

PSC 100-04 Introduction to American Politics
Fall 2008
Tuesdays 6-8:50 pm
Graham 212

Dr. Susan Johnson

233 Graham

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2 pm – 3:15 pm and by appointment

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Class announcements: blackboard.uncg.edu

Course Catalog Description:

Organization and behavior of the institutions, groups, and persons in American national government and politics. Introductory level course.

Course Description:

This course is a survey of the U.S. political system with a strong focus placed on the national level of government. We will begin with an examination of the U.S. Constitution and the founding ideals of the American democratic system (i.e., popular sovereignty, etc.). We will then turn our attention to the larger American political environment and study the roles that the mass public, political parties, interest groups, the media and other political organizations play in American politics. Last but not least, we will then examine the major institutions of the national government: the presidency, the congress, the judiciary, and the bureaucracy. Throughout the course, we will reflect on how these different aspects of American government serve either to promote the principles of a democratic political process, or sometimes, rather, to obstruct them.

PSC 100 is an *introductory* course in American politics. As such, this is more a course of breadth than depth, meaning that we will cover a wide range of topics concerning American politics, but will not delve into any particular subject matter with a great deal of scrutiny. Yet, due to the inter-related nature of the contents to be examined, topics will continue to re-surface long after being introduced. When we do revisit particular subject areas, we will usually analyze them somewhat differently and more comprehensively, utilizing the knowledge we have already acquired and applying it to the study of new concepts and topics. As such, this course builds from the first week of the semester to the last, and students should emerge at the end of the semester with a profitable knowledge of the functions and operations of the American political system and the larger political environment.

Student Learning Outcomes:

- To examine the founding of the United States, including the Constitution, Bill of Rights, and principles underlying our unique system of government.
- To become familiar with the political environment as it shapes our political choices.

- To explore the relationship between the states and the federal government.
- To examine the institutions of American government, with particular emphasis on the impact of certain institutional structures.
- To explore individual rights and liberties and competing interests within American society.

Required Texts:

Wilson, James Q. and John J. DiIulio, Jr. 2006. *American Government, Dolphin Edition*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company Press. ISBN: 0-618-57682-7.

Colbert, M. Jeffrey. 2006. *Vital Readings in American Politics*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall-Hunt Publishing. ISBN 0-7575-2633-0.

Course requirements and Grading Scale:

In-class assignments – 10%

Homework and Quizzes – 15%

Exam 1 – 25%

Exam 2- 25%

Final exam – 25%

Grading scale: A	94-100	C	74-76
A-	90-93	C-	70-73
B+	87-89	D+	67-69
B	84-86	D	64-66
B-	80-83	D-	60-63
C+	77-79	F	0-59

Class attendance and In-class Assignments:

Students are expected to regularly attend class. Much of the lecture material supplements rather than repeats the material covered in the textbook. Students who regularly attend class tend to earn higher grades than students who are absent.

The in-class assignments and quizzes may or may not be announced. Unannounced in-class assignments and quizzes are designed to reward students who attend class and complete the assigned reading. Students who miss an in-class assignment or quiz will not be allowed to make it up. Since 25% of your final grade consists of in-class assignments and quizzes, it is unwise to miss class very often.

The lowest quiz or homework assignment will be dropped at the end of the semester.

Special Needs:

Students with special needs should contact me during the first week of class. I will make every effort to accommodate the needs of students with special requirements.

Exams:

Two exams will be held during the semester, along with a non-cumulative final exam. Success on these examinations will require a thorough understanding of the

reading assignments and lectures. Exams will consist of multiple choice, short answer, and/or essay questions.

Missed Exams:

Only in extraordinary circumstances will make-up opportunities exist. Students must notify me PRIOR to the missed exam with a valid excuse and must be prepared to provide credible evidence (such as a written doctor’s note) of the excuse. Excuses for missed exams after the fact will not be allowed, resulting in a failing grade for the missed exam. It is the instructor’s sole discretion to determine whether or not an excuse is acceptable.

Make-up exams will be scheduled for the same day, time and place for everyone, most likely on the last Friday afternoon at the end of the semester. I will announce the make-up exam time in class. Students will be allowed to make-up only one (1) exam during the semester. There will be no make-up option for the final exam. Students will not be assigned an “I” (incomplete) in this course.

Academic Integrity:

All students are expected to abide by the University’s academic integrity regulations. If you are not familiar with the University’s policy, please see <http://studentconduct.uncg.edu/policy/academicintegrity/>.

General Expectations:

The instructor expects professional and courteous behavior in class. Disruptive and disrespectful behavior will not be tolerated. Students are expected to arrive to class on time. Cell phones, pagers and other noisy electronic devices should be switched off during class.

Course schedule:

Minor adjustments to the reading schedule may be made depending on how quickly material is covered. Reading assignments should be completed prior to class on the date the topic is to be covered in class (with the exception of the first day of class). Students are responsible for keeping up with any schedule adjustments that are announced in class or on Blackboard. The exam dates will not change.

*WD indicates Wilson/DiIulio text, C indicates Colbert text, and numbers refer to chapter numbers/reading selections

Aug. 26	Course introduction The Study of American Government Read: WD 1
Sept. 2 -9	The Constitution Read: WD 2, C 1
Sept. 16	Federalism Read: WD 3, C 3

- Sept. 23 American Political Culture
Read: WD 4, C 9.2 (Putnam)
- Sept. 30 **Exam I**
Public Opinion
Read: WD 7
- Oct. 7 Political Participation and Political Parties
Read: WD 8-9, C 7.1-7.4 (Key, Amy, Fiorina, Moore)
- Oct. 14 Elections and Campaigns
Read: WD 10, C 9.1 (Patterson)
- Oct. 21 Fall Break
- Oct. 28 Interest Groups and the Media
Read: WD 11-12, C 7.5 (Birnbaum) & 8
- Nov. 4 **Exam II**
Congress
Read: WD 13, C 5
- Nov. 11 Congress (cont'd) & the Presidency
Read WD 14, C 3
- Nov. 18 The Bureaucracy & The Judiciary
Read: WD 15-16, C 4 & 6.1-6.3 (Hamilton, O'Brien, *Marbury*)
- Nov. 25 Civil Liberties
Read: WD 5, C 6.4 (*Roe*)
- Dec. 2 Civil Rights
Read: WD 6
- Dec. 9 Reading Day – no class
- Dec. 16 **Final Exam**
6-8:50 pm