

Y103 – Introduction to American Politics
Department of Political Science
Fall 2009

Meeting time: 3-4:15, Monday and Wednesday, CM 212
Instructor: Brent Hierman (hiermanb@ipfw.edu)
Office: CM 211
Office Hours: Tuesday 1:00 – 4:00 (or by appointment)

Course Description

The purpose of Y103 is to introduce you to politics and government in the United States. This course will help lay the foundation for you to become an active and knowledgeable participant in American politics and political culture. In our daily life, through our encounters with news media and “water cooler” conversations, we are surrounded by simplified and fragmented discussions of politics. This course is a tool that will enable you to move beyond the superficial “talking points” and develop a comprehensive, substantive understanding of American politics.

The aim of this course is not to change your opinions on any political issues. However, this course is built upon two fundamental assumptions that I hope that you will embrace by the end of the semester:

1. Politics are important, and your participation in the political process is essential if you hope for your point of view to be represented in our laws and government.
2. People with whom you disagree provide you with crucial opportunities to learn and become a better citizen. Everyone has an opinion worth considering, and when we disagree as citizens we can do so civilly.

We have tremendous amount of material to cover in a single semester, but the goal is to give you a sampling of the main areas of importance in this field so that you can elaborate on them in higher-level courses in the future.

Key topics we will cover include:

- The Constitution and theories of democracy – what exactly is American government?
- Civil rights and liberties – what is your role, and what are your responsibilities?
- Institutions – the Congress, Presidency, and Courts
- Outside actors – parties, interest groups, the media, and voters

Grading Procedure

You will take 5 (non-cumulative) exams in this course in addition to other assignments. ***It is to your benefit to take a larger number of exams!***

Compared to a course in which you have a midterm and a final, by having more exams:

- They will be shorter – think of them as glorified quizzes
- They will cover less material – around two chapters – and be much easier to study for compared to a midterm (which would cover 7-10 chapters) or final
- You will retain more information in the long run compared to a midterm and final
- The exams will be closer to the lectures that cover the topics you're being tested on
- You will have ample opportunity to recover from a poor grade on one exam

In the class period before each exam, you will also be responsible for turning in a short (1-2 pages) written assignment that answers a question related to the subject matter on the exam. These assignments are intended to assist you prepare for the exams and thus late assignments will not be accepted without prior notification.

Final grades will be distributed in the following manner:

Five exams – 15% of your final grade for each exam (75% total)
Attendance and participation – 15%
Five short written assignments – 10% total

Attendance/Participation

Regular attendance is a requirement of this course. Poor attendance will be reflected in the course participation grade. If you have extenuating circumstances that will require you to miss several classes, please arrange a time to meet with me.

Additionally, it is my expectation that everyone in this class will be an active participant. Before each class you are expected to have done the readings and to be prepared to discuss them. You are also expected to have copies of the readings, or very detailed notes, with you in class. As an additional incentive to encourage preparation I reserve the right to issue unannounced reading quizzes. These quizzes should be incredibly easy you have come to class prepared.

As a courtesy to their classmates, students should strive to contribute to a classroom environment conducive to learning. This includes treating your classmates with respect, arriving on time for class, turning off your cell phone, and participating in class discussions. Students who are disruptive will be asked to leave class.

Cell phones, iPods, Palm Pilots and the like are not permitted to be used while class is in session. I reserve the right to proscribe computer usage in class if I suspect that computers are being used for non-academic purposes. If you want to use your computer to take notes, you must sit in the first two rows.

Make-Up / Late Work policy

I expect every student to take the exams as scheduled and hand in the assignments when due. I will not arrange make-ups unless you speak to me **in advance** about your inability

to comply with the dates in the syllabus or unless you have a verifiable emergency that prevents your attendance on the day of the exam.

If you think you can't make it for an exam, email me. Call the political science office or my cell phone (812-340-6296, for emergencies only please). If you show up after the fact and ask for a makeup, you will be out of luck except in verifiable cases of medical or personal emergency.

