

Political Science 101 (Sections 010 – 018)

# American Government

Fall 2011

**Lecture Times:** Monday & Wednesday, 3 - 3:50 pm  
**Lecture Location:** #103 Memorial Hall

**Lecturer:** Professor D. Stephen Voss  
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Office:	1671 POT	1606 POT	1606 POT
Office Hours:	W 12 – 1 pm & 4 – 5 pm	M 10:30-11:30; W 11-12	T 10 – 12; Th. 9 – 11 am
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Section:	011	010	012
Section Time:	F 9:00 - 9:50 am	W 9:00 - 9:50 am	T 8:00 - 8:50 am
Location:	#243 White Hall CB	#213 White Hall CB	#302 L.C. Little Fine Arts

Section:	016	015	013
Section Time:	F 10:00 - 10:50 am	W 10:00 - 10:50 am	W 8:00 - 8:50 am
Location:	#353 Dickey Hall	#263 F. Paul Anderson	#306 Barker Hall

Section:	017	018	014
Section Time:	F 11:00 - 11:50 am	M 12:00 - 12:50 pm	M 10:00 - 10:50 am
Location:	#247 White Hall CB	#301 Dickey Hall	#297 Chem/Phys

Because of the lecture/section format of PS 101-001, students would not necessarily be required to interact much with the lead instructor; most course discussion will take place in the breakout sections scheduled with the individual assistant to whom a student has been assigned. However, depending on the tastes and preferences of the individual, students enrolled in PS 101 should feel free to interact with all members of the teaching staff – not just by asking/answering questions at lecture, but also during their office hours (best for chatting), through the Discussion Board set up on Blackboard (best for questions about course policy or content), and through electronic mail (best for personal matters such as grade inquiries irrelevant to the other students). Such interaction will be especially important if students hope to request recommendation letters (e.g., for College or Greek scholarships) early in their academic careers.

## Learning Objectives

PS 101 is not a high-school Social Studies class, in which you memorize details about political institutions or the political process. It is not a Persuasive Speaking or Debate class, in which you argue over hot policy issues or promote the virtues of candidates you favor. It is not a class on activism, in which you learn how to get involved in politics. And it is certainly not a Church, in which you are told what is right and wrong with the hope that you will change your beliefs or actions.

Rather, the primary purpose of PS 101 is to introduce you to the *science* of American politics – to teach

you how to think critically and analytically about the relationship between Americans and their government. Our goal will be to assess the health of the American political system as it faces the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Along the way, we will question why government works as it does and trace the effects of the country's method of conducting public business. In pursuing this course of inquiry, the hope is that you will learn not only about the specific form of science conducted in one discipline, but also receive a taste of the broader methods and vocabulary of social science.

PS 101 also comes with a secondary purpose. The University of Kentucky recently transformed its general education program, now called UK Core, and incorporated this American Government course under a core requirement with the unwieldy title of "Community, Culture, and Citizenship in the USA." If one looks closely at the obligations of this requirement, it is not intended to ensure that students learn about citizenship; it is oriented toward making them better citizens by acquainting them with the diversity of cultures and communities found in the United States now and over time. Along the way of pursuing our primary objective, therefore, we will pay special attention to how the institutions, processes, and policies we are studying both influence and are influenced by U.S. diversity – an awareness that students must exhibit various ways (including in a written assignment undertaken late in the course).

### **Learning Outcomes**

That being said, students who attend lecture regularly and do their best to stay up with the assigned readings should leave the course with a much better understanding of

- (1) how the nation's historical experience molds current events,
- (2) how the public communicates values, opinions, and attitudes to public officials, and
- (3) how political institutions shape the connection between policies and public demands.

Students will be able to exhibit knowledge about each of those processes if asked. If they also increase their knowledge base of political trivia, develop a firmer sense of what they believe, and pick up advice along the way about how to be good political activists, so much the better. But those insights go beyond the academic purpose of the course.

Because the course will underscore content in American Government pertinent to the UK Core's "Community, Culture, and Citizenship in the USA" requirement, students who attend regularly and read the assigned material also will be able to:

- (4) demonstrate an understanding of historical, societal, and cultural differences arising from an individual's personal background and core belief system;
- (5) demonstrate a basic understanding of how these differences have influenced the political process and the civic life created through that process;
- (6) demonstrate an understanding of the cultural context in which both historical and contemporary political processes play out and how culture helps shape an individual's perceived responsibilities in civic life;
- (7) demonstrate an understanding of how the American political system varies across states and across regions as well as how it has varied over time.

