

POLS111: The American Political System

Class Location and Time: Science Center 105, T-Th 12:30 - 1:45

Section 2 (1858), Fall 2005, 3 Credit Hours

Professor James Longhurst

Email: jamesl@muskingum.edu Course website: <http://courses.muskingum.edu/>

Office phone: 826-8424 / Office: Cambridge Hall 113 / Office hours M&W 10-12, T&TH 10-11 and by appointment

Objectives and Goals:

The course catalog states that this course "introduces students to the institutions, processes, and values that constitute the American Political system. In dealing with such topics as First Amendment Rights, Congress, the Presidency, Parties and Interest Groups, Bureaucracy, and Public Policy, some time is spent in examining select aspects of the social and political background to American politics." That's a good description of the course, but it doesn't explicitly state my goals. I believe that by the time students get to the end of this course, they should be able to:

- Explain the origins of the American political system.
- Describe the various branches, components, and institutions of government.
- Identify their rights as an American citizen.
- Identify their duties and responsibilities as an active participant in their nation.
- Intelligently discuss articles from the mass media about political issues.
- Engage in debate about political issues *based on evidence and logic*.

Important Note About This Class:

Because this is a course about the sometimes-contentious topics of politics, it is very important to outline the intentions and limits of classroom debate. First, and most importantly, you should feel free to hold and defend your own political beliefs. I will never, ever tell you *what* to think, though I may tell you *how* to think (in other words, how to state and defend your beliefs with evidence and logic). This is (in general) not a class about political parties, but rather about the institutions and ideas that underlie the parties, so your party affiliation doesn't really matter here. Second, you must always remember that everyone else in the class has a right to their own beliefs; though we are encouraging debate, we want intelligent, rational debate based upon evidence. No raised voices, personal attacks, or insults of any sort will be allowed. Be aware that I will occasionally ask you to examine issues from a neutral viewpoint, or even to argue from a position opposite to your own beliefs. The goal is to cover many issues, facts, and perspectives, and not necessarily to reinforce your personal ideology.

Required Texts:

Theodore J. Lowi, Benjamin Ginsberg and Kenneth A. Shepsle, *American Government: Power and Purpose*. Core Eighth Edition 2004 Election Update. Norton, 2005. ISBN: 0393927296

David T. Canon, John J. Coleman and Kenneth R. Mayer, *The Enduring Debate: Classic and Contemporary Readings in American Politics*. Fourth Edition, Norton, 2006. ISBN: 0393926184

The book by Lowi, *American Government*, is your textbook, and I'll usually call it "your textbook" or simply "Lowi". It contains the vast majority of the information on which you will be examined in this class. You don't need to bring it to class, but you must read the assigned pages *before* you come to class. The book by Canon, *The Enduring Debate*, is a collection of short readings from many authors, past and present, and I'll generally call it "your reader". I would like you to bring this book to class with you, and also to read the assigned short pieces before you come to class in the expectation that we will be discussing them together. If you are ordering online from Amazon.com or other sources please use the "ISBN" number to make *absolutely certain* that you have the same edition as the rest of the class.

Grade Formula:

Exams (3 @ 20% each)

Projects (4 @ 5% each)

In-Class Activities (many @ 15% total **including 5% extra credit**)

Quizzes (5 @ 15% total **including 5% extra credit**)

	60%
	20%
	15%
	15%
Total	110%

Assignments:

In-class activities: You must be physically present in class to earn these points: they are un-make-up-able. Points come from various activities; most will be earned simply by participating in the activity, though some will be based on graded assignments completed in class. Regardless, 1/3 of the total points to be earned from in-class activities are EXTRA CREDIT.

Reading Quizzes: These quizzes come directly from your assigned textbook reading, and are intended to help you complete your reading assignments on time (so that you don't get behind and have to cram before exams). These quizzes are on the course Blackboard site at <http://courses.muskingum.edu>, and you can take them on your own time, on your own computer, at any time prior to class time on the Thursday for which they are due. The quizzes are timed at thirty minutes, though it will be unlikely that they take you more than ten. These brief quizzes are made up of "identification" and multiple-choice questions. 1/3 of the points are EXTRA CREDIT; in other words, get more than 2/3 of the questions right, and you'll start to earn BONUS points. Woo-hoo!

