

Doshisha University
Graduate School of American Studies
Spring 2004

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POLITICS AND SOCIETY IN AMERICA (4 units)

This course is a comprehensive introduction to the American political system and to the theories that political scientists have devised to understand it. Although the course is designed for students who have had little or no prior study of politics in the United States, it should also prove valuable to those who have had some previous exposure to the topic. Among the topics we will consider are: the origins and nature of the American Constitution; the workings of Congress, the presidency, and the judiciary; the political processes that connect institutions to society; and the size and scope of government. A major focus of the course will be on the question of whether a governmental structure designed over 200 years ago for a small, predominantly agricultural, and rather isolated society still works for a country that is now very large, highly industrial, and the dominant military power in the world. The course will be especially useful for students who are considering doing further research on any aspect of American politics.

Course Requirements: All students must keep up with the assigned readings, attend all class meetings, and complete two paper assignments (each of which must be 7 or more pages in length). Instructions on how to complete these assignments will be provided as the course proceeds, and may be altered depending on student interest and performance. Participation in class discussion will also have a positive impact on the final evaluation. The final grade will be calculated in the following way: 45% for each paper, and 10% for classroom participation.

The core readings will be based on selections from the textbooks listed below, but we will also read selected classic essays and articles written by professors for a scholarly audience. These selections will be distributed in class or made available for you to copy. Depending on class size, students will be required on a regular basis to write brief outlines and make verbal presentations to the class on parts of the assigned readings.

Textbooks:

1. Robert Singh, American Government and Politics: A Concise Introduction (Sage 2003)
2. Robert J. Spitzer, Benjamin Ginsberg, Theodore Lowi, and Margaret Weir, Essentials of American Politics, First Edition (W.W. Norton, 2002).

COURSE SCHEDULE

PART 1: THE CONSTITUTION AND ITS CRITICS

Meeting 1: Introduction

Course content, procedures and requirements; discussion of American politics.

Video: Presidential Bloopers

Meetings 2 - 7: Americanism, The Founding, and the Constitution

Read: Chapters 1 and 2, American Government and Politics

Videos: Liberty -- The American Revolution: The Reluctant Revolutionaries; Blows Must Decide; Are We to Be a Nation?

Focus on the Constitution: The Compromise that Made a Nation

Focus on the Constitution: The Amendments

Meetings 8 - 10: The Logic of Federalism

Read: Chapter 3, Essentials of American Politics

Video: Focus on the Constitution: Federalism

Meetings 11 - 13: The Judicial Branch, Civil Rights, and Civil Liberties

Read: Chapter 8, American Government and Politics and Chapter 4, Essentials of American Politics

Video: Brown vs. Board of Education
Separate But Equal

FIRST PAPER DUE

PART II: THE PARTIES, THE CONGRESS, AND THE PRESIDENCY

Meetings 14 - 16: Political Parties and Elections

Read: Chapters 3, 4, and 5, American Government and Politics

Videos: The Story of Franklin Delano Roosevelt
Chicago 68

CNN Election 2000

America's Political Parties: The Democratic Party, 1960-1992

America's Political Parties: The Republican Party, 1960-1992

Meetings 17 - 18: Interest Groups

Read: Chapter 9, American Government and Politics

Meetings 19 - 21: Congress

Read: Chapter 7, American Government and Politics

Videos: A Perfect Candidate: Oliver North

The People and the Power Game: The Lobbies

American History: An Act of Congress (H.R. 6161, Jan. 1977)

Meetings 22 - 25: The Presidency and the Bureaucracy

Read: Chapters 6 and 10, American Government and Politics

Videos: Focus on the Constitution: The Presidency

The People and the Power Game: The Presidency and Congress

National Geographic: Air Force One

National Geographic: Inside the White House

Meeting 26: The Future of the System

Read: Chapter 13, American Government and Politics

SECOND PAPER DUE