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PSC 100S.02: Introduction to American Government

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Political Science 100
Introduction to American Government
Fall 2005, North ULH 101

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Course Content

This course is an introduction to American government and politics. It is designed to provide a foundation for studying and participating in American politics. This class stresses a sophisticated understanding of American political institutions—the rules of the game—and the behavior they induce. It also introduces students to the ideas and practice of modern political science.

Required Texts

There are two required texts: *Principles and Practice of American Politics* by Kernell and Smith (KS), and the *Logic of American Politics* by Kernell and Jacobson (KJ). In addition, I will periodically provide supplemental readings drawn from contemporary politics, e.g. newspaper articles. Students are strongly encouraged to read these extra readings as soon as possible, since they may be the topic of class discussions. Course examinations will draw on the textbook readings, supplemental assignments, and class lectures.

Students are required to read all assigned readings, attend all lectures, take two exams, and complete two short writing assignments. The grade breakdown is:

Midterm: 20%
Two Writing assignments: 20% each
Final: 40%

Class Rules

Turn your cell phones and pagers off. Show up on time and don't leave early. Participate in class discussions. Convince me that you love to learn.

Make-up exams are allowed in the event of illness or death in the family with documentation. There are no excuses for late papers; start papers early and protect yourself against computer failures.

I regrade papers under these conditions: 1) you must wait at least 24 hours before requesting a regrading; 2) you write "I request a regrading" and sign your name. *Grades may be adjusted up or down.*

Week	Topics	Readings
Aug. 30	Introduction to the Class	
Sept. 1	<i>No Class</i>	
Sept. 6 & 8	Politics as a science. Basic concepts and questions of politics.	KJ 1
Sept. 13 & 15	Founding the Constitution. How can people rule themselves without tyranny?	KJ 2; KS 2-1, 2-2
Sept. 20, 22	The Constitution	KJ 3, 5; KS 2-3; 3-2
Sept 27 & 29	Elections 1. Electoral College, Congressional elections, and campaign rules. Presidential Nominations and Elections. Campaign finance.	See e-mailed readings
Oct 4 & 6	NO CLASS	Read Ahead
Oct 11 & 13	Elections 2. Mini-paper on Constitution due Sept 29. Patterns of elections—turnout, incumbency advantage, parties.	KJ 11; KS 11-1
Oct 18&20	Elections 3. Parties and interest groups.	KJ 12, 13; KS 12-1, 12-2, 13-2
Oct. 25	Midterm.	
Oct. 27	Governing Overview.	KS 10-1, 14-2
Nov. 1 & 3	Public Opinion	KJ 10, 14
Nov. 8 & 10	Congress	KJ 6; KS 6-1, 6-2, 6-3
Nov. 15 & 17	Presidency	KJ 7; KS 7-2, 7-3
Nov. 22	Bureaucracy	KJ 8; KS 8-1, 8-2
Nov. 24	Thanksgiving	
Nov. 29 Dec. 1	Judiciary & Constitutional Politics	KJ 9; KS 9-1, 9-2, 5-2
Dec. 6, 8	Reform Options Mini-Paper 2 due Dec. 12	KJ 15; KS 1-5, 10-3
Dec 15	Final 3:20 – 5:20	