Projects: These are short writing assignments intended to allow you to demonstrate your knowledge of political systems as applied to two types of documents. You should hand in these assignments on the due date as two page papers, double spaced, with regular font size. Formal writing, grammar and spelling count on these assignments. Please attach the article or identify the reading assignment you are discussing. Even if you work with a group on these projects, your final paper must be your own work and only your own work.

Mass Media Article I and II: Find a newspaper or magazine article on any political topic (though preferably a topic you are interested in), read it, and then write a few paragraphs explaining what you think that article means *in context with your readings from the textbook*. Remember to staple two things to your completed Mass Media Article: your rough draft paragraph, (written in class the Tuesday before the due date), and a copy or original of the article itself (from a newspaper, magazine, or a web-based news source). Note: good papers will have one central "point" or "argument" or "thesis", and will use short quotations from the article to support that point. See the "Assignment Sheet" for more details.

"Reader" Assignment I and II: From the list of assigned readings from *the Enduring Debate* provided by the professor, choose one, read it, and then write a short, two-page paper answering the questions posed on the "Assignment Sheet". We will be discussing and drafting these assignments extensively in class.

Exams: There will be three exams total, made up of identification and short essay questions. Use the review sheets for assistance. The final exam will be comprehensive (covering the entire semester).

Course Policies:

Attendance: since attendance is a prerequisite of participation and crucial to your success, I will take role daily. The first three absences are "free" (in other words, without penalty); every subsequent absence will result in the loss of 1% of your final grade. Students who miss more than half of all class sessions cannot pass the course.

Late projects: One letter grade docked per 24 hours late; first 24 hours start when projects are handed in by the rest of the class.

Plagiarism means copying, without permission, the work of another and claiming it as your own. In my courses, plagiarism is specifically defined as using four or more words in a row from a source without attribution. It is fairly unlikely that there will be any plagiarism in this class since the papers are so short and focused. But you should be warned that the instructor is fearsomely web savvy and **will** find your online source if you do plagiarize. Plagiarism will, at minimum, result in an 'F' on the assignment and the reduction in your course grade by one full letter grade, e.g. a C would become a D. Egregious and/or persistent plagiarism will result in an 'F' for the course. All cases of plagiarism will be noted and reported to the Dean of Academic Affairs Office.

Makeup Exams: Exams may only be made up with a documented, excused absence. Excused absences are limited to official university activities, family emergencies, or health emergencies; in all cases documentation is required. Exams may be taken ahead of time without an excuse. Please give me at least a week's notice and we will make arrangements.

Makeup Quizzes: Since the quizzes are available to be completed online on the student's own schedule at least a week before they are due, there will be no makeup quizzes.

A note on extra credit: Note closely where I, as the instructor, am offering extra credit: on in-class activities and on textbook reading completed out of class. I'm trying to encourage two types of behavior by offering incentives to students who show up to class and participate in activities, and to students who complete their reading assignment every week before the class session. I'm offering these incentives for these behaviors because I believe that these behaviors make good students: students who will be well prepared for exams, students who won't need to "cram" because they've been keeping up with the reading every week without falling behind, and students who have completed classroom reading and are prepared to put that knowledge into action.

How to get an "A" in this course: The easiest way to get an "A" in this course is to set aside some time each and every week to read the assigned textbook pages, and take some simple notes based upon the study guides for that reading. That way, you will automatically be prepared for quizzes and classroom activities, and won't fall behind to the point that you'll need to "cram" for exams. Regular reading means you'll be more likely to get the extra credit offered as a part of reading quizzes and in-class activities, and so even if you have difficulty on the exams, you'll have the extra credit to help. Regular reading also means that you'll be more likely to come to class and participate in activities, since you'll be confident in your knowledge. Set aside some time **right now** on your weekly schedule to do the assigned readings before class. Fifteen weeks from now, you'll be glad you did.

