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| Political Science 1  American National Government  1309 Surge 3  TR 9:00-10:20 | Fall 2015  S.L. Hill  Office: 570 Kerr Hall  Office Hours: TR 3:10-4:30  and by appointment |

**SYLLABUS**

This course is designed to introduce students to the institutions of American national government and the processes of American political life. Our primary goal will be to understand how the different components of American government - including its distinct branches of government and numerous political actors - work together as an integrated and often contentious whole. As we develop this broad explanation we will evaluate how well this political system operates in light of its democratic goals and what it actually accomplishes in terms of policy results.

We will begin by describing the constitutional basis of American government and analyzing the political processes by which citizens seek to influence their government. What are the roles of interest groups and political parties in representing the views of the citizenry? Do elections reveal shifts in public opinion or do they reflect the new directions in which politicians seek to lead the electorate? The recent campaigns to elect a congress and president in 2012 and the emerging campaigns for 2016 provide excellent opportunities to examine concrete examples of these ideas. Once we understand how citizens are "linked" to their government, our attention will turn to the formal institutions of Congress, the Presidency, the Supreme Court, and the fourth branch of government, the bureaucracy. We will identify their distinct powers and examine their relative contributions in shaping public policy. Finally, we will look at the policy impacts of this political process with special attention given to economic performance, national defense, and major social programs such as welfare and social security.

**Readings**: Kenneth Janda, Jeffrey Berry, Jerry Goldman and Deborah Schildkraut. The

Challenge of Democracy (Houghton Mifflin, 13th edition, 2016)

Samuel Kernell and Steven S. Smith, eds. Principles and Practice of American

Politics (CQ Press, 5th edition, 2013)

**Course Requirements:**

A. Discussion Section: Each student is required to attend a discussion section each week led by your Teaching Assistant. The purpose of this section will be for students to seek clarification on the readings and lectures and to discuss how course concepts apply to current political events. To participate effectively, students should finish each week's reading *prior* to their weekly meetings with the TA. As an incentive for "informed participation," 10% of the final course grade will be based upon the TA's assessment of each student's performance in section.

B. Examinations: Each student must take a midterm and a final examination. The midterm is scheduled for Tuesday, November 3 and the final will be held on Tuesday, December 8 from 6:00-8:00 pm. Make-up exams will be offered only for those students who cannot take the exams at the scheduled times for well substantiated reasons of health and personal emergency. Excuses must be cleared with Prof. Hill or your TA. prior to the exam. All make-up exams will be more difficult than regularly scheduled examinations. Failure to take an exam or a make-up will constitute grounds for a failing grade for this course.

C. Paper: Explaining the Policy Process. Each student will prepare a paper of 10 double-spaced typed pages on a public policy proposal that has been the subject of disagreement in the national political debate (e.g., energy, tax, health care) within the last six months. The paper will lay out the competing policy positions, analyze the origins of these proposals (ideology and electoral advantage), and assess which proposal is most likely to be enacted into law. Paper topics must be chosen and submitted to your TA for approval by Thursday, October 22. A rough draft of the paper will be due on Thursday, November 19 and the completed assignment should be handed in on Thursday, December 3.

D. Grading: The following weights will be assigned to the course requirements in computing the final course grade: Discussion section participation = 10%; Policy process paper = 30%; Midterm examination = 30%; Final examination = 30%. Incompletes will only be granted when there is a documented personal emergency and students have completed more than 50% of the course requirements with a grade of C- or better.

**Course Outline and Readings**

I. Introduction (September 24)

II. Constitutional Foundations (2 weeks)

A. Liberal Political Thought and the American Revolution (September 29)

Reading: Challenge, pp. 1-48 and A1-A3

B. American Constitution and Federalism (October 1, 6)

Reading: Challenge, pp. 50-115, A3-A18

Principles, pp. 18-85

C. Civil Liberties and Rights (October 6, 8)

Reading: Challenge, pp. 418-489

Principles, pp. 86-137

III. Linking the People to the Government (3 weeks)

A. Public Opinion, Participation, and Socialization (October 13, 15)

Reading: Challenge, pp. 116-145, 176-205

Principles, pp. 273-324

B. Parties (October 20)

Reading: Challenge, pp. 206-235

Principles, pp. 362-390

**Paper:**  **Paper topics due on Thursday, October 22**

III. Linking the People to the Government cont’d

C. Elections and Media (October 22, 27)

Reading: Challenge, pp. 146-175, 236-269

Principles, pp. 325-361, 431-451

D. Interest Groups (October 29)

Reading: Challenge, pp. 270-295

Principles, pp. 1-17, 391-430

**Midterm: Tuesday, November 3**

IV. Formal Institutions (3 weeks)

A. The Policy Making Process (November 5)

Reading: Challenge, pp. 518-553

B. Congress (November 10, 12)

Reading: Challenge, pp. 296-327

Principles, pp. 138-175

C. Presidency (November 17, 19)

Reading: Challenge, pp. 328-361

Principles, pp. 177-204

**Paper: Rough draft due on Thursday, November 19**

D. Bureaucracy (November 19)

Reading: Challenge, pp. 362-385

Principles, pp. 205-232

E. Courts (November 24)

Reading: Challenge, pp. 386-417

Principles, pp. 233-272

V. Policy Process and Outcomes (December 1, 3)

Reading: Challenge, pp. 490-517

**Paper: Final draft due in class on Thursday, December 3**

**Final Exam: Tuesday, December 8 from 6:00-8:00 pm**