American Democracy in a Changing World: Honors

Fall 2004

Political Science 1001, Honors
T/Th 9:45am-11:00am
HHH 60
Course code: 31880 sec 001

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I. Introduction

This course is intended to introduce students to the expressed hopes of the American people for their government and to the institutions and processes that have been created and recreated to achieve these hopes. What do we mean by good government? Have we achieved it? How do we build it?

By the end of the semester students should have a basic understanding of the structure and function of American government as well as an increased ability to critically reflect on the degree to which our institutions, processes, and citizens live up to the expectations placed on them.

II. Required Texts

The following texts are required and have been ordered at the University Bookstore:


III. Course structure and requirements

**Format.** The course will consist of a mixture of lecture and class discussion. The honors section is purposefully small, in order to allow for greater participation and discussion than the larger regular section. Tuesdays will consist mostly of lecture. Thursdays will be devoted to discussion of the readings.
Grades. Your final course grade will be based on two non-cumulative, in-class examinations and course participation, which includes weekly written responses to the readings. Each of these components will weigh in the final grade as follows:

- First exam 30 points
- Second exam 30 points
- Written assignments 40 points

To calculate your final grade, simply add up your points and convert to a letter grade using the following scale:

A: Achievement outstanding relative to the basic course requirements
   - A 93 points or more
   - A- 90-92 points

B: Achievement significantly above the basic course requirements
   - B+ 87-89 points
   - B 84-86
   - B- 80-83

C: Achievement meeting the basic course requirements
   - C+ 77-79 points
   - C 74-76
   - C- 70-73

D: Achievement worthy of credit but below the basic course requirements
   - D+ 66-69 points
   - D 61-65

F: Below 60 points

Class participation. Please come to class having completed the assigned readings. Regular class attendance is expected, as it will contribute to our discussions and investigations over the course of the semester.

Assigned readings. Because our class activities depend on the readings, please come to class having read and prepared to discuss them. All of the readings in the syllabus are required. Lectures and readings will not always overlap, and material from the assigned readings may be included in the exams, whether or not I have discussed it in class.

Examinations. Each of the two exams will cover ½ of the course material. They are not cumulative. Each exam will consist of short answer and essay questions. The exams will test your comprehension of the material covered in the readings and lectures as well as understanding of the underlying concepts.

Written assignments. In addition to the two exams you will be expected to write short written responses to the assigned readings every week beginning the 2nd week of the semester. The response pieces will consist of 1) your own reactions to the day’s readings and 2) questions for the rest of the class concerning the readings. They need to be only, and no more than, 1 single-spaced page. Each response piece is due at the start of class on Tuesday the week that the readings are assigned. Late response pieces will not be accepted. Paper copies only, please. Do not worry about presentation, as long as it is readable text. You may choose one of the assigned readings or give your thoughts on all of them. The responses will not be graded (at first). Instead you will receive 3 points on your final grade for each one that you do, up to 30 points,
meaning you need to do a total of 10. Be prepared to answer questions about your response pieces on Thursday’s class of that week.

At the end of the semester, you will hand in the three responses that you feel are your best, along with a short (2 page single-spaced) thought piece on these readings. This assignment will be graded and will be worth 10 points on your final grade. More information will be given in class.

IV. Course Policies

**Academic Freedom and Responsibility.** All of the work presented in this course is expected to be your own. I will follow the University’s policies and procedures for academic integrity. Using information from a book, article, web page, another person, etc. without crediting the author is plagiarism. Quotations, paraphrased information, and use of others’ ideas should be properly cited in your written assignments. If you have questions about citation, please contact the Professor or one of the TA’s. More information is available at: 
[http://www1.umn.edu/regents/policies/academic/StudentConduct.html](http://www1.umn.edu/regents/policies/academic/StudentConduct.html)

**Students with Disabilities.** I will make every effort to accommodate the needs of students with disabilities. Please contact Disability Services (180 McNamara Alumni Center: 612-626-1333) to discuss your individual needs as early as possible in the semester. More information on disability services is available at [http://disserv3.stu.umn.edu](http://disserv3.stu.umn.edu)

**Late work and missed exams.** Make-up exams are possible only in the case of emergencies or for University-approved functions. In both cases students will need to provide me with documentation (either a note from a physician or from your coach or faculty sponsor). If you must miss an exam for an approved function, you must contact me before the scheduled test time. The make-up exam questions may be different from the regular exam, though the format will be the same.

Please do not come to class after the scheduled start time. We have very little time for each class session, and streams of latecomers are disruptive to the rest of the students in the class.

I will respect and follow University policies regarding sexual harassment, and I expect all students in the course to do the same. The Regents’ policy on sexual harassment can be found on the web at [http://www1.umn.edu/regents/policies/humanresources/SexHarassment.html](http://www1.umn.edu/regents/policies/humanresources/SexHarassment.html).

**University resources.** This class will use multiple choice and short answer exams. Students who feel they might benefit from test-taking services should contact the University Learning and Academic Skills Center at 109 Eddy Hall, East Bank (612-624-3323) or on the web at [http://www.ucs.umn.edu/lasc/](http://www.ucs.umn.edu/lasc/). This class will also use writing assignments. The Student Writing Center has TA’s and ESL specialists to help with your writing skills. The Writing Center is at 306 B Lind Hall, East Bank (612-625-1893) or on the web at [http://swc.umn.edu.html](http://swc.umn.edu.html).
V. Weekly Schedule and Assigned Readings

Week 1: Bad Government


  Martin Luther King, Jr., *Letter From a Birmingham Jail*. Grover and Peschek, Number 37.

Week 2: Power and American Democracy


  Jim Hightower. *This Land is Your Land*. Grover and Peschek, Number 1.


Week 3: The Constitution


  *Antifederalist Paper Number 84*. Woll, Number 14.


Week 4: The Constitution (continued); Federalism


  Howard Zinn. *Some Truths are Not Self Evident*. Grover and Peschek, Number 12.


Week 5: Democratic Ideals and American Political Culture


Jennifer Hochschild. *What is the American Dream?* Grover and Peschek, Number 5.


Week 6: Congress


Nelson W. Polsby. *Congress-Bashing for Beginners*. Woll, Number 64.


Week 7: Congress (continued)


Exam #1 in class Thursday, October 14

Week 8: The Judiciary/Civil Rights


*Plessy v. Ferguson*. Woll, Number 19.


Carl Swidorski. *Corporations, the Law, and Democracy*. Grover and Peschek, Number 29.
Week 9: Civil Liberties


*Zelman v. Simmons-Harris*. Woll, Number 23.


Patricia J. Williams. *This Dangerous Patriot’s Game*. Grover and Peschek, Number 31.

Week 11: The President and the Bureaucracy


Week 12: Interest Groups and the Media


Jeffrey M. Berry. *Madison’s Dilemma*. Woll, Number 41.


Week 13: Parties, Campaigns, and Elections


APSA. *Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System*. Woll, Number 29.

Benjamin Ginsberg and Martin Shefter. *Politics by Other Means*. Woll, Number 33.


No class week of November 22-26

Week 14: Public Opinion and Political Participation


Joel Rogers and Ruy Teixeira. *America’s Forgotten Majority*. Grover and Peschek, Number 19.

Final written response due in class Thursday, December 9

Week 15: Foreign Policy and the War on Terror


TBA

Exam #2 in class Tuesday, December 14