Week 1	Tuesday August 30 Introduction: Course Policies, Grading, Goals Thursday September 1 Lowi Chapter 1, pages 1-13	<i>"What is government?"</i>
Week 2	Tuesday September 6 Lowi Chapter 1, pages 13-31; Hartz, Wood and Smith from Chapter 1 of Reader Thursday September 8 Lowi Chapter 2, 34-47 Quiz 1 Due Before Class	<i>"Why do governments do what they do?"</i> <i>"Founding a government"</i>
Week 3	Tuesday September 13 Lowi Chapter 2, 49-73 Assignment: Bring at least one mass media article to class Thursday September 15 Hamilton and Madison from Chapter 2 of Reader Due in Class: Mass Media Article I	<i>"The Constitution"</i> <i>"The Constitution"</i>
Week 4	Tuesday September 20 Lowi, Chapter 3, 76-100 Thursday September 22 Lowi, Chapter 3, 100-110; Madison and Adler from Chapter 3 of Reader Quiz 2 Due Before Class	<i>"Federalism"</i> <i>"Separation of Power"</i>
Week 5	Tuesday September 27 Lowi Chapter 4, 114-127; Pearlstein and McCarthy from Chapter 4 of Reader Thursday September 29 Lowi Chapter 4, 128-147 & 150; Lincoln and King from Chapter 4 of Reader Due in Class: Reader I	<i>"Civil Liberties"</i> <i>"Civil Rights"</i>
Week 6	Tuesday October 4 Exam 1 Thursday October 6 (Fall Break) NO CLASS	

Week 7	Tuesday October 11 Lowi Chapter 5, 158-194	<i>"Congress"</i>
	Thursday October 13 Lowi Chapter 5, 194-214; "Pig Book," Paige, and Cohn from Chapter 5 of Reader	<i>"I'm Just a Bill . . ."</i>
		Quiz 3 Due Before Class
Week 8	Tuesday October 18 Lowi Chapter 6; 220-245; Neustadt from Chapter 6 of Reader	<i>"The Rising Importance of the President"</i>
	Thursday October 20 Lowi Chapter 6, 245-267; Jones from Chapter 6 of Reader	<i>"The Presidency in Action"</i>
Week 9	Tuesday October 25 Lowi Chapter 7, 272-290; Wilson from Chapter 7 of Reader	<i>"Bureaucrats"</i>
	Thursday October 27 Lowi Chapter 7, 290-307; "9/11 Report," Pappalardo and Gorman from Chapter 7 of Reader	<i>"Controlling Bureaucrats"</i>
		Quiz 4 Due Before Class
Week 10	Tuesday November 1 Lowi Chapter 8; Scalia and Breyer from Chapter 8 of Reader	<i>"The Courts"</i>
	Thursday November 3 NO CLASS	
Week 11	Tuesday November 8 Lowi Chapter 10, 412-436; Parker and Menand from Chapter 10 of Reader	<i>"Elections"</i>
	Thursday November 10 Lowi Chapter 10, 436-457; "People . . ." and Fund from Chapter 10 from Reader	<i>"Problems with Elections"</i>
		Quiz 5 Due Before Class
Week 12	Tuesday November 15 Lowi Chapter 11, 462-476, Fiorina from Chapter 11 of Reader	<i>"Parties"</i>
	Thursday November 17 Lowi Chapter 11, 490-500; Marlantes and Fiorina from Chapter 11 of Reader	<i>"Problems with Parties"</i>
		Assignment: Bring at least one mass media article to class Due in Class: MASS MEDIA ARTICLE II
Week 13	Tuesday November 22 EXAM II	
	Thursday November 24 (Thanksgiving Break) NO CLASS	
Week 14	Tuesday November 29 Lowi Chapter 9; 364-390 & 404-408	<i>"Public Opinion"</i>
	Thursday December 1 Lowi Chapter 12, 504-514; 522-537; Tocqueville, Skocpol and Madison from chapter 12 of Reader	<i>"Interest Groups"</i>
		Due in Class: Reader II
Week 15	Tuesday December 6 Lowi Chapter 13, Bresler, Myrick and Cunningham from Chapter 9 of Reader	<i>"The Media"</i>
	Thursday December 8 Conclusion and REVIEW SESSION	

Section 2 Final Exam: Tuesday December 13 12:00PM - 03:00PM, Science Center 105