

## **Political Science 201: American Government and Politics**

### **Course Description**

This course introduces students to the workings of American Government. We will learn not only about American political institutions, such as the presidency, Congress, and the Supreme Court, but we will also learn about how the average American participates in Government by covering topics such as voting, public opinion, and the media. We will explore why Americans seem to have increasing dissatisfaction with their government and attempt to explore the role that you as U.S. citizens and residents can take in improving democracy in America.

This course also fulfills the university's General Education Requirement (GER) and therefore seeks to impart the following objectives for a GER Social Science course: Students should be able to: 1) understand at least one of the following: human behavior, mental processes, organizational processes, or institutional processes; and, 2) understand how social scientific methods may be applied to the study of human behavior, mental processes, organizational processes, or institutional processes; and, 3) use theories or concepts of the social sciences to understand real-world problems, including the underlying origins of such problems.

### **Proposed Revision**

The proposed revision is the creation of new learning outcomes and means of assessing those outcomes to meet the new GER objectives as set forth by the CUE.

### **Enrollment for the last 5 years:**

Fall 1998	506
Spring 1999	372
Fall 1999	454
Spring 2000	544
Fall 2000	657
Spring 2001	414
Fall 2001	392
Spring 2002	384
Fall 2002	517
Spring 2003	612

**Resources Statement:** N/A

**Consultation With Other Departments:** N/A

### **GER Documentation**

*GER Category Objectives: Social Sciences*

Each course in the social science category of the General Education Requirements will provide instruction and guidance that helps students to:

1) understand at least one of the following: human behavior, mental processes, organizational processes, or institutional processes; and

*Student learning outcome:* By the end of this course, students should be able to explain how individual behaviors and political institutions interact to create political outcomes

*Means of evaluation:* Students will demonstrate their achievement of the outcome through (1) an exam question, such as: How has the recent changing emphasis of federalism affected how most Americans deal with their government? (2) an essay assignment, such as: Outline your personal political beliefs in major areas of government and public opinion. Are you liberal or conservative? Why? What aspects of the larger political environment as well as your own personal environment have helped you form these beliefs?

2) understand how social scientific methods may be applied to the study of human behavior, mental processes, organizational processes, or institutional processes; and

*Student learning outcome:* By the end of this course, students should be able to properly use and critically evaluate political science data such as election returns and/or public opinion poll results

*Means of evaluation:* Students will demonstrate their achievement of the outcome through an exam question, such as: The following are the results of a recent Gallup poll about President's Bush's job performance. What inferences can you make from these results and what conclusions should you not draw from these results? Why?

3) use theories or concepts of the social sciences to understand real-world problems, including the underlying origins of such problems.

*Student learning outcome:* By the end of this course, students should be able to analyze the actions of contemporary political actors (including ordinary citizens) using key course concepts

*Means of evaluation:* Students will demonstrate their achievement of the outcome through (1) an exam question, such as: How would you explain the reactions of the Democratic and Republican parties in Congress to President Bush's recent tax cut proposals? (2) an essay assignment such as: Choose any supreme court case that interests you. Describe the basic facts of the case and how the court decided. Why did the Justices decide the case as they did? Do you feel that the Court made a wise decision in this case? Why or why not?

## Syllabus

### Political Science 201

#### INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

Fall 2003

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Phone: 513-0520

Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday: 2:30-4; and by appointment

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#### GER Category Objectives: Social Sciences

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- 3) use theories or concepts of the social sciences to understand real-world problems, including the underlying origins of such problems.

#### Student Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students should be able to...

- \*1) Explain how individual behaviors and political institutions interact to create political outcomes

\*2) Properly use and critically evaluate political science data such as election returns and/or public opinion poll results

\*3) Analyze the actions of contemporary political actors (including ordinary citizens) using key course concepts

4) Explain and define the roles that key political actors, e.g., the president, members of Congress, Judges, the voting public, play in American democracy

5) Interpret how America's unique history, Constitutional structure, and political culture contribute to the state of contemporary American democracy

\*GER outcomes

## **Readings**

*New American Democracy (NAD) (Alternate 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition)* by Morris Fiorina and Paul Peterson

*Points of View (POV) (9<sup>th</sup> Edition)* Edited by Robert Diclerico and Allan Hammock

*The New York Times* or *The Washington Post* (both available free on-line)

*New American Democracy* will serve as the primary text for this course. The class sessions and the text are intended to complement one another. In order to get the most out of the class it is important that you do the assigned reading **prior to** the appropriate class period.

