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PSC 100S.02: Introduction to American Government

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Political Science 100
INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN GOVERNMENT
Fall 2003

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Office: LA 350 Phone: 243-5202
Office hours: Almost anytime before 3pm.

Course Content

This course is an introduction to American government and politics. It combines factual description of institutions and processes of American government with critical analyses of how well the political system works. Emphasis is placed on explaining that which is puzzling.

Course Objectives

1. to increase knowledge.
2. to improve writing skills.
3. to develop analytical skills.

Required Text

Bond, Watson, and Smith, Promise and Performance of American Democracy, 2001.

Course Requirements and Grading

Students are required to read all assigned readings, attend all lectures, and take four exams (136 points each) and one quiz (40 points). There is no final exam or extra credit.

Each exam is comprised of one essay question and 12 multiple choice and fill-in-the blank questions.

Note: Make-up exams are allowed in the event of illness or death in the family. If either should occur, please call me at 243-5202 or e-mail me at tompkins@selway.umt.edu.

Final grades will be determined as follows:

- 525-584 points - A (90%)
- 467-524 points - B (80%)
- 409-466 points - C (70%)
- 350-408 points - D (60%)

Classroom Etiquette

1. Kaiman Readers - Please put your Kaimin away by the time class begins (the rustling of papers distracts from the learning process).
2. Sleepers - Please stay home in bed if you need more sleep (it is distracting to some, particularly the teacher, and probably doesn't contribute to effective learning).
3. Gabbers - Please don't talk with your neighbors (it is distracting and makes it difficult for others to hear). If you need clarification of a point, please raise your hand.
4. Early Packers - Please sit quietly until the teacher dismisses class (the noise generated by a hundred students packing their things is truly awesome).

Schedule of Lectures and Reading Assignments

Thurs., Sept. 4 Our Liberal Ideology
Read Chapter 1 and Handout on Classical Liberalism.

Theme: Why can't we agree on anything? Ideological differences as a source of political conflict (See exam question #1)

Puzzler: In what sense are all Americans Liberals?

Tues., Sept. 9 Our Liberal Ideology (continued)

Thurs., Sept. 11 ****Quiz over Constitution**** (Read pp. 568-578)
(20 multiple choice questions, a couple of them over the Amendments)

Tues., Sept. 16 The War of Independence and the Articles of Confederation
Read Chapter 2 and the Declaration of Independence, pp. 579-581.

Theme: Why did the colonists separate from England and why did they create a weak form of government? Political action as a product of fear. (See exam question #2).

Puzzler 1: Was the War of Independence a social revolution or a political rebellion?

Puzzler 2: Why does the Declaration make no mention of parliament, nor the colonists' rights as English citizens?

Thurs., Sept. 18 Madison's Fears and Constitutional Principles
Read Madison's The Federalist, No. 10, pp. 582-585.

Theme: Why so many checks and balances? Government inefficiency as the price of liberty. (See exam question #3)

Tues., Sept. 23 ****Optional Review for Exam #1****

Thurs., Sept. 25 ****Exam #1****

Tues., Sept. 30 Federalism
Read Chapter 3.

Theme: Federal-state relations: How did the balance of power become lost? (See exam question #1)

Thurs., Oct. 2 Fiscal Federalism

Puzzler: What do federal grants-in-aid and narcotics have in common?

Tues., Oct. 7 Political Parties as Linkage Mechanisms
Read Chapter 6.

Theme: Can we really influence government? The linkage mechanisms that make democracy possible. (See essay question #2)

****Monday, Oct. 13, is the last day to drop the course or switch to P/NP****

Thurs., Oct. 9 The Structure of Political Parties

Tues., Oct. 14 Interest Groups and PACs as Linkage Mechanisms
Read Chapter 5.

Thurs., Oct. 16 ****Optional Review for Exam #2****

Tues., Oct. 21 ****Exam #2****

Thurs., Oct. 23 The Presidential Nominations Process
Read Chapter 7.

Theme: The complex and grueling presidential nominations process. Is there a better way? (See exam question #1)

Tues., Oct. 28 The Electoral College System
Read Chapter 8.

Theme: The electoral college system. Why did we create it, how does it work, and why don't we change it? (See exam question #2)

Thurs., Oct. 30 Congress
Read Chapter 10

Theme: The responsible party model of government. Why is it so difficult for the majority party leaders to enact their legislative agenda? (See essay question #3).

