

AMERICAN GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS  
Pol Sci 101 MAC 208 T/R 2:00 to 3:15  
Spring 2007

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Office: MAC 322A  
Office Hours: Mondays, 11:00 a.m. to 1:00  
p.m.; Tuesdays and Thursdays 3:15 to 3:45

### **Purpose and Objectives of the Course**

Understanding how government operates is a function of knowing who governs and to what ends. Objectives of this course are to gain a greater understanding of our political environment, so that you will become actively engaged as a citizen. You should leave this course with an understanding of the structures of government, the importance of political institutions and the ways in which individuals can participate in the system. Further, this course satisfies the general education requirements for the social sciences (SS1). Above all, students should understand the important role they play as citizens in this democracy.

### **The nature of the class**

Democracy depends upon the participation of citizens in public affairs. It is important that we consider what it means to be citizens and how we can influence the political process. While the class is primarily lecture-based, please be ready to voice your thoughts, opinions and questions during class and in the D2L discussion forums. The class environment is open, in the sense that you should feel that your opinions are valuable and encouraged, and challenging, in the sense that we will be evaluating, describing, and analyzing what is going on in American politics during our semester together. Additionally, you will have opportunities to engage in applied learning activities throughout the course.

### **Text**

*We the People: A Concise Introduction to American Politics*, 6<sup>th</sup> edition (by Thomas Patterson). You may use earlier versions of the book, though the new edition contains some updated material. You'll also want to stay informed about current events by reading a daily newspaper, such as the *New York Times* or *Washington Post*, a weekly newsmagazine, or watching the News Hour with Jim Lehrer (PBS). For your convenience, you'll find the top political news stories as RSS feeds on the home page of the course D2L site.

### **Method of Evaluation**

You will be evaluated based on three exams, your participation in the Phoenix Forum, participation in the D2L discussion forums, and completion of the judicial assignment.

### Tests

Three exams will be given during the semester (two during the semester and one during the final exam period). Each exam contributes equal weight (20 percent) toward the final grade (60 percent total). The tests will be in multiple-choice format and will contain questions based on the text, the readings, movies, and the lectures. The exams are not cumulative, except that terms introduced in the first part of the class may be used as part of questions on subsequent tests. Tests cannot be made up unless students have a reasonable and verifiable excuse and I know of their absence before the test.

### Phoenix Forums

You'll have a chance to learn and share opinions in a small group during the Phoenix Forum, an citizenship experience organized and led by the Public and Nonprofit Management class on April 10. (The event is held during our regular class period.) After the event, you'll submit a short paper reflecting on the experience and what you learned (due April 17). You'll also be expected to post one thoughtful comment, opinion or reaction in the D2L discussion forum. This contributes 5 percent toward the final grade.

### Judicial assignment

Judicial assignment (due May 1): Assume the role of a current U.S. Supreme Court justice and make a decision about a case that is on the docket of the court. Your 2-3 paged, typed double-spaced paper should contain the following information. 1) The name of the Supreme Court Justice and some biographical information about the justice; 2) the case you chose and a brief description of the case; 3) your position on the case; and 4) how you believe the justice you chose would decide and why you feel that way. When stating your position, you should provide your reasoning for why a case should be decided in a particular way. Several websites have information about the current docket of the court, including <http://www.oyez.org/oyez/frontpage>. The judicial assignment contributes 15 percent of the grade.

### D2L Discussion Forums

Each week you should make at least one thoughtful, informed response to the topic of the week or current event forum in D2L. You certainly may make more comments if you want to. The objective is to have citizens (that's you!) engage in *civil, informed* discourse about our government. Please note that all posts must be polite, though it is okay (even helpful in a democracy) to disagree. Your participation in the D2L forums contributes 20 percent of the grade. Please make sure that you can access the D2L site.

### **Course Outline**

The following outline shows the anticipated weekly progress for the course. **Please note the exam dates: these dates are not likely to change.** The reading schedule, however, may vary slightly depending on the class interest, the pace of class discussions, and the force of current events. If you miss a class, please check with me or class mates for the current reading assignment.

<u>Week</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Reading</u>
1/16	Introduction to Government and explanation of the course American Political Culture	C1
1/23	The Constitution as a foundation of government	C2 & Appendix
1/30	Federalism: Forging a Nation	C3
2/6	Topics continue	
2/13	Public opinion and political socialization	C6
2/20	Political participation and voting	C7
2/27	<b>First exam</b>	
3/1	Political parties, candidates, Campaigns & interest groups	C8 & 9
3/13	Spring Break	
3/20	The news media	C10
3/27	Congress	C11
4/5	<b>Second exam</b>	
4/10	<b>Phoenix Forum</b>	
4/12	Presidency	C12
4/17	Presidency (topic continues) ***Phoenix Forum papers due in the D2L dropbox***	C12
4/19	Bureaucracy	C13
4/24	The Judiciary: Applying the Law	C14

5/1	Civil liberties and rights **Judicial assignment due in D2L dropbox**	C4 & 5
5/3	Last day of class	
5/10	<b>Final exam from 1:00-3:00 p.m.</b>	

### **Why take a general education course?**

Many of you are taking this course to fulfill a general education requirement for graduation. Rather than think about this as a course to “get out of the way” so that you can get on with the “important courses,” I hope that you will keep in mind the objectives of the general education curriculum. This course, as is true of other general education courses, is designed to provide you with a foundation of knowledge, broaden your intellectual experiences, and expose you to new areas of scholarship. General education courses promote lifelong learning and encourage personal reflection on values. This course is designed to help students achieve a fundamental understanding of political structures within the social sciences, which is one of the learning outcomes for the general education program.

### **Scheberle’s suggestions for a great semester**

Learning about government can be fun and interesting! (Trust me on this one.) In order for it to be fun for you, I suggest the following things:

1. Come to class prepared (that means read the material or do the assignment).
2. Come to class often (the more you skip, the more you will feel out of the loop).
3. PARTICIPATE! (I value your comments and observations. Get involved with the class discussion, have fun with the activities and the discussion forums. Getting involved is what democracy is all about.)
4. See me (the earlier, the better!) if you are having trouble with the material.

As required by federal law and UW-Green Bay policy, students with a documented disability who need accommodations must contact the Disability Services Office. Reasonable accommodations can be made unless they alter the essential components of the class. Contact the instructor and Disability Services Coordinator in a timely manner to formulate alternative arrangements.