*Points of View* will serve as the basis for more in-depth discussion about contemporary political issues in your weekly discussion sections. Finally, you are required to read the *New York Times* or *Washington Post* on a **daily** basis in order to be able to apply course concepts to contemporary events in government and politics.

## **Requirements and Grading**

- Midterm Exam(25)%
- Final Exam (25%)
- Participation (15%)
- Ideological Autobiography (15%)
- Supreme Court Case (20%)

Grading will be on the following scale: A = 90-100; B = 80-89; C = 70-79; D = 60-69; F = below 60. + and – will be assigned where appropriate.

## **Participation**

Participation is expected from all students in the class. At minimum, this means good attendance. In accordance with university policy, a record of student attendance will be kept and count towards your participation grade. Students are expected to be attentive during lectures and to ask questions and contribute comments to class discussions. At the beginning of every class period, we will discuss current issues in American Government and how they apply to what we are learning. It is important that you keep abreast of these issues by reading *The New York Times* or *The Washington Post*.

## **Exams**

There will be one midterm exam and a final exam. You should be prepared to integrate material you have learned from both the lectures and the readings into your answers. The midterm will test material from the first half of the class and the final exam will test

material from the second half of the class. Exams will consist of multiple choice, short answer, and short essay questions.

### Assignments

**Ideological Autobiography.** Outline your personal political beliefs in major areas of government and public opinion. Are you liberal or conservative? Why? What aspects of the larger political environment as well as your personal environment have helped you form these beliefs? **Due September XX. 4 pages maximum.**

**Supreme Court Case.** Choose any supreme court case that interests you (except *Roe v. Wade*). Describe the basic facts of the case and how the court decided. Why did the Justices decide the case as they did? Do you feel that the Court made a wise decision in this case? Why or why not? See <http://supct.law.cornell.edu/supct/> to access Supreme Court decisions. Also see class webpage for additional information about the assignment. **Due November XX. 5 pages maximum.**

**All papers should be stapled and double-spaced. Only hardcopies will be accepted.**

### **Late Policy**

It is expected that exams will be taken and assignments turned in when they are scheduled on the syllabus. If you unable to take an exam or turn in an assignment at the assigned time for a valid reason, you **must** let the instructor know in advance in order to take a make-up exam. Failure to do so will result in a 0. Assignments will be downgraded a letter grade for each day they are late.

### **Class Website**

The class website at <http://www2.chass.ncsu.edu/shgreene/PS201> is an additional resource designed to assist you in the class. It will contain important announcements and archived lecture outlines as well as basic course information.

### **Class Email list**

On occasion, announcements will be made through email messages. The University has an official email address on file for each of you. It is your responsibility to see to it that you receive email from this account.

### **Academic Integrity**

Students are expected to complete their assignments with due regard to academic integrity. In order to do so they should familiarize themselves with the relevant sections of the student code of conduct (Sections 7-13). By signing all work submitted on paper, or by identifying themselves in work submitted electronically, students affirm that they neither gave nor received unauthorized aid. Collaboration on assignments among students may only occur when explicitly authorized by an instructor.

In particular the Department of Political Science takes plagiarism very seriously. Plagiarism is “the representation of another’s works or ideas as one’s own; it includes the unacknowledged word

for word use and/or paraphrasing of another person's work, and/or the inappropriate unacknowledged use of another person's ideas.” Students found guilty of academic misconduct will at a minimum receive a 0 for the assignment and have their conduct reported to the office of student affairs. Depending on the severity of the infraction, it is possible that you will automatically fail the course.

### Disability

Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with verifiable disabilities. In order to take advantage of available accommodations, students must register with Disability Services for Students at 1900 Student Health Center, Campus Box 7509, 515-7653

## **Research Requirement**

All PS201 students are required to become familiar with the procedures of political science research, either by participating in the *Political Science Research Subject Pool* (PSRSP) or by writing a short (3 page) paper. Either activity should require the same amount of time. (Students repeating PS201 do not have to complete the requirement a second time.) Students that fail to satisfy the research requirement will receive a grade of incomplete for the course.

