

# PL SC 001 Introduction to American Government

## Summer 2005

### Basic Information

Class meets: Monday through Friday from 3:55PM - 05:10PM in 104 Rackley Building

Instructor: Ms. Heather L. Ondercin

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Office hours: Tuesday 2:00 - 3:30, Thursday 2:30 - 3:30, and by appt.

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E-mail is an effective way to reach me, I check my messages several times a day. In addition to my office hours, I will be available most days after class. If these times don't work, talk to me and we can make an appointment. Never hesitate to talk to me if you have a problem, comment, or concern.

### Goals for the Class

This class is designed as a survey of the United States political system. In the first portion of the class we begin by covering the foundations of the United State government, specifically the *Declaration of Independence*, the *Constitution*, civil rights and civil liberties. The second section of the class examines how citizens' opinions are formed and communicated to government. In this section we focus on link between individuals' opinions and interest groups, political parties, elections outcomes, and the media. The final third of the class concentrates on the institutions of government: Congress, the Presidency, the bureaucracy and the courts. Overall, the class will explore what it means for a political system to work "effectively" and evaluate how effective the U.S. political system is.

The pace of this class will be accelerated compared to a class taken during either the spring or fall semesters. We will cover all the same material that you would during the normal semester, just in a much shorter time period. This creates challenges for both of us. On your part this means several things. First, it will be easy to get behind. So make sure when you are planning you schedule you account for the fact that this class meets everyday for over an hour. Plus, you will have reading and other assignments to do. It also means that missing a single class is like missing  $1\frac{1}{2}$  classes normally. So attendance becomes even more important.

This class is primarily concerned with *political science* rather than with politics. However, in this class we will engage in many discussions about politics and policies. Most of our opinions about these issues are deeply held beliefs. During our discussion I want everyone to feel free to share those opinions with each other. Each of us bring a unique perspective to the class and we can all learn from this diversity. In order to make this possible we need to be respectful of other people's opinions, even if they are the direct opposite of what you believe. With that said, I will not tolerate personal attacks on each other or blatant sexist, racist or other discriminatory language. There is no room for an atmosphere of intimidation,

and I will not tolerate it in this class. If there are any issues that you feel uncomfortable with please feel free to talk to me.

Finally, please shut your cell phones off before coming to class. It is disturbing to me and your fellow students. I reserve the right to confiscate phones if this becomes a problem.

### **Class Assignment and Grading**

The first and most basic requirement that I have for you is that you will do all the readings **before** the class in which we will discuss them. You cannot learn from each other, and I cannot learn from you, if you are not prepared for class. I encourage you to ask questions you may have about lectures, class discussions, readings, and things you see in the news. Don't be passive; class will be much more interesting, and you will learn the material better, if you are active participants.

I will not take attendance in the class, however, it will be hard to do well in the class if you do not regularly attend. **I do not accept late assignments and will not administer make up exams.** The one exception to this rule is that I will administer a make up exam *only in the case of documented emergencies*. Thus, if you are not in class to take the exam or turn in your assignment it will adversely affect your performance in the class. It goes without saying that attending class will prove very useful; **a great deal** of the material for which you will be responsible for can only be learned in class. If doing the readings and attending class will be too difficult, please give serious thought to dropping this class.

**Participation** represent 15 percent of the overall class grade. Participation grades will be based on a set of factors. First, once a week in response to the readings assigned you will write a question or set of questions and e-mail them to by noon. I will assign a day of the week in which you are responsible for sending me the question. If there is no assigned reading on the day you are to send your question you have two options: 1) you can send a question based on reading completed since the last exam or 2) you can base your question on a current event that is relevant to what we are studying. If there is an exam on the day you are assigned submit your question on the day before. Second, participation grades will also be determined by class room participation in discussion and group work. Finally, we may have in class assignments that will contribute to the participation grade. I also reserve the right to have unannounced quizzes in class regarding the readings. While attendance is not directly related to participation in class, you will not have a good participation grade if you are not in class.

**Short Assignments** represent 35 percent the overall class grade. These are short assignments that I will hand out in class. You will be given several days to complete the assignment. The dates these assignments are due are noted on the class schedule below. **No late assignments will be accepted.** Assignments are due the day they are stated in the syllabus in class. I will **not** accept assignments e-mailed to me, placed in my mail box, under my office door or on my desk. The assignments are to be typed, double spaced with proper documentation of any sources used.

**Exams** There will be three exams in the class: two midterm exams and a final exam. Each midterm exam will be worth 15 percent of your final grade for a total of 30 percent. The final exam will count for 20 percent of your final grade. All the exams will consist of short answer and essay questions. The final exam will be have a cumulative component.

Please take the time to review the academic dishonesty policy at the end of the syllabus. I take these cases very seriously and will make not exceptions to this policy. I expect honesty out of all of you.

Participation	15%
Short Assignments	35%
Midterm exam 1	15%
Midterm exam 2	15%
Final Exam	20%

### Required Reading and Class Schedule

There is one required text for this class:

*America's New Democracy* by Morris P. Fiorina, Paul E. Peterson, Stephen D. Voss, Election Update (2nd Edition) Penguin Classics.

Additionally, there are several supplemental readings throughout the semester. These are noted on the syllabus and are available on course reserve through the library. I also have a set that you can pick up from me and photocopy during my office hours.

I highly recommend that you read a daily newspaper. With your student id you are able to get free papers on campus. Additionally, many papers can be accessed on-line. For the purpose of this class I recommend that you read a national newspaper (The New York Times or the Washington Post) versus a more locally focused paper (The Collegian, Center Daily Times, etc). Papers can be found at: [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com) or [www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com).

