

POSC109 THE AMERICAN POLITICAL SYSTEM

Fall Semester 2006
TTh 10:00-11:15am
Kent Hale Smith 119

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

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:

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 9th 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

www.case.edu/provost/ugstudies/handbook2006

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 29 **Introduction to the Course: Civil Society and the State**

August 31 **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*

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

September 5 READ: Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*, Chapter 3

September 7 READ: Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*, Chapter 4

September 12 READ: George Sabine, "The Two Democratic Traditions," *The Philosophical Review*, 61, October 1952: 451-474 [available online at JSTOR]

September 14 READ: James Madison, Federalist Paper #10, in Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*

REVIEW: *The Constitution of the United States*

ATTEND: Constitution Day Lecture by Louis Fisher, Ph.D. , Special Assistant to the Law Librarian, The Library of Congress

4:30 – 6:00 p.m., Ford Auditorium, Allen Memorial Library (corner of Adelbert Road and Euclid Avenue)

September 19 **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 21 READ: Edward Greenberg, "Class Rule under the Constitution," in Goldwin and Schambra, eds., *How Capitalistic Is the Constitution?*

September 26 READ: Bernard H. Siegan, "The Constitution and the Protection of Capitalism," in Goldwin and Schambra, eds., *How Capitalistic Is the Constitution?*

September 28 FIRST EXAMINATION

October 3 **Political Economy and Political Participation**

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

October 5 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 10 READ: Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*, Chapter 9

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

October 17 **Political Parties, the Media, and Elections**

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

October 19 READ: Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*, Chapter 13

October 24 FALL BREAK

October 26 READ: Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*, Chapter 10

October 31 SECOND EXAMINATION

November 2 **Congress: Legislating, Representing, Deliberating**

READ: Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*, Chapter 5

REVIEW: *The Constitution of the United States*

November 7 **The Presidency and the Executive Branch**

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

REVIEW: *The Constitution of the United States*

November 9 READ: Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*, Chapter 7

November 14 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]

November 16 **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 21 READ: O'Brien, *Storm Center*, Chapters 4 through 6

November 23 THANKSGIVING BREAK

November 28 **How Democratic Is the US Political System?**

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

November 30 READ: Dahl, *How Democratic Is the American Constitution?*, Chapters 4 and 5

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

December 7 DISCUSSION; POSITION PAPER DUE IN CLASS

FINAL EXAMINATION TUESDAY, DECEMBER 19, 12:30-3:30PM