

## POSC109 THE AMERICAN POLITICAL SYSTEM

Fall Semester 2007  
TTh 10:00-11:15am  
Clark Hall 302

### **Karen Beckwith, Professor**

Office: 223 Mather House  
E-mail: karen.beckwith@case.edu  
Office Hours: Wednesday 2-4:00pm, 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 inside and outside of the 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 ends 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 35 percent of the final course grade. Third, students will write a short position paper, which accounts for 10 percent of the final course grade. Details of this 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, and all students are expected to participate. Informed participation in class discussion accounts for the remaining 5 percent of the final 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:

Ross Baker, *House and Senate*  
Robert Dahl, *How Democratic Is the American Constitution?*  
Robert Goldwin and William Schambra, eds., *How Capitalistic Is the Constitution?*  
Theodore Lowi, Benjamin Ginsberg, and Kenneth Shepsle,  
*American Government: Power and Purpose* (core 9<sup>th</sup> ed.)  
David M. O'Brien, *Storm Center: The Supreme Court in American Politics*

**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 subscribe to and to read the *New York Times*; information concerning subscriptions will be provided.

**Standards of academic integrity** are an integral component 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.

### SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

August 28     **Introduction to the Course: Civil Society and the State**

August 30     NO CLASS MEETING: Professor attending American Political Science Association meetings in Chicago.

\*\*\*\*\*

September 4   **Liberty, Equality, and the Political Construction of State Institutions**

READ: Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*, Chapters 1 and 2, and the *Constitution of the United States*

September 6   READ: Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*, Chapters 3 and 4

\*\*\*\*\*

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

September 13   READ: James Madison, Federalist Paper #10, in Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*

REVIEW: *The Constitution of the United States*

\*\*\*\*\*

September 18 **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?*

September 20 READ: Edward Greenberg, "Class Rule under the Constitution," in Goldwin and Schambra, eds., *How Capitalistic Is the Constitution?*

\*\*\*\*\*

September 25 READ: Bernard H. Siegan, "The Constitution and the Protection of Capitalism," in Goldwin and Schambra, eds., *How Capitalistic Is the Constitution?*

September 27 FIRST EXAMINATION

\*\*\*\*\*

October 2 **Political Economy and Political Participation**

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

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

October 11 READ: Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*, Chapter 12

\*\*\*\*\*

October 16 **Political Parties, the Media, and Elections**

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

October 18 READ: Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*, Chapter 13

\*\*\*\*\*

October 23 FALL BREAK

October 25 READ: Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*, Chapter 10

NOTE: Lecture by Professor Theda Skocpol, Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at Harvard University, 4:00-5:30 pm in Ford Auditorium. For further information, see <http://policy.case.edu/gender/>

**Students are requested to attend this lecture.**

\*\*\*\*\*

October 30 SECOND EXAMINATION

November 1 **Congress: Legislating, Representing, Deliberating**

READ: Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*, Chapter 5; Baker, *House and Senate*, Chapters 1 and 2

REVIEW: *The Constitution of the United States*

\*\*\*\*\*

November 6 READ: Baker, *House and Senate*, Chapters 3 and 4

November 8 **The Presidency and the Executive Branch**

READ: Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*, Chapters 6 and 7

REVIEW: *The Constitution of the United States*

\*\*\*\*\*

November 12 NOTE: Professor Thomas Patterson, Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, will present a lecture on “The Invisible Primary: Money, Media & Polls in the 2008 Presidential Race,” 4:30-6:00 pm in Ford Auditorium. For further information, see <http://policy.case.edu/patterson.html>

**Students are requested to attend this lecture.**

November 13 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:~](http://www.thomas.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?c107:5:./temp/~c107SGto5n:)]

November 15 **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*

\*\*\*\*\*

November 20 READ: O'Brien, *Storm Center*, Chapters 4 through 6

November 22 THANKSGIVING BREAK

\*\*\*\*\*

November 27 **How Democratic Is the US Political System?**

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

November 29 READ: Dahl, *How Democratic Is the American Constitution?*, Chapters 4 and 5

\*\*\*\*\*

December 4 READ: Dahl, *How Democratic Is the American Constitution?*, Chapters 6 and 7, and Appendices A and B

December 6 DISCUSSION; POSITION PAPER DUE IN CLASS

\*\*\*\*\*

**FINAL EXAMINATION TUESDAY, DECEMBER 18, 12:30-3:30PM**