PSC 1002
Introduction to American Politics and Government

Spring 2013
T + Th, 11:10am-12:00pm
Funger 103

Professor Danny Hayes
dwh@gwu.edu
Monroe 403
T + Th, 2-3:30pm, and by appointment
202-994-2125

Teaching Assistant | Sections | E-mail | Office | Office Hours
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Sarah Eckman | 30, 35, 38 | seckman@gwu.edu | 609 21st St., 2nd floor | Th, 12-2pm and by appt.
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COURSE OVERVIEW AND GOALS
This course provides a survey of the political processes and institutions of American government.

I know what you might be thinking—that sounds boring. Let me assure you, this course will be anything but. The bulk of U.S. political history has been characterized by drama and conflict, and our investigation of American politics will include a focus on topics like the civil rights movement, the war on terrorism, polarization in the U.S. Congress, the 2012 presidential election, and hotly contested debates over health care, immigration, gay marriage, and gun control, to name just a few. Controversial, always; boring, never.

Each of these political issues and events—and most others—can be seen most clearly through the lens of the historical and institutional development of the American political system. Our lectures, readings, and discussions will touch on the Constitution, Congress, the presidency, the judiciary, political parties, voting, and public opinion, among other topics. In all of this, our focus will be on how the basic features of American government illuminate the stories and events that appear in the news that we encounter every day, be it the war in Afghanistan, wrangling over the “fiscal cliff,” or even the price of milk at Safeway.

This course, which satisfies GPAC requirements in critical thinking, has several goals:

- To provide you with a basic understanding of the United States’ political development and institutions, and to help you understand why our government works the way it does
- To help you develop familiarity a variety of political science theories, and their conceptual underpinnings, used to explain American politics
- To help you become a savvy analyst of government and politics, and a thoughtful consumer of political news
- To help you develop the ability to write a critical essay that explicates basic concepts of American politics, including using different sources and points of view on the meaning and evolution of these concepts
• To help you develop the ability to offer substantive policy advice appropriate to Washington policy makers. This will require that you have a relevant, appropriate, “point of view” on a current matter of public policy and that you can present it with appropriate evidence given alternative policy options.

**LEARNING ASSESSMENT**

We will evaluate your success in achieving these goals with the following criteria:

• **Two Exams:** These will assess whether you have acquired a basic knowledge of the structures, functions, and development of American politics and government. In addition, they will assess your knowledge of the important concepts underlying the study of politics in general and American politics in particular.

  The exams will consist of both multiple choice questions and short answer identifications. The multiple choice questions will be straightforward, with four answers to choose from. For the short answer portion of the exam, you will be expected to identify several terms and explain, in a few sentences, why they are important. We will talk more about the design of the exams as the semester proceeds.

  The first exam is **February 28**, and the second will take place **during the final exam period**.

  Makeup exams will be given only in extreme circumstances, such as illness or family emergency. In order to qualify for makeup, you must (1) notify me before the exam and (2) provide documentation of the illness or emergency. If you fail to do either of these things, you will not be eligible to take a makeup.

• **Discussion Participation:** Your ability to engage in critical reading and discussion will be assessed through weekly discussion sections. The sections will focus upon a supplementary “reader” featuring alternative political points of view and research by a variety of political scientists.

  Attendance in discussion sections is required. For every section you do not attend, your participation grade will be lowered by 5 points. If you miss a discussion section because of illness or family emergency, we will not deduct points as long as (1) you notify your TA before section and (2) you provide documentation of the illness or emergency. Otherwise, your absence will not be excused.

• **Concept Paper:** The concept paper will assess your ability to think, read, and write critically about a basic concept central to American politics. You will need to be able to engage in research, consider alternative interpretations and usages of a political concept, and communicate your own interpretation in a formally prepared essay.

  The assignment will be handed out January 29 and due **February 7**.

• **Policy Memo:** The policy memo will assess your ability to examine a current policy issue and offer appropriate political advice to an elected or appointed official. It will require you to consider the official’s political orientation, how that relates to the policy in question, what the varying points of view regarding that policy might be, and how then to offer clear guidance to “your boss.”

  The assignment will be handed out March 21 and due **April 4**.

For both writing assignments, missing the due date will cost you 5 points for each day the assignment is late. For example, if your paper is three days late, you can score no higher than an 85. These
deductions are not negotiable.

The components of your final grade will be as follows:

- Exam 1: 25%
- Exam 2: 30%
- Discussion participation: 10%
- Concept paper: 15%
- Policy memo: 20%

At the end of the semester, your grade will be assigned based on the following scale:

A (93-100), A- (90-92), B+ (87-89), B (83-86), B- (80-82), C+ (77-79), C (73-76), C- (70-72), D+ (67-69), D (63-66), D- (60-62), and F (0-59).

**READINGS**

This course has two required books. They are sold as a bundle at the GW bookstore. In the course schedule below, you are expected to complete the reading before the class for which it is assigned. You must acquire the 5th edition of both books. You are also responsible for keeping up with the news.

**Books**


**The News**

It should come as no surprise in a political science course that you are expected to keep up with the news. Our discussions during lecture and in section frequently will touch on current events, so it is critical that you keep apprised of major political goings-on. Reading a newspaper is perhaps the best way to do this, although there are of course many other news sources with ample political coverage. Not only will this often bring course material to life, but it undoubtedly will make the class more interesting. (As a non-trivial side benefit, being a news junkie invariably gives you interesting things to talk about at parties, especially when you find yourself in a conversation that has lapsed into awkward silence.)

