

POSC109 THE AMERICAN POLITICAL SYSTEM

Spring Semester 2012

TTh 10:00-11:15am

Clark Hall 302

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

Course Website: <http://politicalscience.case.edu/faculty-listings/political-science-109-professor-beckwith/>

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. 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 25 percent of the final grade. Second, students will complete a final examination, which accounts for 40 percent of the final course grade.

In addition, 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 10 percent of the final course grade.

Due dates for examinations are indicated in the reading schedule, below. Please note that students are expected to be present in class for all scheduled exams, including the final examination.

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

Robert Dahl, *How Democratic Is the American Constitution?*
Theodore Lowi, Benjamin Ginsberg, Kenneth Shepsle, and Stephen Ansolabehere,
American Government: Power and Purpose (core 11th ed.)

Additional readings are available through electronic journals or JSTOR, through the Kelvin Smith Library website, or on the course webpage at <http://politicalscience.case.edu/faculty-listings/political-science-109-professor-beckwith/>

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.

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

January 17 **Introduction to the Course**

January 19 **Civil Society and the State**

READ: Lowi et al., *American Government*, Chapter 2 and the *Constitution of the United States*; Dahl, *How Democratic Is the American Constitution?*, Chapter 1.

January 24 **Liberty, Equality, and the Political Construction of State Institutions**

READ: George H. Sabine, "The Two Democratic Traditions," *The Philosophical Review*, 61 (4), October 1952: 451-474 [available online through JSTOR]; Dahl, *How Democratic Is the American Constitution?*, Chapter 2

REVIEW: Lowi et al., *American Government*, Chapter 2

January 26 READ: Lowi et al., *American Government*, Chapter 3; Dahl, *How Democratic Is the American Constitution?*, Chapter 3; Richard Simeon and Beryl A. Radin, "Reflections on Comparing Federalisms: Canada and the United States," *Publius*, 40 (3), 2010: 357-365 [available through e-journals].

January 31 READ: Lowi et al., *American Government*, Chapter 4; and James Madison, *Federalist Paper #10*, in Lowi et al., *American Government*

REVIEW: *The Constitution of the United States*

February 2 **Democracy and Political Participation**

READ: Lowi et al., *American Government*, Chapter 9; and John Mueller, "Democracy and Ralph's Pretty Good Grocery," *American Journal of Political Science*, 36 (4), November 1992: 983-1003 [available online through JSTOR]

REVIEW: James Madison, *Federalist Paper #10*, in Lowi et al., *American Government*

February 7 READ: Gaventa, *Power and Powerlessness*, Chapter 1 [available on course webpage at <http://politicalscience.case.edu/faculty-listings/political-science-109-professor-beckwith/>]

February 9 **Structures of Participation and Representation: Public Opinion, Social Movements, and Interest Groups**

READ: Lowi et al., *American Government*, Chapter 9

February 14 READ: Lowi et al., *American Government*, Chapter 12; and S. Laurel Weldon, *When Protest Makes Policy: How Social Movements Represent Disadvantaged Groups*, Chapter 2 [available on the course website at <http://politicalscience.case.edu/faculty-listings/political-science-109-professor-beckwith/>]

February 16 DISCUSSION

February 21 **FIRST EXAMINATION**

February 23 NO CLASS MEETING; Professor at research seminar at Texas A&M University.

February 28 **Structures of Participation and Representation: Political Parties and Elections**

READ: Lowi et al., *American Government*, Chapter 11

March 1 READ: John Aldrich, “The Invisible Primary and Its Effects on Democratic Choice,” *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 42 (1), January 2009: 33-38; Todd Donovan and Rob Hunsaker, “Beyond Expectations: Effects of Early Elections in the US Presidential Nomination Contests,” *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 42 (1), January 2009: 45-52; and Lonna Rae Atkeson and Cherie D. Maestas, “Meaningful Participation and the Evolution of the Reformed Presidential Nominating System,” *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 42 (1), January 2009: 59-64 [all available through e-journals].

