

Introduction to American Government

PSPA 1010 Sec. 001 MWF 12:30-1:20pm Oxendine 3246
PSPA 1010 Sec. 002 MWF 1:30-2:20pm Old Main 221

Professor: **Dr. Emily A. Neff-Sharum**
Office hours: **M 2:30-5pm, W 10am- noon, or by appointment**
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This course is a survey to American politics on the national level. Students will learn about major 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

Lowi, Theodore, Benjamin Ginsberg, and Kenneth A. Sheplse. *American Government: Power and Purpose*. CORE 10th ed. New York, NY: WW Norton & Co., Inc.

Online companion reader for *American Government: Power and Purpose*.

Please note: the reading from the online reader CANNOT be printed. Please be prepared to do some reading on a computer. Instructions to access the online reader will be given the first day of the course.

Turning Point Technologies RF Response Card (aka a clicker)

Note: The purchase of a clicker is **REQUIRED** for this course. They can be purchased at the UNCP Bookstore. You are also welcome to use clickers that are borrowed or purchased used from students who took this class last semester. While the UNCP Bookstore does not buy back clickers, I use clickers my introductory classes, allowing you to advertise and resell at the end of the course.

Computer access! This course relies heavily on Blackboard (<http://blackboard.uncp.edu/>) and other web based activities. You must check Blackboard regularly. Additionally, all assignments **MUST BE TYPED** and **PRINTED OUT**. I will not accept emailed assignments. If you cannot be in class when an assignment is due, find a friend to turn it in for you.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Grades composition:

Clicker quizzes	36%	
Best four activities with essays of six)	40%	(ten percent per assignment; best four)
Midterm	12%	
Take home final	12%	

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

Clicker quizzes— You must register your clicker number with me. Students are responsible for having their clickers with them and in proper working order to participate in daily quizzes. To set your clicker to the correct frequency, be sure to press **Go- 4-1-Go** at the start of every class. Oftentimes the frequency gets reset as the clicker bounces around in backpacks or purses. These quizzes will be over the reading assigned for the day and concepts presented in previous lectures important for the lecture. Quizzes will generally be comprised of anywhere between four to six graded questions and some questions that just assign points. The **top 90%** of your answers will be included in calculating your grade. **This means that make up quizzes will not be administered for ANY reason.** On occasion, I will have opportunities to earn bonus points for your clicker score.

Activities and essays— You are required to complete four of six assigned activities.

Some essays will be written about activities completed in class (i.e. group activities or watching a film in class), while others will require completion of an online activity outside of class time. After completing the activity, you will be required to write a reflection essay. You will be given an essay question with each assignment. To do well on these assignments, you must **CAREFULLY** read the reflection questions and answer **ALL PARTS** of the essay prompt. Part of your grade will be based on content, part of your grade on organization and argumentation, part will be based upon the use of course reading and lecture in developing your essays, and part of your grade will be based on good writing mechanics (grammar, spelling, etc.) Each assignment prompt will provide more detailed information regarding grading weights.

ALL ASSIGNMENTS MUST BE TYPED with 1.5 spacing, Times New Roman, 12 point font, one inch margins! I WILL NOT ACCEPT HANDWRITTEN WORK ! Assignments should be printed out and stapled in the corner. If essays are not stapled in the corner, I reserve the right to assess a grade deduction that will become harsher with additional offenses. I will **NOT** accept emailed work without prior arrangement.

Students are encouraged to complete all six assignments. I will drop your two lowest scores in calculating this component of your grade.

Midterm and Final Exam- Both exams will be short assessments of retention of core concepts.

DISABLED STUDENTS: Any student with a documented disability needing academic adjustments is requested to speak directly to Disability Support Services (located in the D.F. Lowry Building) and the instructor, as early in the semester as possible. All discussions will remain confidential. Please contact DSS at 521-6695. The syllabus is also available in alternate formats upon request. Please call the aforementioned number if you desire this.

“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 appropriate Deans.

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.

CONDUCT EXPECTATIONS: Respect should be the dominate value observed by all in this classroom. This includes respecting others’ personal views during discussions, **being in class on time**, and engaging in active listening even if you choose not to talk on a particular day (i.e. don’t read the daily or sleep).

COURSE SCHEDULE

LSG= Lowi textbook

Online= Online reader

Blackboard= Document found on blackboard

Week 1—Fundamental Concepts in American Politics

Jan 11-- Introduction

Jan 13-- Chapter 1 LSG

Jan 15-- Online Olsen (recommended online Hardin)

Week 2—Constitutional Founding

Jan 18 — No Class--- Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

Jan 20— ACTIVITY & ESSAY #1 DUE; Chapter 2 LSG

Jan 22—Online *Federalist #10; Federalist #51*

Week 3-- Federalism

Jan 25— Chapter 3 LSG

Jan 27— Online *Federalist #47*

Jan 29— Blackboard—Debate material for federal-state conflicts on medical marijuana and physician assisted suicide

Week 4—Civil Liberties

Feb 1— ACTIVITY & ESSAY #2 DUE; Chapter 4 LSG (Civil Liberties section only)

Feb 3—In class film (Activity #2 will be about this film)

Feb 5— In class film (Activity #2 will be about this film)

Week 5—Civil Rights

Feb 8—Chapter 4 LSG (Civil Rights section only)

Feb 10—Online *Plessy v Ferguson; Brown v Board of Education*

Feb 12— ACTIVITY & ESSAY #3 DUE; Blackboard Women's Rights and Equal Pay

Week 6-- Congress

Feb 15— Chapter 5 1st half

Feb 17— Chapter 5 2nd half

Feb 19— Online Mayhew; Arnold

Week 7-- Presidency

Feb 22-- ACTIVITY & ESSAY #4 DUE; Chapter 6 LSG

Feb 24-- Online Neustadt

Feb 26-- Online Young and Perkins

Week 8-- Bureaucracy

March 1— Chapter 7 LSG

March 3 — Online McCubbins and Schwartz; Online Brehm and Gates

March 5— Midterm Exam

Week 9—SPRING BREAK—NO CLASS March 8-12th

Week 10-- Courts

March 15— Chapter 8 LSG

March 17— Online Perry

March 19— Online *Bush v Gore*

Week 11-- Elections

March 22— Chapter 10 LSG

March 24— Film in class;

March 26— Film in class and discussion connecting core concepts.

Week 12-- Elections

March 29— Online Bartels “What’s the Matter with What’s the Matter with Kansas?”

March 31— **ACTIVITY AND ESSAY #5 DUE**; Meet in computer lab for bonus point activity

April 2— **No class—Good Friday**

Week 13—Public Opinion

April 5—Online Danner

April 7—Chapter 9 LSG

April 9—In class film

Week 14—Interest Groups

April 12—Chapter 12 LSG

April 14—Online Moe; choose groups and pick topic for Friday

April 16—**Developing your own interest group activity.**

Week 15—Political Parties

April 19—Chapter 11 LSG

April 21— **ACTIVITY AND ESSAY #6 DUE**; Online Aldrich

April 23—Go to either RNC.org (Republicans), DNC.org (Democrats), GP.org (Green Party), LP.org (Libertarian Party) and look up your party’s platform

Week 16—The Media

April 26—Chapter 13 LSG

April 28—Online Kellner

April 30—**Wrap up and review.**

FINAL EXAM DUE

PSPA 1010 Sec. 001 MWF 12:30-1:20pm Wednesday, May 5th, 10:45-1:15

PSPA 1010 Sec. 002 MWF 1:30-2:20pm Friday, May 7th, 10:45-1:15