

American National Government

POLS 1310

Fall 2009

Professor Joe Giammo
Unique Number: 61191
Room: Ross Hall 123
Time: T, Th, 9:25 – 10:40

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Office Hours: M, W, and F, 11:00 to noon;
T and Th, 12:30 – 1:30 p.m.
or by appointment

Overview:

This course serves an introduction to the study of the United States government. The course will provide you with a framework for analyzing political institutions at the national, state, and local levels, the behavior of individuals in the system, and the processes involved in creating government policy. The course will emphasize the practical effects of democracy on the American political system, and the impact which individuals can have on the political landscape. The course is intended to assist students to better navigate the American political system, as well as to encourage them to more frequently and effectively participate in politics.

Additional Learning Objectives:

This course will also help you to (1) develop the ability to use logic and evidence to build a persuasive argument and (2) to communicate ideas clearly in writing.

Requirements:

Students are expected to arrive on time for all lectures, to participate in class discussions, and to complete all readings by the assigned dates. The textbook for the course is:

The New American Democracy, by Fiorina and Peterson, Alternate 6th Edition
(paperback)

and should be available at the bookstore. Please let me know immediately if you have trouble locating the textbook.

There will be additional readings posted on the course website, which may include newspaper or magazine articles that are published during the course of the semester.

Grading:

The grade will be based on three in-class exams and an essay assignment, each worth 22.5% of the final course grade, and the average of 5 pop quizzes, worth 10% of your grade. Exams will consist of multiple choice and short answer questions and will cover information from both lecture and readings. You will not be allowed to talk or use notes or books when taking the exams. No make-up exams will be given except in cases of serious, documented emergencies. Since I will be the sole judge of what constitutes such

an emergency, your best policy would be to check with me beforehand. If that is not possible, you are responsible for contacting me as soon as possible after the exam and for making up the exam in a timely fashion. Students taking a make-up exam will not be given the same exam assigned to the rest of the class, and the format of the make-up exams may vary. The essay assignment will be handed out soon, and will be due on November 19th. More details will be forthcoming. Over the course of the semester, I will give 7 pop quizzes at the beginning of class. Students will be able to drop two of these quizzes without penalty, and there will be no make-ups for quizzes under any circumstances.

Letter grades will be based on the traditional scale (90-100 is an A, 80-89 is a B, 70-79 is a C, etc.). There will be no opportunities for extra credit.

Attendance Policy:

You will notice that attendance does not play a formal role in your grade, except as it relates to being present for the quizzes; however, students missing class will find it very difficult to keep up with the material. The material presented in lecture will overlap with, but not be limited to the information presented in the text. Several topics covered in lecture are not mentioned at all in the textbook. Therefore, students who miss class will have trouble answering many of the questions on the tests, and their grades will naturally suffer accordingly. In fact, it is extremely unlikely that students who frequently miss class will be able to pass the course.

Academic Dishonesty:

Academic dishonesty, which includes, but is not limited to cheating on an exam, unauthorized collaboration on an assignment, and plagiarism, is taken very seriously in this course. Students who commit such actions will be reported to the Dean of Students and may receive an F for the course. If you have any questions about whether an action is considered to be academically dishonest, please see me or read the complete description of the UALR policy on academic dishonesty, which is available in the student handbook at www.ualr.edu/www/handbook/student_rights.html.

Students with Disabilities

It is the policy of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock to create inclusive learning environments. If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in barriers to your inclusion or to accurate assessment of achievement—such as time-limited exams, inaccessible web content, or the use of non-captioned videos—please notify the instructor as soon as possible. Students are also welcome to contact the Disability Resource Center, telephone 501-569-3143 (v/tty). For more information, visit the DRC website at <http://ualr.edu/disability/>.

Course Format:

Classes will consist primarily of 75 minute lectures, however, I will often ask questions of the class and may call on students at random. Student questions and observations are always encouraged. Politics is by its nature a matter of considerable disagreement and

strong opinions, and students should feel free to express their own viewpoints, even when the subject is a sensitive one. I fully expect you to disagree with each other and with me on a variety of topics. In fact, class discussions are much less interesting or useful when everyone seems to agree with each other. While healthy disagreement and discussion is encouraged, it should always remain on a respectful and professional level.

General Policies:

Students who are having difficulty with the course or who wish further clarification on a particular topic from lecture or the readings should feel free to see me during my office hours or to schedule an appointment with me to meet at another time. You may also e-mail me, and I will try to get back in touch with you within one business day of your contact. Under no circumstances should you contact me at home.

In order to facilitate a better learning environment, distractions need to be kept to a minimum. Therefore, you should turn off all cell phones before the start of each class. Additionally, you should not bring children with you to class.

Blackboard

Additional information, documents, and course announcements will be available through the course web page. You can access course information at <https://bb.ualr.edu/webct/entryPageIns.doweabt>

Course Outline and Assignments:

All dates subject to change

Readings in italics can be found in the appendix to your textbook.

Date	Topic	Reading Assignment
August 20	Introduction – Democracy and Elections in the U.S.	
25	The State of Nature and the Founding	<i>The Declaration of Independence</i>
27	The Founding and The Constitution	Chapter 2, <i>Federalist 10</i>
September 1	The Constitution	<i>The Constitution</i>
3	Federalism and State Government	Chapter 3
8	Arkansas and Local Government	
10	Political Culture	Chapter 4
15	Political Culture and Public Opinion	Chapter 5
17	Public Opinion and Polling	
22	Participation	Chapter 6
24	Exam I	
29	Interest Groups	Chapter 7
October 1	Interest Groups and Political Parties	Chapter 8
6	Political Parties	
8	Political Parties	
13	Media	Chapter 9

15	Media and Presidential Elections	Chapter 10
20	Presidential Elections	
22	Congressional Elections	Chapter 11
27	Exam II, Essay Topics Due	
29	Congress	Chapter 12
November 3	Congress	
5	The Presidency	Chapter 13
10	The Presidency and the Bureaucracy	Chapter 14
12	The Bureaucracy	
17	The Courts	Chapter 15
19	The Courts, Essays Due	
24	Civil Liberties	Chapter 16
26	Thanksgiving Break, No Class	
December 1	Civil Rights	King and Thomas Readings on WebCT
3	Course Conclusion Exam III	