

SYLLABUS



COURSE CODE: POL 200
COURSE TITLE: Introduction to United States Government
SEMESTER: Fall, 2003
PLACE/TIME: Tues & Fri, 9:15 am – 10:35 am, room 201
PROFESSOR: Bruce Sabin
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<http://pegasus.cc.ucf.edu/~bsabin>
TEXTBOOK: Volkomer, Walter E. *American Government* (10th Ed). Prentice Hall, 2004

CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

A survey of the theory, principles, and institutions of United States Government from the National to the local level. Emphasis is placed on the government's relationship to the private sector, especially in business.

COURSE RATIONALE:

Politics has been defined as 'the authoritative allocation of resources and values' and government is the 'monopolistic use of force.' All people and institutions are affected by government's substantial powers. Consequently, understanding government is essential to effective citizenship and business leadership. This course is designed to familiarize students with the basic practice of American government so that students may be properly involved in democracy.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Upon completing this course, students should be able to:

1. Explain ways the government as a whole, and through its individual branches, affects businesses and the economy.
2. Describe several of the basic civil liberties and rights enumerated in the US Constitution, and provide an overview of the development of civil rights.
3. Discuss the tension between majority rule and minority rights built into the American Constitutional system.
4. Give examples of Supreme Court decisions that have affected public policy and how the Court's interpretation of the Constitution often changes over time.
5. Express ways which people and institutions can participate in and influence government.
6. Explain how "checks and balances" works within the government.
7. Critically analyze media information on current political issues

EXPECTATIONS:

The following is expected of all students in this course:

1. Think. Participate. Evaluate.
2. Attend class regularly. Acquiring more than three unexcused absences will result in a loss of credit for participation.
3. All reading due each week must be completed before the first class meeting of that week. Any exceptions must have prior approval from the instructor. The reading includes prerequisite knowledge for participating in and understanding class discussions.
4. Videos are required supplemental material. If a video is missed, special arrangements must be made with the instructor.
5. In accordance with the University mission, this course seeks to develop professional competencies in students. Students are expected to perform in a professional manner.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:

The *Student Handbook* contains examples of academic dishonesty and appropriate disciplinary actions. Students are personally responsible for understanding the rules. The most common reason students cheat is because they failed to plan. Often students procrastinate studying or writing papers. When the assignment is almost due, and they no longer have adequate time, they feel stuck. So, they cheat. Plan ahead and give yourself plenty of time before due dates. Your instructor is always available to help if a problem arises. Do not cheat or plagiarize.

Note: Course requirements are negotiable.

GRADE DISTRIBUTION:

Ten weekly news responses:	20%
Participation	10%
Group project:	10%
Letter:	10%
Midterm exam	15%
Final exam:	15%

CLASS SCHEDULE:

Reading assignments for each week are to be read before the following week.

Sept 31, 3	Introduction; Review syllabus Read chapter 1 from text and chapter 9 of John Locke's <i>Second Treatise of Government</i>
7,10	What is politics Read chapter 2 and the <i>Declaration of Independence</i>
14,17	America's founding

	Read chapter 3, the <i>Constitution of the United States of America</i> and <i>Federalist #10</i>
21,24	The Federal system Read chapter 4
Oct 28,1	Public opinion and mass media Read chapter 5 video: excerpt: <i>Home Town Story</i> <i>Bowling for Columbine</i> <i>Mr. Smith Goes to Washington</i>
5,8	Parties and interest groups Read chapter 6 video: <i>The Great Health Care Debate</i>
12,16	Nominations and elections Read chapter 7
19,22	Congress Read chapter 8 video: <i>The GI Bill: the Law that Changed America</i>
26,29	Mid-term Exam on the 26th. The President Read chapter 9
Nov 2,5	Federal bureaucracy Read chapter 10
9,12	The Judiciary Read chapter 11 and the <i>Bill of Rights</i> and Eleanor Roosevelt's speech to the ACLU from March 14, 1940 <i>Twelve Angry Men</i>
16,19	Civil liberties Read chapter 12, the "Statement by Alabama Clergymen" and Martin Luther King's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" Public policy group assignment handout video: <i>Japanese Relocation</i> <i>Gattaca</i>
23,26	Letter due on the 23rd. Civil Rights

Read chapter 13

Dec

30,3

Public policy Group Presentations

Read chapter 14

Final Exam

John Locke's *Second Treatise of Government*, "Of the Ends of Political Society and Government" is available at:

<http://www.constitution.org/jl/2ndtr09.htm>

Eleanor Roosevelt's speech is available at:

http://www.pbs.org/greatspeeches/timeline/e_roosevelt_s.html

"Statement by Alabama Clergymen" may be found at:

<http://www.stanford.edu/group/king/frequentdocs/clergy.pdf>

MLK's letter may be found at:

www.stanford.edu/group/King/popular_requests/frequentdocs/birmingham.pdf