You are free to read (in print or online) any news source of your choosing, with one limitation: You need to choose a news source that includes frequent coverage of national politics.

**Scholastic Dishonesty and Academic Integrity**

Thinking about cheating? Don’t do it. In the Code of Academic Integrity, the University defines academic dishonesty as “cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one’s own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information.” Scholastic dishonesty also includes, but is not limited to, providing false or misleading information to receive a postponement or extension on a test, quiz, or assignment, and submission of essentially the same written assignment for two different courses without the prior permission of faculty members. By accepting this syllabus and participating in the course, you have agreed to abide by this Code. Students who violate the Code are subject to disciplinary penalties, including failure on the assignment in question, failure in the course, and other penalties imposed by the University. See http://www.gwu.edu/ntegrity/index.htm.
ACADEMIC FREEDOM
Each student is strongly encouraged to participate in class discussions. In any classroom situation that involves discussion and critical thinking, particularly about political ideas, there are bound to be many differing viewpoints. Students may not only disagree with each other at times, but the students and instructor may also find that they have disparate views on sensitive and volatile topics. It is my hope that these differences will enhance class discussion and create an atmosphere where all of us will be encouraged to think and learn from each other. Therefore, be assured that students’ grades will not be affected by any beliefs or ideas expressed in class or in assignments. Rather, we will all respect the views of others when expressed in classroom discussions.

ACCOMMODATIONS
Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Disability Support Services office at 202-994-8250 in Rome Hall, Suite 102, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss/.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES
If an exam or assignment is scheduled for a date when you are observing a religious holy day, I will work with you to find an acceptable alternative time to complete the assignment.

TECHNOLOGY
I love technology (though not as much as Napoleon Dynamite’s brother, Kip). But the fact is that laptops, smart phones, and other electronic devices are a distraction to your classmates and to me. You may not use them in class. If you have a unique reason for needing a laptop to take notes, please contact me.

COURSE SCHEDULE (Note: This is subject to change as the semester proceeds.)

Part I: The Foundations of American Government and Politics

January 15, 17: What is government, and why do we even have it?
- Logic: Ch. 1 (“The Logic of American Politics”)
- Principles: Olson (pp.1-11)

January 22, 24: Big jobs: The founding of the United States and the writing of the Constitution
- Logic: Ch. 2 (“The Constitution”) and The U.S. Constitution (pp. 712-721)
- Principles: Brutus, Anti-Federalist 3 (pp. 59-63); Madison, Federalist 10 and 51 (pp. 64-73)

January 29, 31: Federalism: You’re not the boss of me! Oh, wait. Yes, you are.
- Logic: Ch. 3 (“Federalism”)
- Principles: Kettl (pp. 80-102); Rauch (pp. 103-106)
- *Concept paper assignment handed out January 29*

February 5, 7: Civil liberties: What they are and why they matter
- Logic: Ch. 5 (“Civil Liberties”)
- Principles: Sunstein (pp. 139-155); Roe v. Wade (pp. 165-173)
- *Concept paper due February 7*
February 12, 14: Civil rights: What they are and why they matter  
- Logic: Ch. 4 (“Civil Rights”)  
- Principles: Ford (pp. 110-126); Prewitt (pp. 127-138)

Part II: The Formal Institutions of American Government

February 19, 21, 26: Congress: Making laws, getting elected, and re-elected, and re-elected, and ...  
- Logic: Ch. 6 (“Congress”)  
- Principles: Smith (pp. 204-219); Binder (pp. 220-230)

February 28: *Exam 1*

March 5, 7: The Presidency: It ain’t your great-great-great-great grandfather’s chief executive  
- Logic: Ch. 7 (“The Presidency”)  
- Principles: Neustadt (pp. 254-274); Kernell (pp. 300-317)

March 12, 14: Spring break—don’t do anything I wouldn’t do

March 19, 21: The Courts: Judges, judging, and politics (heaven forbid!)  
- Logic: Ch. 9 (“The Federal Judiciary”)  
- Principles: Hamilton, Federalist 78 (pp. 414-419); Carp, Manning, and Stidham (pp. 420-435)  
- *Policy memo assignment handed out March 21*

Part III: Connections between the Government and the Public

March 26, 28: Political parties  
- Logic: Ch. 12 (“Political Parties”)  
- Principles: Aldrich (pp. 602-614); Fiorina (pp. 626-639)

April 2, 4: Interest groups  
- Logic: Ch. 13 (“Interest Groups”)  
- Principles: Schattschneider (pp. 640-648); Wright (649-656)  
- *Policy memo due April 4*

April 9: The Media: Our (smudged?) window into the world of politics  
- Logic: Ch. 14 (“The News Media”)  
- Principles: Hamilton (pp. 669-684); Baum and Groeling (pp. 685-694)
April 11: No class

April 16, 18: Public opinion: What Americans think and why it (sometimes) matters
  - Logic: Ch. 10 (“Public Opinion”)
  - Principles: Asher (pp. 436-465); Stimson, MacKuen, and Erikson (pp. 466-480)

April 23, 25, 30: Campaigns and elections
  - Logic: Ch. 14 (“Voting, Campaigns, and Elections”)
  - Principles: Popkin (pp. 533-540); Bartels (pp. 615-625); West (pp. 563-587)
  - *Note that our April 30 meeting is on the University’s makeup class day*

During the finals period: *Exam 2*
  - Date, time, and location to be announced