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Anderson Hall 202

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Course Description

This course provides an overview of American politics: its political culture, the attitudes and political behavior of its citizens, the operation of its key institutions, and its enduring debates. We will cover the three main branches of government — executive, legislative, and judicial — and other important political actors. We will be concerned with several themes, especially the nature and distribution of political power and the role of elections.

Among the questions we will address are: Who has power in American politics and how is that power used? We will consider this question with reference to citizens, elected officials, appointed officials in the bureaucracy, and unelected power-holders outside the government such as journalists and lobbyists. What political beliefs that shape our participation in the political process? Do "special interest" groups wield too much power? What informal and formal powers do the three branches have? What factors limit their ability to achieve their goals? How do the three branches work together or against each other? To what extent do electoral concerns motivate elected officials?

The course will provide students with a basic understanding of the main institutions and actors in American politics. The course offers a foundation and preparation for upper-level courses in the sub-field of American politics.

Although this is a large lecture course, students are still encouraged to participate by asking questions. Talking to your neighbor during the lecture does not count as participation, however. Attendance is mandatory. Material will be covered in the lectures that is not in the course readings. Material in the films that will be shown will also be fair game for the exams.

Textbooks and Readings

There is a required package for the class, which should be available at University of Florida book store. There are three books in the package – sold as the New American Democracy package. This package includes an “access code” that you need for the e-book version of the main text by Fiorina, and for test prep questions and multimedia such as “simulations” and videos. If you don’t purchase the package, you will need to pay separately for an access code. You need an access code to do some of the required course
assignments, which will be on the exams ("simulations").


*Brian Harward, The 2012 Election, 2013 (Pearson)

**Grades/Assignments

There will be three exams, which will be multiple choice tests. On exam day, students will be asked to remove hats, caps, and sunglasses and turn off their cell phones. Initiating or receiving outside communication using a phone or other device during an exam constitutes receipt of outside information and will result in failure on the exam. Absences from exams will be excused only with written and verifiable documentation of illness, death of an IMMEDIATE family member, or a conflicting University or legal obligation.

You must also complete three short (2 page) papers. Information on how to do this is included at the end of this syllabus. Papers are to be handed in to your discussion section leader.

I assume that all students have access to a computer that meets the UF minimum standards for students. When writing papers, make sure to use the spell-check function on your computer and PROOFREAD the entire document. Numerous sources on grammar are available, e.g. Turabian’s A Manual for Writers of Term Papers or Student’s Guide for Writing College Papers. Papers that contain numerous spelling or grammatical errors will receive a lower grade than they would have otherwise. Late papers will be penalized unless the student has a valid reason for handing a given paper in after the deadline.

Plagiarism (using someone else's ideas without assigning credit to the source) is a serious offense. Students must abide by the University of Florida's Student Code of Conduct. Cheating on exams and plagiarism violate the standards of the university and will be addressed seriously.
Final grades will be calculated as follows:

First Exam: 36
Second Exam: 44
Third Exam: 44
Short Papers (3); 12 points each, 36 points total
Attendance – Discussion Section: 5 points total
165 points total possible

A 148    B 132-138    C  115-121    D  99-105
A- 143-147 B- 127-131 C- 110-114 D- 94-98
B+ 139-142 C+ 122-126 D+ 106-109 E  93 and below

August 26: First Day of Class/Introduction

August 28 and September 4 (**)NO CLASS September 2**): The Permanent Campaign, American Political Culture

Assignment: Fiorina textbook (The New American Democracy), Chapters 1 and 4

September 9, 11, 16: The Constitution and Federalism

Assignment: Fiorina text, Chapters 2 and 3

September 18, 23, 25: Civil Liberties and Civil Rights

Assignment:

Fiorina text, Chapters 16 and 17

SEPTEMBER 30: FIRST EXAM (In regular classroom)
October 2, 7: Participation and Public Opinion

Assignment: Fiorina text, Chapters 6 and then 5 (read in this order) and Simulation 5.3: “You Are A Polling Consultant.” On mypoliscilab.com: go to “Apply” section in middle of webpage; click on “Multimedia Library,” then click on Simulations. Choose Simulation 5.3.

October 9, 14, 16: Political Parties and Interest Groups

Assignment: Fiorina text, Chapter 8, Chapter 7

October 21, 23, 28, 30: Congress

Assignment: Fiorina text, Chapters 11 and 12 and Simulation 12.4: “You are a Member of Congress.” On mypoliscilab.com: go to “Apply” section in middle of webpage; click on “Multimedia Library,” then click on Simulations. Choose Simulation 12.4)

NOVEMBER 4: SECOND EXAM, in regular classroom

November 6: Presidential Elections

Assignment: Fiorina, Chapter 10; Harward, entire book.

