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### PSCI 340.01: American Political Institutions

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## **American Political Institutions**

University of Montana  
Political Science 340  
Tu/Th 11:10; NAC 105  
Spring 2013

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Office: Liberal Arts 354  
Office Hrs: Tu/Th 12:30-  
1:30 & by appointment

### **Course Description**

This course explores the theoretical ideas that informed the founding of the American political system, how that system developed over time, and the contemporary challenges facing American democracy and its national institutions. We will focus our attention on federalism, Congress, the Presidency, the Judiciary, and political parties.

### **Readings**

One book is required and is available for purchase at the University Bookstore:

- Richard J. Ellis and Michael Nelson (eds.), *Debating Reform: Conflicting Perspectives on How to Fix the American Political System* (Washington: CQ Press, 2011).

All other readings can be accessed on the course's Moodle website.

The instructor reserves the right to add, delete, or alter course readings.

### **Requirements and Grading**

Midterm Exam 1 (Thursday, March 14):	25%
Paper (due Thursday, May 9):	30%
Final Exam (Tuesday, May 14):	30%
Participation (including debate and reading quizzes):	15%

Exams: The Midterm Exam will be administered in class on Thursday, March 14. The Final Exam will be held on Tuesday, May 14 from 8:00 – 10:00. Exams may include a combination of multiple choice, identification, short answer, and essay questions. Makeup exams will only be permitted if I have been notified *prior* to the missed exam and only if I agree that the absence was necessitated by a serious, documented emergency. Check your calendar now to make sure you do not have anything that conflicts with the exams.

Paper: Students will write a 5-7 page double-spaced paper with 1-inch margins and standard 12 point font. More information about the paper will be provided in class. Papers are due at the beginning of class on Thursday, May 9. Extensions will only be granted if I have been notified *prior* to the due date and only if I agree that an extension is warranted due to a serious, documented emergency. Papers will be marked down half a letter grade for each day they are late.

Participation: Much of our class time will be spent discussing course material. Consequently, both quantity and quality of class participation will be very important. Students are expected to do all of the assigned readings before each class meeting and come to class prepared to discuss the material. Daily attendance will be taken and factored into participation grades. Students missing more than ¼ of our class meetings will not pass the course.

- *Debate:* Each student will participate in a formal group-based, cross-examination policy debate. We will discuss the debates in more detail in class.
- *Reading Quizzes:* Reading quizzes will be administered several times during the semester without prior announcement. Quizzes will cover basic aspects of the assigned reading.

Grades: Grades will be assigned according to the following percentages:

A 93-100	B+ 87-89.9	C+ 77-79.9	D+ 67-69.9	F 0-59.9
A- 90-92.9	B 83-86.9	C 73-76.9	D 63-66.9	
	B- 80-82.9	C- 70-72.9	D- 60-62.9	

**\*\*\*Students must complete both exams, the paper, and the debate to pass the course.\*\*\***

### **PSCI 400 Writing Project**

Students may enroll in PSCI 400, Advanced Writing in Political Science (1 credit), in conjunction with this course. *This opportunity is strictly optional and has absolutely no influence on your performance in, or grade for, the larger course.* Students enrolled in this co-requisite option must meet with the instructor prior to starting their project to discuss its aim, scope, sources, and style.

### **Academic Honesty**

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code, which is available for review online: <http://life.umt.edu/SA/documents/fromWeb/StudentConductCode1.pdf>. I take academic honesty very seriously, and will do my utmost to prevent, uncover, and penalize any form of cheating. Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns about academic honesty.

## **DSS Students**

Qualified students with disabilities will receive appropriate accommodations. Students requesting accommodations on exams, papers, or other course requirements should contact me as soon as possible, and must contact DSS in order to arrange for and provide me with a letter of approval for accommodations at least one week prior to the first exam. DSS is in Lommasson Center 154.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

### **Week 1, January 29 & 31: Introduction**

- A. Welcome
- B. What are political institutions and why are they important?
  - Franklin Roosevelt, Second Inaugural (1937)
  - Ronald Reagan, First Inaugural (1981)
  - Barack Obama, Second Inaugural (2013)

### **Week 2, February 5 & 7: The Idea of a Political Regime and the Role of Institutions**

- A. Distinguishing between different regime types and forms
  - Aristotle, *The Politics*, Book 3, Chapters 7-8; Book 4, Chapters 1-2
  - Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws* (omit "On the Const. of England" pgs. 156-66)
- B. Examples of different regimes in practice
  - Plutarch, "The Life of Lycurgus"
  - Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (selection)
  - Kurt Vonnegut, "Harrison Bergeron"

### **Week 3, February 12 & 14: The American Experiment**

- A. Philosophical Foundations on the American Political System
  - John Locke (selections)
  - Aristotle, *The Politics*, Book 3, Chapter 4; Book 7, Chapters 1-3
- B. Debating American Constitutionalism
  - The Federalist Papers: 15, 23, 47, 51
  - Centinel, "The Small Republic Argument"
  - Brutus #3 (excerpts)
  - Sanford Levinson and David E. Kyvig, *Debating Reform*, Chapter 1