### *Participation in Political Science Research*

Students choosing the PSRSP will satisfy the requirement by participating as a subject in studies totaling 4 half-hour units. A study lasting less than 30 minutes earns one credit; one that lasts 30-60 minutes earns two credits, and so forth. You must provide your name, e-mail address, and campus phone number and will be contacted (via e-mail) by researchers seeking subjects. You will receive a brief description of the study and session locations/times and may choose to accept or decline participation. *Students that agree to participate in a study but fail to show up at the appropriate time/location will be penalized one credit.* The studies will insure student anonymity and follow the guidelines of the NCSU Institutional Review Board. You may at any time withdraw from a study you find objectionable without loss of participation credit. Please report any such incident to Dr. Boettcher. At the conclusion of participation the investigator will explain the study and answer any questions. At an appropriate time during the semester the investigator will briefly present the results of the study to the entire class.

### *Report on a Research Article*

As an alternative to participating in the PSRSP you may write a paper discussing a recent article from a political science journal. You are expected to gain and demonstrate some familiarity with the methods of political science research. Select an article from the list found at <http://social.chass.ncsu.edu/boettche/articles.html>. Give the full reference for the article: name of author(s), year, title of the article, title of the journal, volume, page numbers. Then summarize the hypotheses/goals of the researcher(s), method(s) used to test the hypotheses, results of the study, and political significance/relevance of the results. The paper should be typed, double-spaced, in a 10 or 12 point font, at least three pages long, and include you name and social security number. Papers must be turned in by the 14<sup>th</sup> week of the semester. All papers are graded pass/fail. If a paper is unacceptable you will be given the reasons for its rejection and asked to make necessary revisions.

## **Schedule of Topics and Assigned Readings (Fall 2002)**

<b>August 19</b>	<b>Course Introduction</b>
<b>August 21-23</b>	<b>The Constitution</b> <i>NAD</i> , chapter 2 <i>POV</i> , chapter 2

<b>August 26-28, Sept 4</b>	<b>Political Culture and Federalism</b> <i>NAD</i> , chapters 4 & 3 <i>POV</i> , chapter 3
<b>August 30 – Sept 2</b>	<b>No Class</b>
<b>September 6-11</b>	<b>Public Opinion</b> <i>NAD</i> , chapter 5 <i>POV</i> , chapter 4 “American Public Opinion Through the Century” at <a href="http://www.gallup.com/poll/releases/pr991220.asp">http://www.gallup.com/poll/releases/pr991220.asp</a>
<b>September 13-18</b>	<b>Mass Media</b> <i>NAD</i> , chapter 9 <i>POV</i> , chapter 6 <b>Assignment 1 due September 16</b>
<b>September 20-25</b>	<b>Political Parties</b> <i>NAD</i> , chapter 8 <i>POV</i> , chapter 8
<b>September 27 – Oct 4</b>	<b>Campaigns and Elections</b> <i>NAD</i> , chapter 10-11 <i>POV</i> , chapter 7, “The Electoral College”
<b>October 7-9</b>	<b>Political Participation</b> <i>NAD</i> , chapter 6 <i>POV</i> , chapter 8
<b>October 11</b>	<b>Midterm Exam</b>
<b>October 14</b>	<b>No class: Fall Break</b>
<b>October 16-21</b>	<b>Congress</b> <i>NAD</i> , chapter 12 <i>POV</i> , chapter 10
<b>October 23-25</b>	<b>Interest Groups</b> <i>NAD</i> , chapter 7 <i>POV</i> , chapter 9
<b>October 28 – Nov 1</b>	<b>Presidency</b> <i>NAD</i> , chapter 13 <i>POV</i> , chapter 11

<b>November 4-8</b>	<b>The Judiciary</b> <i>NAD</i> , chapter 15 <i>POV</i> , chapter 14, “The Supreme Court and Judicial Review”
<b>November 11-18</b>	<b>Civil Liberties and Civil Rights</b> <i>NAD</i> , chapters 16-17 <i>POV</i> , chapter 15 <b>Assignment 2 due November 13</b>
<b>November 20-25</b>	<b>Criminal Justice: <i>Murder on a Sunday Morning</i> (Video)</b>
<b>November 27- Dec 4</b>	<b>Bureaucracy,</b> <i>NAD</i> , chapter 14 <i>POV</i> , chapter 13
<b>November 29</b>	<b>No Class: Thanksgiving Holiday</b>
<b>December 6</b>	<b>Wrap-up and Review</b>
<b>December 11, 9:00AM</b>	<b>FINAL EXAM</b> (Section 13, classes meeting at 11:20)
<b>December 16, 9:00AM</b>	<b>FINAL EXAM</b> (Section 6, classes meeting at 10:15)