Tues., Nov. 4 The Legislative Process

Thurs., Nov. 6 ****Optional Review for Exam #3****

Tues., Nov. 11 ****Veterans Day Holiday****

Thurs., Nov. 13 ****Exam #3****

Tues., Nov. 18 The Presidency
Read Chapter 11.

Thurs., Nov. 20 The Federal Bureaucracy
Read Chapter 12.

Tues., Nov. 25 The Myth of Bureaucratic Neutrality

Theme: Do career civil servants make policies? The myth of bureaucratic neutrality (See essay question #1).

Thurs., Nov. 27 ****Thanksgiving Holiday****

Tues., Dec. 2 The Federal Judiciary
Read Chapter 13.

Thurs., Dec. 4 The Myth of Objective Judicial Review

Theme: Do Supreme Court justices make policy? The myth of objective judicial review. (See essay question #2)

Puzzler: Why does the Supreme Court promote the myth?

Tues., Dec. 9

****Optional Review for Exam #4****

Thurs., Dec. 11

****Exam #4******Key Terms** (Each exam will give you definitions and you will be asked to identify the correct terms).

| <u>Exam #1</u> | <u>Exam #2</u> | <u>Exam #3</u> | <u>Exam #4</u> |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| ideology | federal system | nominations process | Executive Office of the President |
| liberal | unitary system | closed primary | |
| conservative | confederal system | open primary | pocket veto |
| direct democracy | enumerated (express) powers | blanket primary | merit system |
| representative democracy | judicial review | blanket primary | neutral competence |
| popular sovereignty | implied powers | soft money | cabinet depts. |
| limited government | reserved powers | party platform | independent agencies |
| equality of opportunity | concurrent powers | national party convention | administrative rules |
| equality under the law | Marbury v. Madison | electoral college | bureaucratic lobbying |
| government | direct lobbying | automatic plan | sunshine laws |
| politics | indirect lobbying | proportional plan | agency capture |
| liberty | fiscal federalism | district plan | executive orders |
| constitution | categorical grants | direct popular election plan | legislative intent |
| Articles of Confederation | block grants | reapportionment | original jurisdiction |
| Federalists | logrolling | gerrymandering | appellate jurisdiction |
| Anti-Federalists | necessary and proper clause | one person one vote | rule of four |
| Virginia Plan | responsible party model | pork barrel benefits | writ of certiorari |
| bicameral legislature | party discipline | discharge petition | majority opinion |
| New Jersey Plan | parliamentary system | majority leader | concurring opinion |
| Connecticut (Great) | split-ticket voting | minority leader | dissenting opinion |
| Compromise | divided government | party whip | judicial restraint |
| Federalist Papers | political machine | standing committees | judicial activism |
| checks and balances | winner-take-all election | House Rules Committee | |
| separation of power | presidential system | closed rule | |
| | initiative | riders | |
| | referendum | joint conference committee | |
| | recall | filibuster | |
| | | cloture | |

Essay Exam Questions (One question will be selected at random on the day of the test)

Reminder: The ability to reason and develop ideas logically are important. Did you remember to:

- 1) place the essay in an appropriate context by establishing its importance/significance in the introductory paragraph (by introducing theme)?
- 2) identify the purpose of the essay in the introductory paragraph?
- 3) begin each paragraph with a topic sentence borrowed from your essay outline?
- 4) back up your key points with analysis, e.g., by providing examples and explaining the significance of each point?

Exam #1

1. **Theme: Why can't we agree on anything? Ideological differences as a source of political conflict.** Write an essay around this theme by establishing that ideological values can be a source of conflict in society, defining Classical Liberalism and its principles, explaining how laissez faire capitalism (1880s) and the Great Depression (1930s) caused our commitment to these principles to change, distinguishing a modern "conservative" from a modern "liberal," and returning to the theme of ideological differences as a source of conflict.

2. **Theme: Why did the colonists separate from England and why did they create a weak form of government? Political action as a product of fear.** Write an essay around this theme by establishing the special attachment Americans have always had with protecting their liberties, identifying some of the rights that the colonists believed Parliament was intent on destroying, and explaining how this fear of losing their rights as English citizens influenced their decision to a) declare independence from England and b) create a weak form of national government. Use examples as appropriate.

3. **Theme: Why so many checks and balances? Government inefficiency as the price of liberty.** Write an essay around this theme by establishing that democracies must find an acceptable balance between making government work efficiently and protecting individual liberties, identifying Madison's three fears regarding democracy, explaining how he designed the Constitution to address these three fears, and assessing the results in terms of the trade-off between efficiency and liberty. Use examples as appropriate.

