

## 17.20 Introduction to the American Political Process

Lecture: M, W 2-3  
Recitation: F 2-3  
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This course provides students with an introduction to the basic institutions of American government, especially as established in the constitution, and with an introduction to currents of thought among social scientists about the workings of U.S. politics. This is a communication intensive course. As such you are required to write at least 25 pages – that's the C.I. requirement – and participate in class discussions.

### *Requirements*

#### 1. Participation (20 % of your grade)

Regular attendance and participation in class discussion.

#### 2. Reading paper and discussion leader (20 % of your grade)

Write one short paper on the readings for one of the weeks. Please choose one of the weeks during the first week of class.

This paper is due Monday morning of the week about which the paper is written. The paper should engage what you feel to be an interesting political question raised in the readings. The paper should be 3 to 4 pages long, double spaced, 12 points, 1 inch margins. Send the paper to me and to all other students in the class electronically. I will use these to open conversation about the week's topic. During your week I expect you to help lead discussion.

The paper will be graded on your writing and analysis and your participation during that week.

#### 3. Observation paper (20 % of your grade)

During the first month or so of the course I would like you to attend the meeting of a local governmental body – city council, school board, state legislature, or court. You are to write a paper at least five pages in length on your observations. What is the authority of the body you observed? Who is on this body and how is it organized? What was

issues or cases did the organization address at the meeting you attended? Who attended the meeting and who participated in the meeting? How did the deliberations go? E.g., who spoke about what? What decisions were made and how? Finally, offer observations about what you learned about decision-making within this body (even if obvious).

Please submit your paper by the last day of October.

#### 4. Term paper (40 % of your grade)

The project for this course is a research paper on one of the topics distributed in class. All of the topics have a local angle, but deal with problems common to many political circumstances in the United States.

I expect you to choose a topic by September 17<sup>th</sup>. Please stick with your topic throughout the term. On or before the 17<sup>th</sup>, inform your TA of the paper topic that you have chosen. You will work in recitation on how to research and write your paper. You are required to submit a paper outline by October 22<sup>nd</sup> and a rough draft by November 19<sup>th</sup>. We will give you comments on your draft so that you can rewrite the paper and turn it in by December 8<sup>th</sup>.

The projects will be graded on the quality of thought and analysis of the political situation, the research you do, and the quality of writing. The paper should be 20 pages in length.

#### *Resources for this Course:*

Books for you to purchase:

Dahl, Who Governs  
Kinder and Sanders, Divided By Color  
Olson, The Logic of Collective Action  
Mansbridge, Why We Lost the ERA  
Mayhew, Congress: The Electoral Connection  
Rosenberg, The Hollow Hope  
Neustadt, Presidential Power

Readings from the following (on reserve at Dewey Library):

Krehbiel, Pivotal Politics  
Wilson, Bureaucracy

On-line resources:

The Constitution, the Federalist Papers, and the Anti-Federalist Papers.  
These are available through a wide variety of online sources.  
I recommend: [www.findlaw.com](http://www.findlaw.com),  
[www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/federal/fed.htm](http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/federal/fed.htm),  
[www.constitution.org/afp](http://www.constitution.org/afp).

Court Cases: [www.findlaw.com](http://www.findlaw.com).

Academic Articles: available through [www.jstor.org](http://www.jstor.org)

*Outline of the Course:*

**Introduction**

Week 1 (9.3)                      Organization

**Politics of the American Constitution**

Week 2 (9.8, 9.10)              Articles of Confederation and U. S. Constitution  
*Federalist Papers*: 10, 51, 84  
*Anti-Federalist Papers*: Centinel 1, Federal Farmer  
1 and 2, Brutus 1, Pennsylvania Minority  
([www.constitution.org/afp/afpchron.htm](http://www.constitution.org/afp/afpchron.htm))

**Citizen Politics**

Week 3 (9.15, 9.17)              Sociology and Political Participation  
Dahl, Who Governs, Books I, IV, V, VI

Week 4 (9.24)                      Collective Action  
Olson, The Logic of Collective Action  
(especially the first 2 chapters)

Week 5 (9.29, 10.1)              Ideology and Organization  
Mansbridge, Why We Lost the ERA

Week 6 (10.6, 10.8)              Race  
Kinder and Sanders, Divided By Color

**Voting and Elections**

Week 7 (10.15, 10.20)            Ideology, Party, and Voting  
Angus Campbell et al, The American Voter,  
Chs. 6 (Dewey Reserve)  
V.O. Key, The Responsible Electorate  
Chs. 1 – 3 (Dewey Reserve)  
David Brooks, “One Nation, Slightly Divisible”  
The Atlantic, December, 2001.  
[www.theatlantic.com/issues/2001/12/brooks.htm](http://www.theatlantic.com/issues/2001/12/brooks.htm)

Week 8 (10.22)                      Votes and Seats  
Tuftes, “Determinants of the Outcomes of Midterm

Congressional Elections” *The American Political Science Review*, vol. 69, No. 3. (Sep., 1975), pp. 812-826. (available on [www.jstor.org](http://www.jstor.org))

## **Law Making**

- Week 9 (10.27, 10.29) Representation  
Mayhew, Congress: The Electoral Connection (esp. First Essay)  
Dahl, Book III
- Guest Presentation on 10/29:  
Congressman Phil Sharp
- Week 10 (11.3, 11.5) Bargaining and Law  
Krehbiel, Pivotal Politics, Chapters 1, 2, 8, 9  
Dahl, Book II
- Week 11 (11.12, 11.17)  
(note: dates messed up) Courts  
Brown v. Board of Education ([findlaw.com](http://findlaw.com))  
Roe v. Wade ([findlaw.com](http://findlaw.com))  
Rosenberg, The Hollow Hope, Parts 1 and 2 (pages 9 – 269)  
Recommended: Federalist #78, Brutus 11  
Marbury v. Madison ([findlaw.com](http://findlaw.com))

## **Execution and Implementation**

- Week 12 (11.19, 11.24) Executive Power  
Neustadt, Presidential Power  
Recommended: Krehbiel Chapter 7
- 11.26 Flexible Date
- Week 14 (12.1, 12.3) Organization and Bureaucracy  
Wilson, Chapters 1, 2, 5, 7, 9, 13, 14
- Week 15 (12.8, 12.10) Making Government Work  
Wilson, Chapters 19, 20.