

## POSC109 THE AMERICAN POLITICAL SYSTEM

Spring Semester 2008

MWF 10:30-11:20am

Sears 480

### **Karen Beckwith, Professor**

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Office Hours: Wednesday 2:30-4:00pm, or by appointment

Course Website: [www.case.edu/artsci/posc/kb109.htm](http://www.case.edu/artsci/posc/kb109.htm)

### **COURSE OUTLINE AND REQUIREMENTS**

POSC109, The American Political System, is an introduction to the US political system, with a focus on national governing institutions, constitutional constraints, and the impacts of mass participation and the political economy on US politics and democracy. The course focuses on the political and economic development and national construction of the United States. In so doing, this course considers fundamental national values such as liberty, equality, racism, capitalism, and democracy, in terms of the impact of these values upon the construction of the nation and of their negotiation in practice across two centuries.

The course is divided into three major sections. The first focuses on civil society and the state, the mechanisms of national government elaborated in the Constitution, and their relationship to the economic system. In the second section of the course, we examine the relationship between state and citizen, and the ways in which political power achieves expression in a democratic state. We will consider public opinion, the role of the media, the formation of interest groups and political parties, and the means by which citizens organize to have an influence on governing officials. Because 2008 is a presidential election year, we will investigate these relationships with reference to the presidential campaigns and the presidential election process. The third section of the course is devoted to an investigation of the three major branches of national government: the Congress, the Presidency, and the federal court system. The course concludes with a consideration of governance and democracy in contemporary U.S. politics.

**Evaluation of student performance** in this course will be based on the following criteria. First, students will complete two in-class examinations, each of which accounts for 20 percent of the final grade. Second, students will complete a final examination, which accounts for 30 percent of the final course grade. Third, students will write two short position papers, each of which accounts for 15 percent of the final course grade. Details of the short paper assignments are available in a separate course handout. Finally, each student is expected to attend class and to be prepared for each class meeting by having read, in advance, the materials assigned for that day. Students should be prepared to discuss the material in detail in class every day, and all students are expected to participate. Informed class participation and professionalism are requirements of the course. Due dates for examinations and assignments are indicated in the reading schedule, below.

**Books required for this course** are listed below and are available for purchase in the University Bookstore:

Ross Baker, *House and Senate*  
Robert Dahl, *How Democratic Is the American Constitution?*  
Theodore Lowi, Benjamin Ginsberg, and Kenneth Shepsle,  
*American Government: Power and Purpose* (core 10<sup>th</sup> ed.)  
David M. O'Brien, *Storm Center: The Supreme Court in American Politics*  
Thomas E. Patterson, *Out of Order*

**Additional readings** are available through electronic journals or JSTOR, through the Kelvin Smith Library website. Each student should print a hardcopy of every additional assigned reading for his or her own research purposes. Please note that this is a requirement of the course.

Students are encouraged to read the *New York Times* daily. Copies of the *Times* are available on campus and in the University Bookstore.

**Standards of professionalism and academic integrity** are integral components of this course. Students are reminded that they are obliged to understand, to uphold, and to comply with the Academic Integrity Policy of the University. A copy of the Code may be found online at

<http://studentaffairs.case.edu/groups/aiboard/policy.html>

Students who do not understand this Policy after having read it should make an appointment to see me to discuss it; indeed, I welcome this discussion and encourage students to see me in advance of any assignment about which they have doubts or questions. It is a course requirement that students read the University's Academic Integrity Policy.

Professionalism refers to adherence to standards of behavior and performance expected from political scientists. This includes, but is not limited to, courteous behavior in class; attention to other speakers; engagement with the work at hand; and, of course, adherence to university standards of academic integrity. Students are expected, and obliged, to comport themselves, in class, in a professional manner.

### SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

January 14      **Introduction to the Course:**

January 16      **Civil Society and the State**

READ: Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*, Chapter 1 and the *Constitution of the United States*

January 18      **Liberty, Equality, and the Political Construction of State Institutions**

READ: Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*, Chapter 2

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January 21      Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday; NO CLASS MEETING

January 23      READ: Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*, Chapter 3

January 25      READ: Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*, Chapter 4

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January 28      READ: George Sabine, "The Two Democratic Traditions," *The Philosophical Review*, 61, October 1952: 451-474 [available online at JSTOR]

January 30 READ: James Madison, Federalist Paper #10, in Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*

REVIEW: *The Constitution of the United States*

February 1 DISCUSSION

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February 4 **Democracy and Political Participation**

READ: Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*, Chapter 9

February 6 READ: Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*, Chapter 10; Dahl, *How Democratic Is the American Constitution?*, Chapters 1 and 4

February 8 **Political Parties and the Media**

READ: Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*, Chapter 11

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February 11 READ: Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*, Chapter 13

February 13 READ: Thomas Patterson, *Out of Order*, Prologue and Chapters 1 and 2

February 15 READ: Thomas Patterson, *Out of Order*, Chapters 3 and 4

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February 18 READ: Thomas Patterson, *Out of Order*, Chapters 5 and 6

February 20 DISCUSSION

February 22 SHORT POSITION PAPER DUE IN CLASS

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February 25 FIRST EXAMINATION

February 27 **Political Economy and Political Participation**

READ: John Gaventa, *Power and Powerlessness*, Chapter 1 [course handout]

February 29 READ: John Mueller, "Democracy and Ralph's Pretty Good Grocery," *American Journal of Political Science*, 36 (4), November 1992: 983-1003 [available on line at JSTOR]

REVIEW: James Madison, Federalist Paper #10, in Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*

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March 3           **Capitalism, Democracy, and the Political Economy of the State**

READ: Walter Dean Burnham, "The Constitution, Capitalism, and the Need for Rationalized Regulation," in Goldwin and Schambra, eds., *How Capitalistic Is the Constitution?* [available on course website]

March 5           READ: Bernard H. Siegan, "The Constitution and the Protection of Capitalism," and Edward Greenberg, "Class Rule under the Constitution," in Goldwin and Schambra, eds., *How Capitalistic Is the Constitution?* [available on course website]

March 7           READ: Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*, Chapter 12

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March 10-14    SPRING BREAK

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March 17       **Congress: Legislating, Representing, Deliberating**

READ: Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*, Chapter 5; Dahl, *How Democratic Is the American Constitution?*, Chapters 1 and 2

REVIEW: *The Constitution of the United States*

March 19       READ: Baker, *House and Senate*, Chapters 1 and 2

March 21       READ: Baker, *House and Senate*, Chapters 3 and 4

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March 24       READ: Baker, *House and Senate*, Chapters 5 and 6

March 26       READ: Baker, *House and Senate*, Chapter 7

March 28       DISCUSSION

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March 31       SHORT POSITION PAPER DUE IN CLASS

April 2         SECOND EXAMINATION

April 4         **The Presidency and the Executive Branch**

READ: Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*, Chapter 6

REVIEW: *The Constitution of the United States*

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April 7 READ: Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*, Chapter 7

April 9 NO CLASS MEETING; Professor lecturing in New York.

April 11 READ: Bert A. Rockman, "Reinventing What For Whom? President and Congress in the Making of Foreign Policy," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 30 (1), March 2000 [available through electronic journal] and David P. Auerswald and Peter F. Cowhey, "Ballotbox Diplomacy: The War Powers Resolution and the Use of Force," *International Studies Quarterly*, 41 (3), September 1997 [available through JSTOR]

RECOMMENDED: *The War Powers Resolution of 1973* [available at <http://usinfo.state.gov/usa/infousa/laws/majorlaw/warpower.htm>]; *Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002* [available at <http://www.thomas.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?c107:5:./temp/~c107SGto5n::>]

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April 14 **The Federal Court System**

READ: Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*, Chapter 8

REVIEW: Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*, Chapter 4, and the *Constitution of the United States*

April 16 READ: O'Brien, *Storm Center*, Chapters 4 and 5

April 18 READ: O'Brien, *Storm Center*, Chapter 6

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April 21 **How Democratic Is the US Political System?**

READ: Dahl, *How Democratic Is the American Constitution?*, Chapters 1, 2 and 3

April 23 READ: Dahl, *How Democratic Is the American Constitution?*, Chapters 4 and 5

April 25 READ: Dahl, *How Democratic Is the American Constitution?*, Chapters 6 and 7, and Appendices A and B

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April 28 **Conclusion of the Course**

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**FINAL EXAMINATION ON THURSDAY, MAY 1, 8:30-11:30AM**