### **Week 4, February 19 & 21: Federalism**

- A. Theoretical Foundations
  - The Federalist Papers: 39 and 46 (excerpts)
  - Martha Derthick, "Federalism"
- B. Contemporary Issues in Federalism
  - Jonathan Rauch, "A Separate Peace," *The Atlantic Monthly*, April 2007
  - United States v. Morrison* (2000)
  - Gonzales v. Raich* (2005)

**Week 5, February 26 & 28: Theory and Development of Congress**

- A. Theoretical Foundations  
The Federalist Papers: 57, 63
- B. Congress' Development  
Nelson Polsby, *How Congress Evolves* (selections)

**Week 6, March 5 & 7: The Contemporary Congress**

- A. Problems Facing the Contemporary Congress  
David Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection* (selections)  
Barbara Sinclair, "The '60 Vote Senate'"  
Thomas E. Mann and Norman J. Ornstein, *The Broken Branch* (selections)
- B. Ideas for Reforming Congress  
Michael P. McDonald and Justin Buchler, *Debating Reform*, Chapter 10  
Bruce I. Oppenheimer and John J. Pitney, *Debating Reform*, Chapter 11

**Week 7, March 12 & 14: Theory and Development of the Presidency**

- A. Theoretical Foundations  
The Federalist Papers: 69, 70, and 72  
Letters of Cato: 4 and 5  
James W. Ceaser, "Demagoguery, Statesmanship, and the American Presidency,"  
*Critical Review* (2007)
- B. \*\*\*Midterm Exam: Thursday, March 14\*\*\*

**Week 8, March 19 & 21: Policy Case Study: American Health Care**

- A. The Politics of American Health Care  
James Morone, *The Heart of Power: Health and Politics in the Oval Office*  
(selections)  
Megan McArdle, "My Reasons for Opposing National Health Insurance," *The Atlantic*, July 29, 2009  
Avik Roy, "Opposing Obamacare is No Longer Enough: Toward a New  
Conservative Health Care Agenda," *Forbes*, Nov. 27, 2012
- B. The Future of Health Care in America Conference  
attend conference; details TBA

**Week 9, March 26 & 28: The Contemporary Presidency**

- A. The Presidency's Development  
James Madison and Alexander Hamilton, Pacificus-Helvidius Letters (1793-4)  
William Howard Taft, theory of presidential power  
Teddy Roosevelt, theory of presidential power  
Jeffrey K. Tulis, "The Two Constitutional Presidencies"  
Stephen Skowronek, "Presidential Leadership in Political Time"
- B. Ideas for Reforming the Presidency  
Garrett Epps, "The Founders' Great Mistake," *The Atlantic* (2009)  
Michael Nelson and Robert J. Spitzer, *Debating Reform*, Chapter 13

**Week 10, April 2 & 4: Spring Break**

### **Week 11, April 9 & 11: Theory and Development of the Judiciary**

- A. Theoretical Foundations
  - The Federalist Papers: 78
  - Brutus, “The Problem of Judicial Review”
- B. The Judiciary’s Development
  - Marbury v. Madison* (1803) (selections)
  - Justice Robert H. Jackson, “The Supreme Court in the American System of Government”

### **Week 12, April 16 & 18: The Contemporary Judiciary**

- A. Interpreting the Constitution
  - Justice William Brennan, “The Constitution of the United States: Contemporary Ratification”
  - Justice Antonin Scalia, “Originalism: The Lesser Evil”
  - Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, “Speaking in a Judicial Voice,” *NYU Law Review*
- B. Ideas for Reforming the “Least Dangerous” Branch
  - Steven G. Calabresi and James Lindgren and Ward Farnsworth, *Debating Reform*, Ch. 15

### **Week 13, April 23 & 25: Theory and Development of the Political Party System**

- A. Early Conceptions of Political Parties
  - James Reichley, “Intentions of the Founders: A Polity Without Parties”
  - George Washington, “Farewell Address”
- B. The Development of a Party System
  - Richard Hofstadter, *The Idea of a Party System*, Chapter 6

### **Week 14, April 30 & May 2: The Contemporary Party System**

- A. Polarization and Partisanship
  - Mickey Edwards, “How to Turn Republicans and Democrats Into Americans,” *The Atlantic* (2011)
  - Matthew Yglesias, “The Case for Partisanship,” *The Atlantic* (April 2008)
- B. Ideas for Reforming the Party System
  - Caroline J. Tolbert and David P. Redlawsk, *Debating Reform*, Chapter 5

### **Week 15, May 7 & 9: Conclusion**

- A. Are properly arranged institutions sufficient?
  - Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (selections)
  - Abraham Lincoln, Lyceum Address
  - Putnam, Robert D., *Bowling Alone* (selections)
- B. Wrap-up and review
  - \*\*\*Paper Due: Thursday, May 9\*\*\*

**\*\*\*\*Final Exam: Tuesday, May 14, 8:00 – 10:00 AM\*\*\*\***