Exam #2

1. **Theme: Federal-state relations. How did the balance of power become lost?** Organize an essay around this theme. You will want to define federalism, explain why the Founding Fathers chose this type of system, and explain how the following factors tipped the balance of power in favor of the federal government at the expense of the states: a) precedents set by the Marshall Court, b) use of the elastic clause to expand federal powers, and c) the grants-in-aid programs.

2. **Theme: Can we really influence government? The linkage mechanisms that make democracy possible.** Organize an essay around this theme. After introducing the concept of linkage mechanism, you will want to describe in some detail how Americans "link" themselves to government by participating in political parties, interest groups, and political action committees. (Explain the logic: how do people participate and what do they hope to accomplish by doing so). You will also want to assess how well these linkage mechanisms allow us to influence government policies.

Exam #3

1. **Theme: The complex and grueling presidential nominations process. Is there a better way?** Organize an essay around this theme. You will want to establish what must take place at the party convention for a candidate to capture the party nomination, explain what must take place prior to the convention in order to win the nomination, and assess the merits of this particular method for selecting candidates.

2. **Theme: The electoral college system. Why did we create it, how does it work, and why don't we change it?** Organize an essay around this theme. You will want to discuss why the founding fathers selected this system over the direct popular vote method, how the system operated during the first few elections, and how it works today. You will also want to provide an argument regarding why it should or should not be reformed and an explanation of why we have not yet changed it.

3. **Theme: The responsible party model of democracy. Why is it so difficult for the majority party leaders to enact their legislative agenda?** Organize an essay around this theme. In the introduction be sure to clarify what is meant by a party's legislative agenda. Then you will want to define the "responsible party model of government" and explain how the presidential system in the United States diverges from it. Lastly, explain the difficulties confronting party leaders in terms of a) the amount of influence they have over members of their own party, b) the amount of influence they have over committee chairpersons, and, most importantly, c) the fact that the president is elected separately from congress. (Perhaps choose a policy, such as tax reform legislation, to illustrate these difficulties).

Exam #4**1. Theme: Do career civil servants make policy? The myth of bureaucratic neutrality.**

Organize an essay around this theme. You will want to explain the problem of bureaucratic accountability and explain how the myth of bureaucratic neutrality provides assurance that accountability is not a problem. Next, review the evidence that bureaucratic neutrality is a myth (untrue). Explain how civil servants do in fact make important policy decisions and involve themselves in politics, and describe how both congress and the president attempt to hold them accountable to their respective views of the public interest.

2. Theme: Do the Supreme Court justices make policy? The myth of objective judicial review. Organize an essay around this theme. You will want to define the myth, explain why and how the Supreme Court promotes it, review the evidence suggesting that judicial objectivity is a myth (untrue), and explain why the Court is unlikely to make decisions that greatly alter the status quo.

Criteria for Grading Essay Questions

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|---|---|---|---|------|
| 1. Thoroughness of answer | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | X6 = |
| 2. Sophistication of analysis | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | X6 = |
| 3. Organization & logical development | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | X5 = |
| 4. Clarity of expression | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | X3 = |
| 5. Grammar and punctuation | See Below | | | | | |

1. Thoroughness of answer. The best essays respond to each part of the question thoroughly and with sufficient detail to demonstrate that the subject is fully understood.

2. Sophistication of analysis. In the best essays, the author does much more than just explain or describe. He or she shows evidence of having thought about the subject in depth. The subject is analyzed from many angles and assessed critically.

3. Organization and logical development. The best essays show evidence of prior planning as if they have been outlined in advance. They have a purpose or theme which is introduced in the introduction, developed in the body of the essay, and returned to in the conclusion. Paragraphs are well constructed and are linked to each other in a logical sequence using transitional sentences. Arguments, examples, facts, opinions, and details explain the main point and lend credibility to each point being developed.

4. Clarity of expression. In the best essays, words are chosen carefully and sentences are constructed purposefully so that each point the author makes is expressed as exactly, precisely, and clearly as possible.

5. Grammar, punctuation, and spelling. The best essays are characterized by consistently correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Verbs agree with their subjects. There are no single-sentence paragraphs, sentence fragments, or run-on sentences.

One point will be subtracted from the test score for each occurrence of the following:

- single sentence paragraph
- verb-subject disagreement
- sentence fragment (incomplete sentence)
- run-on sentence

However, no points will be lost due to spelling mistakes.