NO CLASS NOVEMBER 11: HOLIDAY

November 13, 18: The Presidency

Assignment: Fiorina, Chapter 13

November 20, December 2: (**NO CLASS NOVEMBER 25**) The Courts

Assignment: Fiorina, Chapter 15 and Simulation 15.4: “You are a Clerk to Supreme Court Justice Judith Gray.” On mypoliscilab.com: go to “Apply” section in middle of webpage; click on “Multimedia Library,” then click on Simulations. Choose Simulation 15.4

December 4: Bureaucracy

Assignment: Fiorina, Chapter 14

December 9: Media

Assignment: Fiorina, Chapter 9

FINAL EXAM Tuesday December 16, 3-3:50 pm in our regular classroom (double check ISIS regarding the time)
YOUR DISCUSSION SECTION

Discussion sections will meet 10 times over the course of the semester, during the block for which you signed up. All readings come from the Rourke text. MAKE SURE TO GET THE 2012 edition. The 2010 one is outdated and does not have the correct readings. Below are the assigned readings for each discussion section.

September 11/12: Session 1: Civil liberties and civil rights, Debates 3 and 4 (pp. 38-75)
September 18/19: Session 2: Participation, Debate 6 (pp. 94-107)
September 25/26: Session 3: Interest groups, Debate 8 (pp. 120-133)
October 2/3: Session 4: Political parties, Debate 9 (pp. 134-141)
October 9/10: Session 5: Congress, Debate 11 (pp. 164-175)
NO SECTION October 16/17 (Homecoming)
October 23/24: Session 6: President, Debate 18 (pp. 176-191)
October 30/31: Session 7: Presidential Elections, Debate 10 (pp. 141-163)
November 6/7: Session 8: Court, Debate 14 (pp. 208-221)
November 13/14: Session 9: Bureaucracy, Debate 13 (pp. 192-207)
November 20/21: Session 10: Media, Debate 7 (pp. 108-119)

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INFORMATION ON SHORT PAPERS FOR POS 2041

Below are your discussion section leaders. They will hold office hours—times to be announced—in Anderson Hall Room 010. Check ISIS to make sure the room locations for sections listed below are correct.

Section 0174, Thursday Period 5, (meets in MCCA 2196): Alex Smith: alexpsmith@ufl.edu
Section 018D, Thursday, Period 6 (meets in MAT 0105): Stephen Phillips: scphillips@ufl.edu
Section 0184, Thursday, Period 7 (meets in MAT 0007): Adam Bilinski: abilin@ufl.edu
Section 0187, Friday, Period 3 (meets in LEI 0142): Alex Smith: alexpsmith@ufl.edu
Section 4251, Friday, Period 4 (meets in MAT 0114): Stephen Phillips: scphillips@ufl.edu
Section 7863, Friday, Period 5, (meets in MAT 0010): Charles Shields: cgshields@ufl.edu
Section 1F17, Friday, Period 6, (meets in MAT 0114): Adam Bilinski: abilin@ufl.edu
Section 1F30, Friday, Period 7 (meets in Anderson 0032): Charles Shields: cgshields@ufl.edu.

Please hand the papers in at the beginning of discussion section to your TA. Note the due dates for each paper, although you are welcome to hand each paper in earlier than the posted due date. If for some reason you must email the paper, email it to your TA and ask for confirmation that it was indeed received.

Each paper should be approximately two pages long DOUBLE SPACED. Papers should not shorter than 1.5 pages and no longer than 2 pages. You should have margins of 1.25 inches on each side (left, right, top and bottom). There should be a separate cover page with your name, email address, UF ID number, and TA’s name. (The cover page does not count toward the two page limit).

The topics come from the assigned readings in the Rourke book You Decide. Each assignment in Rourke is a debate between two authors (these can be scholars, or public interest groups, etc.). No additional reading is necessary and for these papers, it is not desirable to bring in outside readings. Keep it simple and just focus on the assigned reading.

The papers are intended to be critical essays. This means that you should evaluate the evidence and arguments provided by each author. Make sure to address the arguments of BOTH authors for each topic. YOU MUST TAKE A SIDE IN YOUR PAPER, stating and explaining which author you believe has the better arguments and why.
If you quote directly from the reading, just note which of the two authors in the reading the quote comes from and cite after the quotation as (“Rourke, p. ---”).

Below are the paper topics. You can hand in papers BEFORE the due date if you want.

1. **Civil Liberties, Debate 3, pp. 38-53.**
   Does the phrase “under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance violate the First Amendment? DUE October 9/10 at the beginning of discussion section.

2. **Participation, Debate 6, pp. 94-107.**
   Does requiring photo identification to vote protect the integrity of elections or does is suppress voter turnout? DUE October 23/24 at the beginning of discussion section.

3. **Presidential Elections, Debate 10, pp. 146-167.**
   Should the electoral college be abolished or preserved? DUE November 13/14 at the beginning of discussion section.