March 6 READ: Lowi et al., *American Government*, Chapter 10

March 8 READ: Marjorie Randon Hershey, “What We Know About Voter ID Laws, Registration and Turnout,” *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 42 (1), January 2009: 87-91; and Matt A. Barreto et al., “The Disproportionate Impact of Voter-ID Requirements,” *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 42 (1), January 2009: 111-116; Christopher F. Karpowitz et al., “Tea Time in America? The Impact of the Tea Party Movement on the 2010 Midterm Elections,” *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 44 (2), April 2011: 303-309; and Michael MacDonald, “The 2010 Midterm Elections: Signs and Portents for the Decennial Districting,” *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 44 (2), April 2011: 311-315 [all available through e-journals].

March 13-15 **SPRING BREAK**

March 20 READ: Lowi et al., *American Government*, Chapter 13; Audrey A. Haynes and Brian Pitts, “Making an Impression: New Media in the 2008 Presidential Nomination Campaigns,” *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 42 (1), January 2009: 53-58; and Gabriel S. Lenz and Chappell Lawson, “Looking the Part: Television Leads Less Informed Citizens to Vote Based on Candidates’ Appearance,” *American Journal of Political Science*, 55 (3), July 2011: 574-589 [both available through e-journals].

March 22 **SECOND EXAMINATION**

March 27 **Congress: Legislating, Representing, Deliberating**

READ: Lowi et al., *American Government*, Chapter 5; and Kathryn Pearson, "Demographic Change and the Future of Congress," *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 43 (2), April 2010: 235-238 [available through e-journals].

REVIEW: The Constitution of the United States

March 29 READ: Jamie L. Carson et al., "The Electoral Costs of Party Loyalty in Congress," *American Journal of Political Science*, 54 (3), July 2010: 598-616; and David R. Jones, "Partisan Polarization and Congressional Accountability in House Elections," *American Journal of Political Science*, 54 (2), April 2010: 323-337 [both available through e-journals].

April 3 READ: Bartels, *Unequal Democracy*, Chapters 1 and 7 [available on the course website at <http://politicalscience.case.edu/faculty-listings/political-science-109-professor-beckwith/>]

April 5 **The Presidency and Executive Powers**

READ: Lowi et al., *American Government*, Chapter 6; Dahl, *How Democratic Is the American Constitution?*, Chapter 4

REVIEW: The Constitution of the United States

April 10 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 online at JSTOR]; and *The War Powers Resolution* [available at http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/warpower.asp] and *Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002* [available at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-107publ243/html/PLAW-107publ243.htm>]

RECOMMENDED: Charlie Savage, "Clock Ticking on War Powers Resolution," *New York Times*, April 1, 2011, at <http://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/04/01/clock-ticking-on-war-powers-resolution/>.

April 12 NO CLASS MEETING; Professor attending the Midwest Political Science Association meetings.

April 17 **The Supreme Court and the Federal Court System**

READ: Lowi et al., *American Government*, Chapter 8

REVIEW: Lowi et al., *American Government*, Chapters 4 and 5; The Constitution of the United States

April 19 READ: *Crawford v. Marion County Election Board*, 553 US 181 (2008) [available at <http://supreme.justia.com/us/553/07-21/>; see also http://www.oyez.org/cases/2000-2009/2007/2007_07_21#sort=vote/ for oral arguments].

RECOMMENDED:
http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/jurisprudence/2011/12/the_obama_administration_s_risky_voter_id_move_threatens_the_voting_rights_act.html

April 24 **Conclusion to the Course: How Democratic Is the US Political System?**

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

RECOMMENDED: Jeffrey A. Winters and Benjamin I. Page, “Oligarchy in the United States?,” *Perspectives on Politics*, 7 (4), 2009: 731-751; and Alfred Stepan and Juan J. Linz, “Comparative Perspectives on Inequality and the Quality of Democracy in the United States,” *Perspectives on Politics*, 9 (4), 2011: 841-856 [both available through e-journals].

April 26 DISCUSSION

FINAL EXAMINATION: WEDNESDAY, MAY 9, 12:30PM - 3:30PM