

Introduction to American Government

PSPA 1010 Sec. 802: Online Course

Spring 2012

Instructor: Dr. Emily Neff-Sharum Meet: online
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Please check Blackboard and email regularly.

This course is a survey of American politics on the national level. Students will learn about core concepts and observations of political science, as well as develop the tools to become informed citizens. This course will provide an introduction to key principles developed during the constitutional founding, to how American institutions function and why their structure is important, and to the role of behavior (for both political actors and citizens) in American politics for both consuming and using information. This course is intended to provide students a broad understanding of American politics and provide the necessary preparation to excel in upper division American politics courses.

REQUIRED READING and EQUIPMENT

Harris and Harrison. 2011. *American Democracy* (condensed version of *Democracy Now*). McGraw-Hill: Dubuque, IA. ISBN: 0077532139

Note: We will be using the companion website, connect.mcgraw-hill.com. If you are buying a used book, you will need to purchase an access code on the website. If you have a new book, you should be able to find the information about registering on a card in the front of the book.

Articles as assigned in the course modules, which can be found and downloading using JSTOR. JSTOR is a journal article database available through the UNCP library. Be sure you use your Banner ID to log into the library webpage. <http://www.uncp.edu/library/electronic/title.html#j>.

Daily news access- You can get your news from newspapers, television news, radio, or internet based news. News sources must be from a credible source! Avoid overtly partisan news sources (including Fox news, MSNBC, etc.) If you have questions, please contact me.

Computer access! This course relies on Blackboard (<http://blackboard.uncp.edu/>), supplemental reading, and other web based activities. It is your responsibility to have access to updated software required for the course (i.e., be sure that you have an updated version of FLASH). You must check Blackboard regularly. All assignments, quizzes, and exams must be completed on time if it is to count for credits. Students are responsible for seeking out help if they do not understand how to use Blackboard. There is a tutorial for Blackboard at www.uncp.edu/doit. I am available to help you during my office hours.

A NOTE ABOUT ONLINE COURSES:

I will leave each chapter module up on Blackboard for roughly two weeks. You should clearly note the days that modules open and close. You can find a detailed schedule at the end of the syllabus. I will NOT reopen modules! You should expect to be checking and working with Blackboard materials at least two to three times a week. Early in the week to check on assignments and modules for the week, and begin your work, mid week to contribute to the class blogs, and late in the week to comment on other class members thoughts.

When providing responses to your peers, there are a few rules of thumb to keep in mind. First, your comments must be thoughtful and substantive. Simply posting, “I agree with James,” or “Wow! This was an interesting article,” is not enough. Additionally, you must be respectful of others on the course board. Offensive comments will be penalized. Finally, please proofread your comments. Correct grammar and spelling impacts how receptive others are to your comments.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Grades composition:

Learn Smart modules	30%
Activities and essays	30%
Discussion and homework	20%
Midterm exams	10%
Final exams	10%

Grading scale—

100-95 = A	76-73= C
94-91= A-	72-70= C-
90-88= B+	69-67= D+
87-84=B;	66-63= D
83-80=B-	62-60=D-
79-77= C+	59 and below F

Learn Smart modules-- After reading your chapter, you will have to complete the Learn Smart module for the chapter. Learn Smart is a set of quiz questions designed to measure your reading comprehension of the material and help you review the material presented in the chapter. These quizzes are found on the Connect McGraw-Hill website, which is accessed through Blackboard.

To start, you will be prompted to enter your access code the first time you try to access the Connect web tools through Blackboard. You will only be allowed a certain number of wrong answers before the quiz will shut down and ask that you go back through the reading. You will have unlimited attempts, but your grade will be an average of all attempts at a particular quiz. You can easily get a 100% of each Learn Smart module if you carefully go through the questions. If you stop a module before it is complete, you will get a partial grade.

Activities and essays— You are required to complete an activity and response essay several times throughout the term. The essays are short reflective responses that require you to connect the reading to an example of politics in action. Each assignment should be well organized, written in clear, concise prose and utilize correct spelling and grammar. **Late assignments will not be accepted.** You will find each assignment within

the bi-weekly work. For this reason, I highly recommend checking the module the first day it opens so that you may be able to plan to complete this work.

