

Political Science  
Y103 Introduction to American Politics

Spring 2005  
Ulmschneider

Georgia Wralstad

Office: CM 219

Office Hours: T - 8  
9:00 a.m.

R - 12:00

2:00 p.m.

And by

appointment.

- 481-6687

Telephones: Office

Department - 481-6686

POLS web address: <http://www.ipfw.edu/pols/>

### **Course Description**

This course examines the constitutional principles, institutions, processes, and personalities of American politics and government. The topics covered include the Constitution; the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government; political parties and interest groups; the nomination and election processes; public opinion and mass media; and civil rights and liberties. The course discusses not only the contemporary American political institutions and processes, but also develops the historical, social, economic, and cultural context within which these institutions and processes must operate.

### **Course Objectives**

Students who diligently pursue the work of this course will be better able to:

- a) have a coherent understanding of the American political system and its dynamic nature;
- b) recognize the fundamental issues confronting the American political system;
- c) appreciate and respect the multicultural diversity of American society;
- d) synthesize information into a coherent whole;
- e) distinguish between fact, interpretation based on fact, and opinion; and
- f) articulate and defend, with appropriate evidence, their ideas, views, and opinions.

This course fulfills the General Education Requirement for Area Three: The Individual, Culture, and Society.

### **Evaluation of Student Performance**

Evaluation of student performance in meeting the course objectives will be primarily derived from three examinations, two intermediate examinations and a final comprehensive examination, and a short paper.

Both the examinations, which will likely consist of multiple choice questions, and the paper require students to demonstrate basic knowledge about the American political system; synthesize discrete information into coherent patterns; distinguish among facts, interpretations based on fact, and opinion; and critically analyze. A separate handout detailing the paper assignment will be distributed later on in the course. The intermediate examinations will each count 25% of the course grade, the short paper will count 20% of the course grade, and the final examination will count 30% of the course grade. Finally, the instructor's evaluation of class attendance, participation, and performance may influence the final grade in close cases. Please bear in mind some individuals are more comfortable speaking in class than others. This is to be expected and, therefore, a few well-placed, insightful comments are just as valuable as general classroom talkativeness. Participation accounts for quality as well as quantity of responses. Also, remember that cheating, plagiarism, or even facilitating academic dishonesty, are serious offenses that may lead to failure on an assignment, failure for a course, or, in serious cases, suspension or expulsion from the university. (See IPFW Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities and Conduct)

Students are expected to take all examinations on the scheduled examination dates. Consequently, it is the general policy of this course **not** to allow students to take makeup examinations. Exceptions to this policy will be made only under appropriate and unusual circumstances. Makeup examinations are the instructor's prerogative and may be different in format (e.g., essay questions). Only one makeup examination will be given to any student. In order to be considered for a makeup examination, a student must **directly contact** the instructor **prior** to the time of the exam. It is also the student's responsibility to follow up with the instructor on any arrangements concerning a makeup. Further, students are expected to read all assigned material prior to discussion of the material in class and participate in class discussions. The instructor may even play devil's advocate to stimulate such discussion. Because we will be discussing controversial material, it is imperative that everyone be respectful of one another and one another's views, no matter how much one disagrees. Disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. (This includes communications devices—cell phones, pagers, beepers, etc.) Class participation cannot be made up. If you miss a class, contact someone who has attended. Announcements pertinent to the course will frequently be made in class and students will be held responsible for knowing these announcements. **Both reading assignments and intermediate examination dates will be announced in class.** The final examination is scheduled for the **9:00 class** on Tuesday, May 3, at 8:00 a.m. in CM112. Reading assignments, course requirements, and/or evaluation criteria may be altered during the course of the semester. Students are also expected to keep up with current events. Finally, taping of classes is generally not permitted.

If you have or acquire a disability and would like to find out what special services and accommodations may be available to you, contact Services for Students with Disabilities in WU 118 & 218 (481-6657, voice/TTY).

Required Books:

Bardes, B., Shelley, M., and Schmidt, S. *American Government and Politics Today: The Essentials*, 2004-2005 Edition.

**Other readings will be given to you in the form of handouts or placed on reserve in the library.**

Course Outline:

- I. Introduction to the American Political System (January 11)
  - A. What is politics?
  - B. Political Culture and Ideology  
Required Readings (RR): *American Government and Politics Today* (hereafter *American Government*), Ch. 1
- II. The Constitutional Context (Week of January 18)
  - A. Historical Background  
RR: *American Government*, Ch. 2, pages 32-41; Appendix A
  - B. The Constitutional Framework  
RR: *American Government*, Ch. 2, pages 41-58; Appendix D, pages 531-533
- III. Civil Liberties and Civil Rights (Weeks of January 25-February 8)
  - A. Civil Liberties  
RR: *American Government*, Ch. 4
  - B. Civil Rights  
RR: *American Government*, Ch. 5
- IV. Political Institutions (Weeks of February 15-March 22)
  - A. The Judiciary  
RR: *American Government*, Ch. 13; Appendix D, pages 533-536
  - B. The Presidency and the Bureaucracy  
RR: *American Government*, Ch. 11
  - C. The Congress  
RR: *American Government*, Ch. 10

V. People and Politics (Weeks of March 26-April 19)

A. Campaigns, Elections, and the Media

RR: *American Government*, Ch. 9

B. Public Opinion and Political Socialization

RR: *American Government*, Ch. 6

C. Political Parties

RR: *American Government*, Ch. 8

D. Interest Groups

RR: *American Government*, Ch. 7

VI. American Politics and the Future