Cheating, Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct:

In writing your short writing assignments, you should at all times avoid plagiarism. Plagiarism is defined by IPFW as "a form of cheating in which the work of someone else is offered as one's own. The language or ideas thus taken from another may range from isolated formula, sentences, or paragraphs, to entire articles copied from printed sources, speeches, software, or the work of other students." Plagiarism can easily be avoided by properly citing all references used in your paper. If you have any questions, please see me during office hours or before or after class to talk about this. Any plagiarism will be penalized. Papers that contain substantial plagiarized sections will automatically receive an F in this course and may lead to disciplinary action by the university.

This course is conducted according to university regulations and expectations regarding academic affairs and academic integrity. Students should familiarize themselves with the "Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities and Conduct", available online at <http://www.ipfw.edu/academics/regulations/code/>. If you are uncertain about the applications of these guidelines to your situation, please feel free to contact me.

A Few General Polices and Recommendations:

- Office hours are very helpful. Come and visit to straighten out any questions. My email response time will vary, plan ahead when possible.
- Participation is key. Engaging in classroom discussion will help not only your grade, but your understanding of new concepts. Ask questions.
- Politics are often contentious. We will respect the rights of fellow students to be heard in turn. Personal, derogatory remarks will not be tolerated.
- Keep copies of all your work. (i.e. e-mail it to yourself)
- Again, plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated. You will receive an F in the class and I will report you to the Dean. When in doubt, cite. Using appropriate sources can actually add power to your argument.
- All work handed into me will be graded in a timely manner. Exams and the paper will be returned within one week.

The following scale will be used to determine letter grades.

97-100 A+

93-96 A

77-79 C+

73-76 C

90-92 A-
87-89 B+
83-86 B
80-82 B-

70-72 C-
67-69 D+
63-66 D
60-62 D-
<59 F

Readings

We will be using the following textbook for this class:

Barbour, Christine and Gerald C. Wright. *Keeping the Republic: Power and Citizenship in American Politics*, 4th edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2009. [Hereafter KTR]

As you read, do not try to memorize every word. Instead ask yourself, “What is this chapter about? What are the key concepts?” The book will provide the foundations of our discussions, and it is important that you do the assigned readings in a timely manner.

Schedule of Classes

I reserve the right to slightly alter this schedule.

Monday, August 24	Introduction to Y103 Review syllabus in class
Wednesday, August 26	Politics – What is it, and who cares? KTR Chapter 1
Monday, August 31	Political culture, citizenship KTR Chapter 2
Wednesday, September 2	The Founding and Constitution KTR Chapter 3
Monday, September 7	Labor Day! No class
Wednesday, September 9	Constitution: Separated powers KTR Chapter 4
Monday, September 14	Rights and Liberties KTR Chapter 5

Wednesday, September 16	Struggle for Equal Rights KTR Chapters 5-6
Monday, September 21	Catch up/Review Written Assignment #1 DUE
Wednesday, September 23	Exam 1
Monday, September 28	Equal Rights continued KTR Chapter 6
Wednesday, September 30	Congress KTR Chapter 7
Monday, October 5	Congress continued KTR Chapter 7
Wednesday, October 7	Catch Up/Review Written Assignment #2 DUE
Monday, October 12	Fall break! No class
Wednesday, October 14	Exam 2
Monday, October 19	The Presidency KTR Chapter 8
Wednesday, October 21	The Courts KTR Chapter 10
Monday, October 26	Judicial Review KTR Chapter 10
Wednesday, October 28	Catch Up/ Review Written Assignment #3 DUE
Monday, November 2	Exam 3
Wednesday, November 4	Bureaucracy KTR Chapter 9
Monday, November 9	Public Opinion KTR Chapter 11
Wednesday, November 11	Parties KTR Chapters 12

Monday, November 16	Catch Up/Review Written Assignment #4 DUE
Wednesday, November 18	Exam # 4
Monday, November 23	Interest Groups, Representation KTR Chapter 13
Wednesday, November 25	Thanksgiving Break! No class
Monday, November 30	Tuesday, June 12 Voting KTR Chapter 14
Wednesday, December 2	The Media KTR Chapter 15
Monday, December 7	Catch Up and Review Written Assignment #5 DUE
Wednesday, December 9	Exam #5 Last day of class