

## Introduction to American Government Sample Syllabi

### Course overview:

This course introduces students to the study of United States national government. In particular its objective is to familiarize student with the theoretical and practical workings of the United States political system. Topics discussed are analysis and appraisal of major political institutions, role of the mass media, the political economy, the United States constitution, elite and pluralist models of democracy, and the policy making process. Select case studies focusing on issues at the domestic and global level are also explored to apply concepts learned to real world and current events.

### Grades and Policies

**Evaluation:** 100 – 94 A, 93-90 A-, 89-87 B+, 86-84 B, 83-80 B-, 79-77 C+, 76-74 C, 73-70 C-, 69-67 D+, 66-64 D, 63-60 D-, 59 (and below) F

Class attendance and Participation	15%
Reading Quizzes	15%
Research Paper	20%
Midterm	25%
Final Exam	25%

**Grades:** It is a violation of FIRPA to discuss grades via email. As a result, **UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCE WILL I DISCUSS GRADES OTHER THAN BY APPOINTMENT.** All emails asking about grades will be referred to this syllabus.

Moreover, your grades are your responsibility, not mine. If you are doing poorly I am always available to help you outside of class. It is your responsibility, however, to seek help as soon as you know your grades are not as good as you would like. **DO NOT wait until the end of the semester to ask how you can improve your grade.** By that point there will be little you or I can do to help improve the situation.

**Extra credit:** I periodically offer extra credit, though this is NOT guaranteed. If you are concerned about your grade you should take these opportunities if offered. Under no circumstance will I offer extra credit at the end of the semester just for you because you are unhappy with your grade. All requests for extra credit will be referred to this syllabus.

**Make-up Policy:** I do not give make-up exams, quizzes, or assignments unless you have a verified absence by the Dean of Students. In such cases it is **your responsibility** to contact me to arrange a time to make-up the missed assignment. At my discretion make-up assignments, quizzes, and/or exams may be different than that given in class, but will be of equal difficulty level.

**Special Needs:** If you are an individual with a disability and require accommodations for this class, please notify the instructor immediately.

## STRUCTURE OF COURSE

**Course Material/Readings:** All readings will be available on the Blackboard system or through Purdue Library Electronic Resources.

### Student requirements:

1. A midterm and a final examination.
2. Research Paper. Details will be given later in the semester regarding the specific requirements of this paper, but the paper will focus on an issue/case study similar to those covered in class and will provide an analysis of the outcome of the event. The power of institutions, the role of the media and other outside actors, and how class-based issues impact the outcome will be discussed within the context of the theories discussed in class.
3. Preparation for and participation in class discussions along with periodic reading quizzes. You are expected to follow the Purdue University Class Attendance and Absence Reporting Policy, meaning that you are required to attend all lectures and events. **Absences will be excused only for documented physical or mental illness, accident, or emergency as determined by the Dean of Students. (See above regarding make-up policy for excused absences.)**

For all work, the Purdue University Student Code of Conduct is in effect. Every assignment, quiz, and exam must be your own work. Students who cheat or copy will fail the course and be turned into the Dean of Students.

**Class Format:** I will post PowerPoint slides for each lecture the day before each class. The slides will outline the important points of that day's reading. Though these slides will be utilized in class during lectures on occasion, they are also posted to help guide you through each reading. It is to your benefit to look over the slides before and during reading the assigned material. These slides are in no way meant to replace the reading, but to help you understand it.

Most classes are discussion based with little to no lecture except to explain difficult to understand concepts. Discussion is much more interesting and allows the students to shape the class around those areas that most interest them about the reading or how it applies to real world examples. This only works when students participate in discussion and have come prepared to class by reading the material. If students are consistently not prepared I will return to a lecture only format. But, trust me, you will enjoy discussions much more. So make sure to come prepared!

**Student Contributions:** Students are encouraged to send me links to articles, videos, etc. they find related to a topic discussed in class. I will incorporate it when appropriate to further keep the class engaged in material which is relevant and of interest.

**\*\*\*\*Each class meeting listed on the following Course Schedule is broken into sections separated by a solid black line. The reading listed in that section is the reading we will discuss that day. For example, on August 22 we will discuss Chapter 5 from Lindblom and Woodhouse's book *The Policy-Making Process*. Therefore, you should complete this reading before coming to class on that day.**

Note: This syllabus is a living, organic creation, and it may change over the course of the semester in response to changing classroom and campus conditions. More specifically, in the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines and grading percentages are subject to changes that may be necessitated by a revised semester calendar or other circumstances. Use the Blackboard Vista web page to keep track of the most recent version of the syllabus along with my email address [lyoungx@gmail.com](mailto:lyoungx@gmail.com) to get information.