### Week One

**Wednesday, June 29: Introduction to the class.**

**Thursday, June 30: Foundations of American Politics.**

Chapter One  
The Declaration of Independence

**Friday, July 1: The United States Constitution**

Chapter 2  
Federalist 10 in the Appendix  
Skim the Constitution in the Appendix

## Week Two

### **Monday, July 4: No Class**

Enjoy the holiday.

### **Tuesday, July 5: Federalism**

Chapter 3

Federalist 51

### **Wednesday, July 6: Civil Liberties**

Chapter 13

Read the Bill of Rights

### **Thursday, July 7, Civil Rights**

Chapter 14

Read the remaining amendments to the Constitution

*Constitution Assignment Due Today*

### **July 8 Civil Rights and Liberties Continued**

No reading today.

## Week Three

### **Monday, July 11: Review for Exam**

### **Tuesday, July 12: Exam 1**

### **Wednesday, July 13: Public Opinion: Measuring**

Chapter 6, pages 121-134

Stimson, James A., Michael B. MacKuen, and Robert S. Erikson. 1994 "Opinion and Policy: A Global View" *PS: Political Science and Politics* March 1994, pages 29-35.

### **Thursday, July 14: Public Opinion: Formation**

Chapter 5, 101-113

Chapter 6, pages 134-146

### **Friday, July 15: Media**

Chapter 6, pages 146-167

## Week Four

### Monday, July 18: Individual Participation

Chapter 8

*Public Opinion Assignment Due Today*

### Tuesday, July 19: The Electorate

Brady, Henry E., Kay Lehman Scholzman, Sidney Verba, and Laurel Elms. (2002) "Who Bowls? The (Un)Changing Stratification of Participation." in *Understanding Public Opinion* ed. Barbara Norrander and Clyde Wilcox.

### Wednesday, July 20: Elections

Chapter 7, 196-214

### Thursday, July 21: The Electoral Process

Chapter 7, 214-233

### Friday, July 22: Parties

Chapter 8, pages 237-257

## Week Five

### Monday, July 25: Interest Groups

Chapter 8, pages 257-275

*Voter Turnout Assignment Due Today*

### Tuesday, July 26: Review for exam

### Wednesday, July 27: Exam 2

### Thursday, July 28: Congress

Chapter 9, pages 279-298

### Friday, July 29: Congress

Chapter 9, pages 298-209

Mayhew, David R. 1974. "The Electoral Connection and the Congress," in *Congress: Structure and Policy* ed. Mathew D. Mcubbins and Terry Sullivan. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

## Week Six

### Monday, August 1: Congress

Barnes, Fred. 1988 "The Unbearable Lightness of Being a Congressman." *The New Republic*. Feb 15, 1988, pages 18-22.

Crile, George. 1975. "The Best Congressman." *Harper's Magazine*. Jan 1975, pages 60-66.

*Congress Assignment Due Today*

### Tuesday, August 2: The Presidency and the Executive Branch

Chapter 10

### Wednesday, August 3: The Presidency: Looking at the West Wing

No reading today.

### Thursday, August 4: The Judiciary

Chapter 12

### Friday, August 5: Bureaucracy

Chapter 11

## Week Seven

### Monday, August 8: Public Policy: Domestic Policy

Chapter 15, pages 502-515

*Public Policy Assignment Due Today*

### Tuesday, August 9: Public Policy: Economic and Foreign Policy

Chapter 15, pages 515-535

### Wednesday, August 10: Review for Final Exam

**Final Exam TBA**

**Academic Dishonesty\*** The Department of Political Science, along with the College of the Liberal Arts and the University, takes violations of academic dishonesty seriously. Observing basic honesty in one's work, words, ideas, and actions is a principle to which all members of the community are required to subscribe.

All course work by students is to be done on an individual basis unless an instructor clearly states that an alternative is acceptable. Any reference materials used in the preparation of any assignment must be explicitly cited. In an examination setting, unless the instructor gives explicit prior instructions to the contrary, whether the examination is in class or take home, violations of academic integrity shall consist of any attempt to receive assistance from written or printed aids, or from any person or papers or electronic devices, or of any attempt to give assistance, whether the one so doing has completed his or her own work or not.

Other violations include, but are not limited to, any attempt to gain an unfair advantage in regard to an examination, such as tampering with a graded exam or claiming another's work to be one's own. Violations shall also consist of obtaining or attempting to obtain, previous to any examinations, copies of the examination papers or the questions to appear thereon, or to obtain any illegal knowledge of these questions. Lying to the instructor or purposely misleading any Penn State administrator shall also constitute a violation of academic integrity.

In cases of a violation of academic integrity it is the policy of the Department of Political Science to impose appropriate penalties that are consistent with University guidelines.

\* Much of the text above has been directly obtained from the sections of the Princeton University website (<http://www.princeton.edu/pr/pub/rrr/99/pages/O1.htm> ) concerning academic integrity (Rights, Rules, Responsibilities introductory text as well as pages 55-69) as well as from the website of the Department of Economics at The Pennsylvania State University.

**Disabilities** The Pennsylvania State University encourages qualified people with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities and is committed to the policy that all people shall have equal access to programs, facilities, and admissions without regard to personal characteristics not related to ability, performance, or qualifications as determined by University policy or by state or federal authorities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation in this course or have questions about physical access, please tell the instructor as soon as possible. Reasonable accommodations will be made for all students with disabilities, but it is the student's responsibility to inform the instructor early in the term. Do not wait until just before an exam to decide you want to inform the instructor of a learning disability; any accommodations for disabilities must be arranged well in advance.