

American National Government

Spring 2008
PLS 101-003

Class Meetings

M, W, F 9:00-9:50 a.m. (Leutze Hall 111)

Instructor Dr. Jungkun Seo (Department of Public and International Affairs)

Office Location Leutze Hall 272

Office Phone (910) 962-2287

E-mail seoj@uncw.edu

Office Hours

M, W, TH 200-400 p.m. or by appointment

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION & STRUCTURE

This course provides students with an account of the basic elements of politics in the United States. The class is designed to balance the task of presenting "the basics" with the more complicated project of encouraging students to develop their own interpretations of political life in the U.S. When the semester is over, students are expected to be equipped with a basic working knowledge of the political systems in the United States and the tools to be more critical consumers of political information.

The first part of the course looks at the ideological and institutional roots of politics in the U.S., emphasizing the historical foundations of the U.S. and the subsequent evolution of basic constitutional elements into political assumptions and practices prevalent in the contemporary political system.

The second unit of the class focuses on the formal and informal institutional features of government that are probably most readily recognizable to students, i.e. the three branches of government. We will discuss both their design and the ways in which these institutions have evolved historically and come to shape political practices.

The third and final segment of the course uses the elements of the first two segments to examine how people express their ideas and interests through voting, parties, interest groups, and other vehicles of political action.

II. COURSE READING

Required Reading (for Textbook)

Samuel Kernell and Gary C. Jacobson. 2006. *The Logic of American Politics*. 3rd edition. (Washington D.C. CQ Press)

Suggested Reading (for Issue Debates and Reports)

CQ Research. 2008. *Issues for Debate in American Public Policy*. 8th edition. (Washington D.C. CQ Press)

III. GRADING

Students are expected to read and reflect upon assigned readings and prepared to discuss them. Grades will be based on the following

1. First Mid-Term Exam (Feb 11) = 15%
2. Second Mid-Term Exam (March 24) = 15%
3. Final Exam (May 2) = 20%
4. Policy Reports Presentation = 20% (10% each)
5. Debate Papers and Participation = 15%
6. Attendance = 15%

- **Exams**

The exams will be a mixture of multiple choice, short identification, and/or short essay questions. Exams will cover lecture notes and assigned readings. Make up exams will only be given for EXCUSED absences and emergencies.

- **Policy Reports Presentation**

You are supposed to choose TWO issues from the following list. The reading materials will be provided by the instructor on Mondays in your presentation week. Following the class schedule, you will present to the class your reports on the selected issues. I expect a 20-minute presentation followed by debates among the students.

- **Debate Papers and Participation**

When your classmate presents his or her policy report, the rest of students are supposed to be ready for debates afterwards. For effective debates, I will distribute debate questions on Mondays in presentation week, and students should submit ONE-PAGE typed paper for each debate containing their answers to debate questions.

- **Attendance**

Students who miss class will find themselves, and their participation grades, quickly falling behind. I will do attendance check and apply it into your final grade. All documentation should be submitted to me in a timely manner. A grade of incomplete ("I") will be given if unforeseeable circumstances keep you from completing the course requirements within the normal semester. Under these circumstances you submit the missing assignments during the subsequent semester (not revisions of previously graded work).

For the whole course, letter grades will be assigned according to the following point totals

A=92.5 or more	A-=89.5-92.49	
B+=87.5-89.49	B=82.5-87.49	B-=79.5-82.49
C+=77.5-79.49	C=72.5-77.49	C-=69.5-72.49
D+=67.5-69.49	D=62.5-67.49	D-=59.5-62.49
F= less than 59.5		

IV. OTHER ISSUES

You are expected to uphold the Academic Honor Code published in the *University of North Carolina Bulletin* and the *Student Handbook*. You are advised that (1) Do not commit plagiarism. (2) Do not receive unauthorized assistance during the exams. (3) Violations of these rules in any assignment may be subject to a minimum penalty of failing grade for the assignment and could result in a grade of “F” for the course.

