

Political Science 100W: American Politics

University of North Carolina at Greensboro
Department of Political Science

Section: 04

Day: Tuesday

Time: 6:00-8:50

Room: 203 Graham Building

Instructor: Dr. Thomas H. Little

Office: 411 Graham Building

Office Hours: Tuesday: 5:00- 6:00

Phone: 334-4360

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The purpose of this course is to introduce you to the people, processes and politics associated with American government. We will, of course, discuss such nuts and bolts features of government as how a bill becomes a law, the powers of the courts and the rules and laws governing elections. However, we will get beyond those things to understand not just the **what** of American politics, but also the **how** and **why**. Why does our legislative process work the way it does? Why are the courts so powerful? Why are elections run the way they are in America? How can we balance the need for security with the rights of individual citizens? How can we ensure the safety of workers without restricting economic growth?

Required Texts

We the People: An Introduction to American Politics, Shorter Sixth Edition (2007) Benjamin Ginsberg, Theodore J. Lowi and Margaret Weir (New York: Norton Press).

Student Responsibilities

Participation. Students are expected to participate in class discussions. While the class is designed in a lecture format, students will have ample opportunity to express their ideas and opinions and are strongly encouraged to do so. Class is much more interesting for the students and the instructor with active participation.

Attendance (5%). Obviously, students can only participate if they are present! Much of the exams will come from lecture so such attendance is in the academic interest of the student. It is not necessary for you to inform me that you will miss a particular class period (unless there is an exam scheduled). However, if you expect to miss more than a week of class you may wish to inform the instructor. While attendance will not be taken on a regular basis, the instructor reserves the right to take attendance at any time and adjust grades accordingly.

Papers (25%). Because this is a writing intensive class, each of you will complete an series of papers that will allow you to both improve your writing skills and explore various aspects of American government. Please submit each paper at the appropriate time in hard copy (in class) and electronically (to sllfthom@aol.com). Every assignment you submit should include your name and e-mail address. Particular paper assignments will be distributed.

Exams (30% and 40%). Your grade will be based upon three exams, each covering a separate

section of the course. The exams will be a combination of essays, short answers and definitions. The final exam will NOT be cumulative.

If you are unable to take an exam at the scheduled time, you must contact the instructor at least 24 hours before class, or within 24 hours of missing the exam. Students must present a medical excuse in order to reschedule an exam they missed and **make-up exams will be scheduled at the convenience of the instructor.**

Instructor Responsibilities

Preparation. The instructor is expected to be prepared to teach the class and to be knowledgeable regarding the subject matter to be discussed. You can expect the instructor to accurately answer questions or provide you a source for gaining the particular knowledge you seek.

Availability. The instructor is responsible to make himself available to the students in order to answer questions regarding course material or the nature of the course. The instructor should hold regular office hours and return phone calls and e-mails in a reasonable time.

Fairness. The instructor is responsible to treat the students in a fair and reasonable manner making his expectations clear and holding students to those expectations and nothing more. Students have the right to expect fair tests and grading that is reasonable and reliable.

Promptness. Students can expect the instructor to convene class on time, to return messages in a reasonable time and to return exams and assignments within a reasonable period. I will try to complete all exams within one week.

Student Evaluation

Students will be evaluated on the basis of their participation, their papers and their performance on two written exams (*) according to the following weights and the participation project:

Participation		5%
Written Assignments		30%
Midterm Exam	March 4	30%
Final Exam	May 13	40%

* I reserve the right to add extra points for attendance or [pop quizzes] if necessary.

Course Schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Reading Assignment</u>
January 15	Why Does Government Matter?	
January 22	What Do We Believe?	Chapter 1
January 29	How Did We Get Here?	Chapter 2
February 5	United States is or United States Are?	Chapter 3
February 12	You Can't Do that or can you?	Chapter 4 and 5
February 19	Do You Really Believe That?	Chapter 6
February 26	You Want to Voter for Whom?	Chapter 8
March 4	Midterm Exam	Chapters 1-6, 8
March 11	No Class- Spring Break	
March 18	Where's the Party?	Chapter 9
March 25	Can We Choose None of the Above?	Chapter 10
April 1	What Makes Your Interest So Special?	Chapter 11
April 8	Can Congress Govern?	Chapter 12
April 15	Who Is in Charge Here?	Chapter 13
April 22	Can you Stick with Red Tape?	Chapter 14
April 29	Can Justice be Blind?	Chapter 15
May 6	Conclusion	
May 13	Final Exam	Chapters 9-15

Written Assignments

Note: Each paper should be submitted in class on the due date and sent to me electronically (slfthom@aol.com). Be sure to include your name and e-mail address on hard copy.

Paper #1 Due January 22

Who is My Guy (or Gal)? The purpose of this paper is for me to evaluate your strengths as a writer. Please complete a two page (double spaced, 12 pt. font) explaining why you support one of the current candidates for President. I am not interested in intense research on this paper- just gather enough evidence and facts to make your case as why either John Edwards, Hillary Clinton or Barack Obama (on the Democratic side) or Rudy Gulliani, Mitt Romney, Mike Huckabee, John McCain or Ron Paul (on the Republican side).

Paper #2 Due February 19

Is this Any Way to Choose a President? In this paper, you will exhibit your writing and analytical skills by examining and discussing the process by which we choose a president. As you will note in your text and notes, we have a Federal system of government based on a written constitution. How does the method of choosing a president (think about the primary system and the electoral college) reflect both debates surrounding the constitution and the federal nature of our system of government. The paper (3-5 pages) should include a thorough description of how we choose a president and then an analysis of that process in light of the questions indicated above.

Paper #3 Due April 1 (no joke!)

Who is this Guy (or Gal)? This paper is a more traditional research paper. In it, you will create a thorough profile of one of the candidates for president. In that profile, you should include a discussion of his or her personal and political history, his or her key political positions and prospects in the current presidential race. You must use at least five different sources (cannot use wikipedia) and two of them must be from actual books or magazines (not internet). This paper (5-7 pages) is to be fact based with sources to support your facts.

Paper #4 Due April 29

And the Winner Is? This paper will bring it all together. Based on your research, class discussions, readings and your own observations, who do you believe will be the next President of the United States. At this point, I believe we will have a much clearer picture of the two party nominees. Your paper should include a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the candidate you believe will win as well as an understanding of the electoral and electoral college process as it is likely to influence determination of the winner. Thoroughly defend your answer with logic and facts, making a clear and cohesive case for your position.