## Democracy

- Week 1:** Dahl, Robert. 1956. *A Preface to Democratic Theory*  
Olson, Mancur. 1965. *The Logic of Collective Action*.

## Political Institutions - Congress

- Week 2:** Mayhew, David. 1974. *Congress: The Electoral Connection*  
Fenno, Richard. 1978. *Home Style*. Chapters 1-6, appendix.
- Week 3:** Fiorina, 1989. *Congress: Keystone of the Washington Establishment*

## Political Institutions - Presidency

- Week 4:** Neustadt, Richard. 1990. *Presidential Power*. Chapters 1-6.  
Howell, William G. and Terry M. Moe. 1999. "Unilateral Action and Presidential Power: A Theory." *Presidential Studies Quarterly*. 29:4 (December): 850-872

## Political Institutions – Bureaucracy

- Week 5:** Downs, Anthony. 1967. *Inside Bureaucracy*. Chapters 2, 6-11,  
James Q. Wilson. 1975. "The Rise of the Bureaucratic State." *Public Interest* 41 (Fall), p. 77 - 103.

## Political Institutions – Judicial

- Week 6:** William Landes and Richard Posner. 1975. "The Independent Judiciary in an Interest Group Perspective." *Journal of Law and Economics*. 875-901.  
Research Paper Workshop

## Political Behavior

- Week 7:** Angus Campbell, Philip Converse, Warren Miller, and Donald Stokes. 1980. *The American Voter*, Chapter 1 - 3  
Converse, Philip E.. 1964. "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics," in *Ideology and Discontent*, edited by David Apter. New York: Free Press

## Mid-Term Exam

## Decision Making

**Week 8:** Graham T. Allison. 1969. "Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis." *American Political Science Review*: 689-718.

Boustead, Greg. "Deciding How to Decide." *Seed Magazine*. March 18, 2009.

Janis, Irving. *Groupthink*. Chapters. 1

Mason, Henry L. 1988. "Implementing the Final Solution: The Ordinary Regulating of the Extraordinary," *World Politics* vol. 33, pp. 542-569.

## Public Opinion and The Media

**Week 9:** Anthony Downs. 1972. "Up and Down with Ecology: The 'Issue-Attention Cycle.'" *Public Interest* 28 (Summer), p. 38 *et seq.*

Jakobsen, Peter Viggo. 2000. "Focus on the CNN Effect Misses the Point: The Real Media Impact on Conflict Management is Indivisible and Indirect." *Journal of Peace Research* 37, 2, 131-143.

## American Foreign Policy

**Week 10:** Wildavsky, Aaron. 1966. "Two Presidencies." *Transaction*. 4: 7-14.

Knecht, Thomas and M. Stephen Weatherford. 2006. "Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: The Stages of Presidential Decision Making." *International Studies Quarterly* 50, 3, pp. 705-727.

## Rally 'round the Flag

**Week 11:** Mueller, John. 1973. *War, Presidents and Public Opinion* Chapters 1-7, 9

Young, Laura. 2013. "Unilateral Presidential Policymaking and the Impact of Crises." Forthcoming *Presidential Studies Quarterly*. (June).

## The Policymaking Process

**Week 12:** Lindblom and Woodhouse. *The Policy-Making Process*. Chapter 5, 7 & 8

## Domestic & International Case Studies

**Week 13:** Judith A. Layzer. 2002. "Market-based Solutions: Acid Rain and the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990," in Judith A. Layzer, ed. 2005. *The Environmental Case*. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Judith A. Layzer. 2002. "Love Canal: Hazardous Wastes and the Politics of Fear," in Judith A. Layzer, ed. 2005. *The Environmental Case*. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press pp. 54 – 76.

**Week 14:** Barry Rabe. "The Politics of Climate Change, State Style" *Statehouse and Greenhouse: The Emerging Politics of American Climate Change Policy*. Washington D.C., Brookings Institution Press, 2004. . **Pages 1-6; 16-29; 34-37 ONLY**

David Downie. "Global Environmental Policy: Governance Through Regimes." In Om Axelrod, Regina S., David Leonard Downie, and Norman J. Vig (eds). 2005. *The Global Environment: Institutions, Law, and Policy*. Washington D. C., CQ Press. Pp. 64-82.

Miranda Schreurs. "The Climate Change Divide: The European Union, the United States, and the Future of the Kyoto Protocol." In Norman J. Vig and Michael G. Faure. 2004. *Green Giants? Environmental Policies of the United States and the European Union*. Cambridge, MA, The MIT Press.

**Week 15: Paper Presentations & Final Exam**