POL 101 Honors: Introduction to American Politics  
Spring, 2004

Dr. Robert Brown  
9:30 - 10:45 TTh, Deupree 205  
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Office Hours: MW 8:30 - 9:30; 1:00 - 2:00, and by appointment.

Course Description

This is a course about the major forces in American politics. We will look at the constitutional foundations of the national government, and how the rules of the game figure so prominently in the current American political setting. We will look at the presidency -- its symbolic power as an agenda-setter and why our expectations of those who hold the office are often not realized; the Congress -- the setting of the institution, and how electoral incentives affect policymaking and representation; the Supreme Court and its unique role as the arbiter of our individual rights and liberties; the media and how they influence political campaigns and what we know about politics; political parties and interest groups and their role as linkage institutions; and finally, we will look at the public -- the nature of public opinion, who votes and what influences the vote, and what happens when voter interest declines.

As this is an honors section, we will organize it somewhat differently than a normal POL101 class. To begin, since this is a small and select class, I will run it as a seminar, centered around class discussions instead of lectures. This means that I expect all students to attend class regularly and contribute frequently to class deliberations, and that I will consider both the quality and quantity of participation in student evaluations. Second, rather than one central book, we will be reading from a much more diverse set of viewpoints on American politics. Finally, in accordance with Honors College standards, there will be significantly more writing required in this class than in a normal 101 section. Most of this writing will take the form of several analytical assignments corresponding to various topics of the course.

An noted, I will be putting together a reading packet, so there will be no required texts for the course. For those interested in an introductory text on American politics, the following are excellent, and available from internet book sellers:


Grades

All grades in the course will be calculated on a 100 point scale as follows:

90-100 = A
80-89 = B
70-79 = C
60-69 = D
59 and below = F

Semester grades will be calculated according to each individual student’s performance on several analytical assignments, two midterm examinations, a final examination, and participation in class discussions. These components will be weighted equally, and each will contribute 20% toward your final grade.

The assignments are designed to allow you to pursue the various topics of the course in a more in-depth fashion. I will be providing descriptions of these assignments shortly.

An introductory course on American politics can offer the student many interesting and important topics -- all of which can be made even more engaging when the class gets involved and each student offers their own individual perceptions of material. Students are therefore urged to take an active part in the class and participate in class discussion as much as possible (of course, the fact that this is reflected in your grade should provide additional incentive). It should go without saying, therefore, that one important way to facilitate these goals is to have all readings completed prior to class. Attendance is assumed.

In addition, students are strongly encouraged to read a newspaper daily. One of the greatest things about studying American politics is that one does not have to look very far to find it -- "politics" takes place all around us at many different levels. By keeping abreast of the national, state, local, and even University news, students will not only be able to get a better feel for the material in the course, but they will also be able to participate more. As you may know, many excellent national newspapers (The New York Times, The Washington Post, Chicago Tribune, etc.) are available “online,” and thus are quite accessible for everyday reading.

Academic Misconduct

Though I assume it will be unnecessary, I have been asked by the Honors College to include the following statement on academic misconduct in this syllabus: “Academic integrity is essential to all the values upon which the university is founded. Honors students must therefore embody academic honesty in all aspects of their work. A student with a documented case of plagiarism or academic cheating in an honors course will receive the grade of F for the course and will be dismissed from the Honors College. Students should consult the M Book for detailed descriptions of academic cheating and plagiarism.”

Class Schedule and Assignments

T. Jan 13: Why Government?

Th Jan. 15: Citizenship and Democracy
John Mueller, Democracy’s Romantic Myths
Paul Rogat Loeb, “The Active Citizen”

M. Jan. 19: Martin Luther King Jr Day
“I Have a Dream”
-Read it. Think about it.

David Brooks, “The Age of Conflict: Politics and Culture After September 11”
Bill Moyers, “Which American Will We Be Now?”

Th Jan. 22: Solving the Delegates’ Dilemma I – Democracy but Limited Democracy
Elgin, Duane, “Revitalizing Democracy through Electronic Town Meetings”
Ornstein, Norman and Amy Schenkenberg, “The Promise and Perils of Cyberdemocracy”

T Jan. 27: Solving the Delegates’ Dilemma II – Stronger but Limited Government
William D. Eggers and John O’Leary, “Beyond the Beltway”
John D. Donahue, “The Devil in Devolution”

Th Feb 29: Civil Liberties and Civil Rights I
*The Bill of Rights: A 200 Year History of Turbulence and Triumph*, American Civil Liberties Union, *The Bill of Rights: A Brief History*
Lawrence, Charles R. “The Justification for Curbing Racist Speech on Campus.”

