLASS

October 21 - Equality

Readings: Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, selections

Brooks, "The American Way of Equality," *New York Times* (link provided)

October 23 - Hartz and America's "liberal tradition"

Reading: *TED* -17-26 (4th)

9-end of article (5th)

October 28 - Culture war

Reading: Keynote Address of the 1992 Republican National Convention, Patrick Buchanan (D2L)

TED 410-415

October 30 - Culture, language, and immigration

Readings: Huntington, "The Hispanic Challenge" (D2L)

Fukuyama, "Identity Crisis" *Slate Magazine* (link provided)

November 4 - Discussion, political culture and 2008 election

Reading: Current events, TBA

Assignment 2 handed out

Unit Four: Political Behavior and the Political Process

November 6 - History and Importance of American Political Parties

Reading: TED- Fiorina, "The Decline of Collective Responsibility in American Politics,"
374-384 (4th)

409-(5th)

Excerpt from 2008 Party platforms

November 11 - Elections, voting behavior

Reading: Brudney and Weber, p. 65-81

TED- V.O. Key selection 330-344 (4th)

367 (4th)

November 13 - Elections, voter turnout

Reading: Brudney and Weber, 83-103

Assignment 2 due

Reading: Lowi, "Let's Take 'No' For an Answer" (D2L)

November 18 - Media, part one - framing and informing

Reading: Brudney and Weber, Chapter 3

Assignment # 3 handed out

November 20 - Media part two, old vs. new media

Reading: TED- Last, "The Not-So-Swift Mainstream Media," 306-310 (4th)

D2L (5th)

November 25 - Interest groups

Reading: Brudney and Weber, Chapter 5

November 27- Thanksgiving, NO CLASS

Unit Five: Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

December 2 - Civil Rights

Reading: Brudney and Weber, Chapter 10

December 4 - Civil Liberties

Reading: Brudney and Weber, Chapter 11

Assignment #3 due

Final Exam 12/8/2008 1-3PM