### **Required Reading**

- **Bianco, William T., and David T. Canon. 2011. *American Politics Today*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co. Second edition.** Copies, both used and new, should be available both online and at local bookstores, as well as in electronic form from the publisher.
- **A large number of articles published in the *Wall Street Journal*, a national newspaper based in New York City and published by Dow Jones.** Students will need access to a WSJ online account, not simply to an ongoing subscription or to online articles currently available to the public, because many of the required readings linked from the Blackboard page are in the Dow Jones archives. Semester-length student subscriptions that include both WSJ online access and

hard-copy paper delivery are available for \$30. Students will be able to sign up for this service in class starting on the first day up until 31 August, at which time a representative of WSJ/Dow Jones will visit during lecture, provide a quick orientation to using the newspaper, and collect the remaining subscription requests. Note that while access to the newspaper's archives is necessary if students wish to complete the required reading, no individual student is required to purchase or obtain a personal subscription.

### Recommended Reading

**Hudson, William. 2010. *Democracy in Peril*. CQ Press. Sixth edition.** Copies, both used and new, should be available both online and at local bookstores. This book overlaps with a fair bit of the content that will be presented in lecture, yet presents it at a fairly sophisticated level. It therefore can be useful to students struggling to understand concepts presented in lecture *as well as* to advanced students wishing to delve deeper into some of the subject matter.

### Evaluation

Students in PS 101-001 will be graded based on a variety of evaluation methods: tests, writing, discussion. The examinations making up the bulk of the grade, meanwhile, will offer questions following various formats: multiple choice, identification, and short answer. And the multiple-choice questions on these exams will not rely on a fill-in-the-bubble format; students are allowed, if not encouraged, to “talk back” to the exam’s grader to explain why multiple answers seem correct or no answer seems correct. Why all this variety? The hope is that it will prevent grades from being too vulnerable to the particular learning styles or strengths/weaknesses of each student, so that instead grades will represent as accurate an estimate as possible of each student’s overall effort and talents.

Assignment scores will be weighted using the following percentages:

- 15% Section Attendance/**Participation**, evaluated as per the section policy set by each TA
- 20% **First Midterm** Exam, which will take place during the regularly scheduled class time on 28 September, followed by a partial retake option in the next section meeting.
- 20% **Second Midterm** Exam, which will take place during the regularly scheduled class time on 31 October, followed by a partial retake option during the subsequent section meeting.
- 30% **Final** Exam, which will take place on Monday, 12 December 2011, from 1 – 3 pm in the usual classroom.
- 15% UK Core **analytical paper**, to be uploaded in Blackboard by the start of lecture on 16 November.

With regard to this last assignment, we will distribute additional details later. However, it will be the culmination of two projects, a presentation developed by groups within each section and a paper growing out of that presentation written individually by each team member. The paper will be 4-6 pages in length, and submitted through Blackboard. In it, the student will select one form of diversity found in the U.S. population, trace that diversity to any conflicts that it has produced within the political system (across different places and across different time periods), and finally describe how Americans operating within this cultural conflict can participate effectively and responsibly within the political system.

Each assignment will be graded on a **10-point scale** (in theory, A = 90-100, B = 80-89, C = 70-79, D = 60-69, E = 0-59). However, the examinations for the course are rigorous, generally producing numerical averages lower than found in other UK social science courses. Should that occur, **final grades will be curved upward** before marks are reported to the registrar for inclusion on student transcripts. Because each student’s ultimate grade depends upon relative rather than absolute performance, anyone who is confused by his or her status in the course should seek clarification.

## Other Course Policies

Because there will be no attempt to take **attendance** during lecture, no one is forced to participate in, or even show up for, the lectures in PS 101 (the exceptions being testing days). The only requirement with regard to the lecture meeting is that students who do wish attend should arrive before the start of lecture and wait to leave until it has finished, so as not to disrupt the proceedings. Further, as long as a student refrains from disrupting others in the class, either directly (by making noise or blocking their line of sight) or by providing distractions (which reading a newspaper, fiddling with electronic devices such as a smart phone, or flipping through Web pages on a laptop normally will create), course policy does not regulate how attentive or inattentive a student in class wishes to be. In short, course policy assumes that students will be mature adults, and that as adults they can decide how much value they wish to receive for their tuition dollars. However, should that assumption prove to be incorrect, the instructor reserves the right to punish each violation of these rules of classroom etiquette by *deducting 1-5 percentage points off of the student's final course grade*.

While PS 101 does not require either attendance or participation in lecture, two points should be clarified: First, attendance and participation will be required in the discussion sections because that is part of the learning process, both individually and collectively. Second, students should not interpret the lack of hand-holding to mean that skipping class will have no serious consequences. Not all of the information presented in the lectures will appear in the assigned readings, yet students are responsible for all lecture material. Furthermore, important organizational policies may be announced during class meetings. Students will not perform well in PS 101 if they do not attend faithfully.