T Feb. 3: Civil Liberties and Civil Rights II
Estrich, Susan, and Kathleen Sullivan. “Abortion Politics: The
Case for the Right to Privacy.”
Bop, James and Richard Coleson. “Abortion on Demand Has No Constitutional or Moral Justification.”
Bergmann, Barbara, “In Defense of Affirmative Action”
Jost, Kenneth, “Should Colleges Use Race-Based Admissions Policies to Remedy Discrimination Against Minorities? CQ Researcher

Th Feb. 5: Civil Liberties, Civil Rights, and the Delegate’s Dilemma in a Post 9-11 U.S.
Masci, David, and Patrick Marshall, “Civil Liberties in Wartime” CQ Press
Hanson, Victor. 2002. “I Love Iraq, Bomb Texas.”
Vidal, Gore. 2003. “We Are the Patriots.”

T Feb. 10 No Class – work on exams. **Exams due Wednesday Feb 11**

Part II: The Political Marketplace

Th Feb. 12: Public Opinion and Political Socialization
Barbour and Wright, “Measuring and Tracking Public Opinion.”

T Feb. 17 The Media
James Fallows, *Why Americans Hate the Media*

Th. Feb. 19: Political Parties I
E. J. Dionne, “Are Moderate Republicans Obsolete?”
Theda Skocpol, “Democrats at the Crossroads”

T Feb. 24  Political Parties II
Wayne, Stephen, “Are Political Parties Relevant?”

Th. Feb. 26:  Interest Groups – Pluralism and Organized Interests
Berry, *The Interest Group Society*, “Madison’s Dilemma”
Berry, *The Interest Group Society*, “Washington Lobbying”
Lowi, “Interest Group Liberalism”

T March 2:  Campaign Finance: Laws, Loopholes, and Impacts
Stephen Wayne, *Is This Any Way to Run a Democratic Election?*, Chapter 5: Has Money Corrupted Our Electoral Process?
Broder, David. “Cash Flow”
Broder, David. “Campaign Finance Casualties.”
Dionne, E.J. “How to Fix Financing”
Dionne, E.J. “Money Talks and the Court Listens”

Th. March 4:  Campaigns and Elections I
Broder, David. “Tipping Left Toward 2004”
Broder, David. “No Way to Choose a President.”
Broder, David. “Primary Gift to Bush?”

March 9 and 11  Spring Break
T. March 16: Campaigns and Elections II
Stephen Wayne, *Is This Any Way to Run a Democratic Election?*, Chapter 1: Democratic Elections: What’s the Problem?
Solomon, Burt. “Gone are the Giants.” *National Journal*, May 26, 2000
E.J. Dionne, “Democratic Catastrophe”
Abramowitz, Alan. “The Battle For the White House II: The General Election”

Th. March 18: No Class: Instructor Attending Southwestern Meetings

T. March 23: Participation and Voting
Gerald Pomper, Susan Lederman, and Howard Reiter, “Do Voting and Elections Mean Very Much?”

Th. March 25: No Class: Work on Exams. **Exams due Monday, March 29**

Part III. The Policymaking Institutions

T March 30: Congress I: Congressional Elections and Incumbency
Jacobson, Gary. “Congressional Candidates.” in *The Politics of Congressional Elections*
Norman Ornstein: “Term Limits Would Just Make Things Worse”

Th. April 1: Congress II: Policymaking and Representation

T April 6: The Presidency – The Nature of Presidential Power
Barbour and Wright, “The Presidency and the Double Expectations Gap.”
Solomon, Bert. “Do We Ask Too Much of Our Presidents?”
Greenstein, Fred. “Lessons from the Modern Presidency”
Stephen Skowronek, “The Changing Political Structures of Presidential Leadership”

Th. April 8: The Politics of Divided Government
William Schneider. “How Divided is America?”
Dionne, E.J. “One Nation Deeply Divided”
Mayhew, David. “Divided Party Control: Does it Make a Difference?”
Broder, David. “Gridlock Begins at Home: How We Build Political Failure into the System.”

April 13 & 15: No Class: Instructor attending AERA and MPSA conferences

T. April 20: The Bureaucracy – The Power of Unelected Policymakers
DeMuth, Christopher. “Why the Era of Big Government Isn’t Over.” Commentary April 2000
DeMuth, Christopher. “Why the Era of Big Government Isn’t Over.” Commentary April 2000

Th. April 22: The Supreme Court as a Policymaker
Tribe, Laurence and Todd Gaziano. “Legal Philosophy as a Qualification for the Bench: Judicious Standard or Obstructionist Barrier”
Kaufman, Irving. “What Did the Founding Fathers Intend?”

T. April 27: The Politics of Policy-making
-to be announced

Th. April 29: Catch up and Clean up