

POSC109 THE AMERICAN POLITICAL SYSTEM

Fall Semester 2008
TTh 10:00-11:15am
Mandel Center 108

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Office Hours: Wednesday 1:00-3:00pm, or by appointment

Course Website: 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 electoral 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, 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 25 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 assignment 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. All students are expected to participate and to present themselves in class in a professional manner. 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. Informed class participation and professionalism are requirements of the course, and account for the remaining 5 percent of the final course grade.

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:

Robert Dahl, *How Democratic Is the American Constitution?*
Theodore Lowi, Benjamin Ginsberg, and Kenneth Shepsle,
American Government: Power and Purpose (core 10th ed.)
Thomas E. Patterson, *Out of Order*

Additional readings are available through electronic journals or JSTOR, through the Kelvin Smith Library website, or on the course webpage at www.case.edu/artsci/posc/kb109.htm. 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://www.case.edu/provost/ugstudies/acintegrity.htm>

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.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

August 26 **Introduction to the Course**

August 28 **Civil Society and the State**

READ: Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*, Chapter 1 and the *Constitution of the United States*; Dahl, *How Democratic Is the American Constitution?*, Chapter 1

NOTE: NO CLASS MEETING TODAY; PROFESSOR BECKWITH WILL BE ATTENDING THE AMERICAN POLITICAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION MEETINGS.

September 2 **Liberty, Equality, and the Political Construction of State Institutions**

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

September 4 READ: Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*, Chapter 3; Dahl, *How Democratic Is the American Constitution?*, Chapter 3

September 9 READ: Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*, Chapter 4

September 11 READ: George Sabine, "The Two Democratic Traditions," *The Philosophical Review*, 61, October 1952: 451-474 [available online at JSTOR]

September 16 READ: James Madison, Federalist Paper #10, in Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*

REVIEW: *The Constitution of the United States*

September 18 **Democracy and Political Participation**

READ: Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*, Chapter 9; Dahl, *How Democratic Is the American Constitution?*, Chapters 1 and 4

September 23 READ: John Gaventa, *Power and Powerlessness*, Chapter 1 [available on course webpage at www.case.edu/artsci/posc/kb109.htm]

September 25 NOTE: NO CLASS MEETING TODAY; PROFESSOR BECKWITH WILL BE LECTURING AT TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

September 30 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*

October 2 FIRST EXAMINATION

October 7 **Political Parties and the Media**

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

October 9 READ: Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*, Chapter 13

October 14 READ: Thomas Patterson, *Out of Order*, Prologue and Chapters 1-3

October 16 READ: Thomas Patterson, *Out of Order*, Chapters 4-6

October 21 FALL BREAK

October 23 FIRST SHORT PAPER DUE IN CLASS

October 28 Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*, Chapter 10

October 30 Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*, Chapter 12

November 4 ELECTION DAY

November 6 SECOND EXAMINATION

November 11 **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*

November 13 READ: Charles Stewart, *Analyzing Congress*, Chapter 9 [available on course webpage at www.case.edu/artsci/posc/kb109.htm]

November 18 **The Presidency and Executive Powers**

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

REVIEW: *The Constitution of the United States*

November 20 READ: 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::>]

November 25 SECOND SHORT PAPER DUE IN CLASS

November 27 THANKSGIVING

December 2 **The Supreme Court and the Federal Court System**

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

REVIEW: Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*, Chapter 4

December 4 READ: **How Democratic Is the US Political System?**

READ: Dahl, *How Democratic Is the American Constitution?*, Chapters 5, 6, and 7

FINAL EXAMINATION ON TUESDAY, DECEMBER 16, 12:30-3:30AM