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should (1) register with and provide documentation to the Disability Services; and (2) bring a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done during the first week of class. The contact number is 910-962-7555.

V. CLASS SCHEDULE

Jan 9 (W) **Course and Student Introduction**

Jan 11 (F) **The Logic of American Politics**
Chapter 1

Jan 14 (M) **The Logic of American Politics**
The Constitution
Chapter 1 & 2

Part I: The Nationalization of Politics

Jan 16 (W) **The Constitution**
Chapter 2

Jan 18 (F) **Policy Reports and Debates #1 --- “Gun Violence”**

Jan 21 (M) **Martin Luther King Holiday**

Jan 23 (W) **Federalism**
Chapter 3

Jan 25 (F) **Policy Reports and Debates #2 --- “No Child Left Behind”**

Jan 28 (M) **Federalism**
Chapter 3

Jan 30 (W) **Civil Rights**
Chapter 4

Feb 1 (F) **Policy Reports and Debates #3 --- “Death Penalty Controversies”**

- Feb 4 (M) **Civil Rights**
Civil Liberties
Chapter 4 & 5
- Feb 6 (W) **Civil Liberties**
Chapter 5
- Feb 8 (F) **Policy Reports and Debates #4 --- “Privacy in Peril”**

Feb 11 (M) First Mid-Term Exam (Chapter 1 through 5)

Part II: The Institutions of Government

- Feb 13 (W) **Congress**
Chapter 6
- Feb 15 (F) **Policy Reports and Debates #5--- “Stem Cell Research”**
- Feb 18 (M) **Congress**
Chapter 6
- Feb 20 (W) **Congress**
The Presidency
Chapter 6 & 7
- Feb 22 (F) **Members of Congress: “Home Style” vs. “Hill Style”**
- Feb 25 (M) **The Presidency**
Chapter 7
- Feb 27 (W) **The Presidency**
Chapter 7
- Feb 29 (F) **Policy Reports and Debates #6--- “Rethinking Foreign Policy”**
- Mar 1- Mar 9 **Spring Break !!!**
- Mar 10 (M) **The Bureaucracy**
Chapter 8
- Mar 12 (W) **The Bureaucracy**
Chapter 8

- Mar 14 (F) **Policy Reports and Debates #7 --- “Universal Health Care Coverage”**
- Mar 17 (M) **The Federal Judiciary**
 Chapter 9
- Mar 19 (W) **The Federal Judiciary**
 Chapter 9
- Mar 21 (F) **Good Friday Holiday**

Mar 24 (M) Second Mid-Term Exam (Chapter 6 through 9)

Part III: The Public’s Influence on National Policy

- Mar 26 (W) **Public Opinion**
 Chapter 10
- Mar 28 (F) **Policy Reports and Debates #8 --- “The New Environmentalism”**
- Mar 31 (M) **Public Opinion**
 Chapter 10
- Apr 2 (W) **Voting, Campaigns, and Elections**
 Chapter 11
- Apr 4 (F) **No Class --- Instructor in Chicago for the 2008 MPSA Conference**
- Apr 7 (M) **Voting, Campaigns, and Elections**
 Chapter 11
- Apr 9 (W) **Political Parties**
 Chapter 12
- Apr 11 (F) **Policy Reports and Debates #9 --- “Illegal Immigration”**
- Apr 14 (M) **Political Parties**
 Interest Groups
 Chapter 12 & 13
- Apr 16 (W) **Interest Groups**
 Chapter 13
- Apr 18 (F) **Policy Reports and Debates #10 --- “Controlling the Internet”**

- Apr 21 (M) **The News Media**
 Chapter 14
- Apr 23 (W) **The Dilemmas of Institutional Reform**
 Chapter 15
- Apr 25 (F) **A Polarized Nation: “The State of the Union: Red vs. Blue States”**
- Apr 28 (M) **Course Wrap up --- LAST CLASS DAY**
- May 2 (F) Final Exam**