This course will follow university policy on excused absences, including as applied to **late papers or make-up exams**. Students must follow the deadlines and exam policies announced in this syllabus except when faced with the most dire and clearly documented circumstances: a death in the family, or a serious illness or debilitating injury. Students also may need to reschedule the Final Exam if it occurs on the same day as two or more other exams, in which case the course will follow standard university policy in determining which exam should be rescheduled. Even in these exceptional cases, students are responsible for informing the professor ahead of time, when circumstances permit, about the need for an adjustment. *Failure to do so will remove any chance of having an absence or a delay excused*. Note: The Teaching Assistants do *not* have authority to grant extensions, even under the permissible instances.

All of the material students submit for class must reflect their own work. Students who copy answers from someone else's exam or who plagiarize material from someone else's written work can face serious disciplinary action. We intend to pursue any such cases of academic dishonesty to the full extent allowed by university procedures. We encourage students to visit the Ombud's Office or its Web page to learn more about UK's policies as regards **academic dishonesty**.

Some students will have recognized disabilities that must be accommodated if they are to take full advantage of the learning opportunities in PS 101. We will fully and enthusiastically cooperate with any student who requests reasonable accommodations for a university-recognized disability – as we will with any student who requests reasonable assistance for situations that may not fall under an ironclad university rule. For formal arrangements of this sort, you should contact the Disability Resource Center in Room 2 of the Alumni Gym. For informal requests, you naturally should approach the member of the teaching team most relevant for discussing your particular situation.

## Course Outline

Because PS 101 is only an introductory course, and therefore must skim rather quickly over a multitude of topics, a student's factual knowledge about particular components of the political system certainly will not be complete by the semester's end. Indeed, coverage of some topics will be so fleeting that they may find the experience to be frustrating. More advanced offerings in political science provide greater depth.

The topics are listed below, with the readings from the textbook indicated in parentheses. Newspaper articles will be added to each week's readings using the course Blackboard page. (In no case will a student be assigned more than 200 newspaper articles by the end of the semester.) Students read the assigned material before each week's discussion session.

Wed., Aug. 24 Introduction

### PART I: Historical Background

Mon., Aug. 29 A Tale of Two Rebellions (Bianco & Canon Chap. 1, Declaration of Independence)

Wed., Aug. 31 The Constitution I (Bianco & Canon Chap. 2) ... plus Dow Jones rep Rick Nielsen visits

Wed., Sept. 7 The Constitution II (The U.S. Constitution, Hudson Intro)

Mon., Sept. 12 American Political Development

### PART II: American Political Institutions

Wed., Sept. 14 The Legislative Branch (Bianco & Canon Chap. 10, Hudson Chap. 1)

Mon., Sept. 19 The Executive Branch I: The Presidency (Bianco & Canon Chap. 11)

Wed., Sept. 21 The Executive Branch II: The Bureaucracy (Bianco & Canon Chap. 12)

Mon., Sept. 26 The Judicial Branch (Bianco & Canon Chap. 13, Hudson Chap. 2)

Wed., Sept. 28 Exam #1 (20%)

Mon., Oct. 3 Federalism (Bianco & Canon Chap. 3)

Wed., Oct. 5 State & Local Government

### PART III: American Political Behavior

Mon., Oct. 10 Channels of Public Influence (Hudson Chap. 6)

Wed., Oct. 12 Political Parties (Bianco & Canon Chap. 7)

Mon., Oct. 17 Interest Groups (Bianco & Canon Chap. 9) ... plus midterm grades due

Wed., Oct. 19 The Media (Bianco & Canon Chap. 6)

Mon., Oct. 24 Elections I: Rules of the Game (Bianco & Canon Chap. 8, Hudson Chap. 4)

Wed., Oct. 26 Elections II: Mass Behavior (Hudson Chap. 5)

Mon., Oct. 31 Exam #2 (20%) (Withdrawal deadline after this date)

Wed., Nov. 2 Public Opinion (Bianco & Canon Chap. 5)

Mon., Nov. 7 American Political Culture (Hudson Chap. 3)

Wed., Nov. 9 Immigration and Diversity

### PART IV: American Public Policy

Mon., Nov. 14 Civil Rights (Bianco & Canon Chap. 14, Hudson Chap. 7)

Wed., Nov. 16 Civil Liberties (Bianco & Canon Chap. 4) ... plus Diversity papers are due

Mon., Nov. 21 Domestic Policy (Bianco & Canon Chap. 16)

Mon., Nov. 28 Fiscal and Monetary Policy (Bianco & Canon Chap. 15)

Wed., Nov. 30 Globalization and Economic Policy

Mon., Dec. 5 Foreign & Defense Policy (Bianco & Canon Chap. 17, Hudson Chap. 8)

Wed., Dec. 7 Conclusion & Review

Mon., Dec. 12 1 – 3 pm in normal classroom: FINAL EXAM