Discussion and Homework- Each student is required to make at least three quality, substantive comments to the discussion of each chapter. This means that you must say something more than, “I agree with Jenny,” or “You are right on Elliott.” You should explain why you agree, provide an example of the idea illustrated, or connect the reading to the discussion. You are expected to respect the comments and feelings of your peers. While much of the discussion may include disagreement, rather than attacking others you should provide credible evidence for your point of view or critique.

While three substantive comments are the minimum requirement, students who fully engage the discussion boards will get more out of the class than those who are minimally engaged. I encourage you to be very active on the discussion board. I do assign bonus points for students who go above the minimum requirement or for exemplary answers that make a clear and successful effort in demonstrating how the reading can provide insight to the discussion. Additionally, parts of discussion board questions can offer good indicators of what kinds of essay questions will be asked on the exam.

Finally, there will be times that I assign additional, short assignments which will be weighted as 10% of your grade for the discussion and homework component.

Midterm and Final Exam- Both exams will be short assessments of retention of core concepts. They will be composed of a multiple choice section that will be based on the Learn Smart modules and an essay component related to the discussion and activities you complete.

DISABLED STUDENTS: Any student with a documented learning, physical, chronic health, psychological, visual or hearing disability needing academic adjustments is requested to speak directly to Disability Support Services and the instructor, as early in the semester (preferably within the first week) as possible. All discussions will remain confidential. Please contact Disability Support Services, DF Lowry Building, Room 103 or call 910-521-6695.

This publication is available in alternative formats upon request. Please contact Disability Support Services, DF Lowry Building, 521-6695.

“When testing accommodations or alternative testing is needed, students are responsible for discussing this issue with the professor to make the appropriate arrangements to have the exam administered. It is the responsibility of the student to schedule exams with DSS at least one week prior to the exam date. Failure to schedule an exam one week in advance may lead to DSS denying the requested time and date for the exam.” For the Exam Proctoring Authorization Form and for more information, visit http://www.uncp.edu/dss/students/directions_for_accesing_exams_for_current_students.htm.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY: Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Any instance of academic dishonesty (plagiarism, cheating, etc.) found will result in an automatic “F”

for that assignment and notification to the Office of Student Affairs. Please do not plagiarize. I regularly catch it.

From the UNCP Student Handbook: “Plagiarism is intentionally or knowingly presenting someone else’s words or ideas as one’s own. You avoid plagiarism by very carefully acknowledging the sources of ideas you use and by appropriately indicating any material that has been quoted [or paraphrased] (that is, by using quotation marks and properly acknowledging the source of the quote, usually with a clear reference source citation and page number).” If an instance comes up where you are unsure whether or not you should cite, play it safe and cite. Visit <http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/plagiarism.html> for more information on plagiarism.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Chapter 1 Introduction (Jan 9-Jan 23)

Chapter 2 Constitution (Jan 16-Jan 30)

Chapter 3 Federalism (Jan 23-Feb 6)

Chapter 4 Civil Liberties (Jan 30-Feb 13)

Chapter 5 Civil Rights (Feb 6- Feb 20)

Chapter 9 Elections, Campaigns, and Voting (Feb 13-Feb 27)

MIDTERM EXAM Feb. 23st- March 1st. Exams must be completed before 11:59pm, March 1st. Exams will be timed.

Chapter 11 Congress (March 5-19)

Chapter 12 Presidency (March 12- 26)

Chapter 13 Bureaucracy- (March 19- April 2)

Chapter 14 Judiciary- (March 26- April 9)

Chapter 6 Political Socialization and Public Opinion (April 2-16)

Chapter 7 Interest Groups (April 9- 23)

Chapter 8 Political Parties (April 16- April 30)

FINAL EXAM April 30-May 4th. Exams must be completed before 11:59pm, May 4th. Exams will be timed.