

Rhode Island College
Political Science
American Government 202
Spring 2010
Professor Leazes
Tuesday, Thursday 9:30-10:50

Description

This course is an introduction to American Government for Political Science majors who are preparing for advanced, specialized courses and for other students who want a general, basic understanding of the American political system. The course is rooted in understanding basic Social Science. The course stresses theoretical perspectives, factual information and political analysis. Students are encouraged to engage in conversation about their government with the instructor and with students in the class. After all, democracy depends on the public's ability to read, think, and exchange views openly.

Readings (required for purchase)

Lowi, Ginsberg, Shepsle, Ansolabehere American Government: Power and Purpose Brief 11th Edition (New York: Norton, 2010).

Requirements:

This course is built around your political interests. The course has three basic objectives.

A. The first objective is to introduce you to the basic core knowledge necessary to understand how the American political system works. You will be tested on that core knowledge in two ways: objective tests and short test related essays. 55% of the grade comes from achieving this objective

- 1) 30% of the final grade based upon 3 (10% each) exams.
- 2) 25% of the final grade based upon a comprehensive final examination.

NOTE: THERE ARE NO MAKE-UP EXAMS UNLESS YOU HAVE A NOTE FROM A PHYSICIAN STATING THAT YOU WERE ILL OR A NOTE FROM A DEAN

B. The second objective is to learn the ways to interact with the American political system. You will be asked to undertake a series of assignments designed to allow you to do so and to demonstrate that you understand the basic ways that citizens can interact with the American political system. To achieve this objective you have to identify an interest of yours. It could be professional for example what do you expect to be doing for work after graduating; or it might be more personal now such as an organization that you belong to. To test your awareness of the ways you can interact with government you must submit the following **on the date that it is due**. You will be asked throughout the semester to use the same interest you identified at the outset of the semester. Each assignment is worth 5 points for a total of 30% of the course Grade.

Assignment 1 Understanding Federalism: Find a federal Grant (Go to the Catalogue of Federal Domestic Assistance or Grants.gov) that might financially assist your

professional or your personal interest. Copy the page(s) that describes the grant program. Write a brief (1 paragraph—minimum 4 sentences) narrative explaining why this program would be of assistance to your profession or personal interest. Grade assigned by: timeliness; appropriateness of grant; Paragraph description.

Assignment 2 **A.** Review the list of Bill of Rights (amendments 1-8). For each liberty write a brief statement (1 sentence) how that liberty specifically has been important to you, or, how specifically you have seen it in action. If not, write: Have not needed it and then submit a newspaper clipping associated with the amendment you have not personally seen in action. **B.** Similarly: Make a list of the specific impact of Civil Rights legislation (See list in text book) on you or on a close friend or family. If not, write: Have not needed it and then submit a newspaper clipping associated with the amendment you have not personally seen in action. Grade Assignment: Timeliness; completeness; appropriateness of example

Assignment 3 Find a Senate Committee and House Committee and one subcommittee of each that has jurisdiction in your area of professional or personal interest. Go to that Committee/subcommittees web page and write a brief description (no more than 2 sentences) of their jurisdiction. Go see if there is any bill in Congress that addresses some aspect of your area of interest. Write a brief description (no more than two sentences) concerning your professional or personal interest and what the Committee is doing in that area. Grade assignment: timeliness; committee/subcommittee appropriateness; congressional action

Assignment 4 Email President Obama a question related to your interest, copy it and submit it to me. Find the Federal Agency that is responsible for implementation of the grant you discovered in Assignment 1. Copy its front page and write a 1 paragraph description summarizing the responsibility of that agency. Grade assignment: timeliness; copy of question for the President; federal agency front page and description.

Assignment 5 Go to the Web site of an interest group that would represent the professional or personal interests that you have. Copy the front page and write a 1 paragraph narrative that describes what you have to do to join; and what political issues they are involved in. Grade assignment: timeliness; appropriateness of interest group; paragraph description.

Assignment 6 Very briefly answer the following questions: In what state are you registered to vote. If not registered in what state will you register? Did you vote in the last presidential election? If no, why? Did your congressional District vote for Senator McCain or President Obama?; Did your state vote for Senator McCain or President Obama?; Who is your Congressperson and the two Senators from your state? What Political Party do they belong to? Grade assignment: timeliness, complete answers to all questions

C. The third objective is to ensure that you demonstrate a commitment to your education by being actively engaged in the class. There will be in-class activities to demonstrate this commitment. (15% of grade)

1. Article Summary (2.5%)

2. Submit Federalist Paper #10 assignment (2.5%)

3. I reserve (10%) of the grade for my general assessment about how seriously you take your role a student. I measure that seriousness by a) your record of class attendance b) participation in class; c) the submission of all assignments on the day they are due.

Schedule

The following dates and topics are an approximate guide to what we will be doing during the semester. Assigned readings should be done prior to the class period in which the topic will be discussed.

1/26/10 Organization Session

1/28/10 Government and Politics: What Are They?
Lowi Chapter 1

THEORY AND STRUCTURE

2/02/10 Founding Principles
Lowi: Chapter 1
Handout Readings: Summary Article Due (C-1)

2/04/10 The Constitution: History
Lowi: Chapter 2

2/09/10 The Constitution: Framework
Lowi: Chapter 2 continued
Federalist #10 Assignment Due: C-2

2/11/10 The Constitution: Ratification and Federalism
Lowi Chapter 3

2/16/10 Federalism continued
Lowi Chapter 3 continued
B-1 Federalism Assignment is DUE.

2/18/10 Civil Liberties
Lowi: Chapter 4
B-2-A Civil Liberties Assignment Due

2/23/10 Civil Rights
Lowi: Chapter 4
B-2-B Civil Rights Assignment Due

- 2/25/10 Review Civil Liberties/Civil Rights
- 3/02/10 "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington"
- 3/04/10 "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington"/Discussion

3/09/10 **EXAMINATION**

INSTITUTIONS

- 3/11/10 Congress: Representation and Functions
Lowi: Chapter 5
- 3/23/10 Congress: Structure and Decision Making
Lowi: Chapter 5
Assignment B-3 is Due
- 3/25/10 The Executive Branch: Presidency
Lowi: Chapter 6
- 3/30/10 The Executive Branch: Presidency
Lowi: Chapter 6
- 4/01/10 The Executive Branch: Bureaucracy
Lowi Chapter 7
Assignment B-4 is DUE
- 4/06/10 The Federal Courts
Lowi Chapter 8
In Class Simulation
- 4/08/10 The Federal Courts
In class Simulation complete

4/13/10 **EXAMINATION**

PARTICIPATION

- 4/15/10 Interest Groups
Lowi: Chapter 12
B-5 Assignment Due
- 4/20/10 Media and Opinion
Lowie Chapter 9

4/22/10	Media and Opinion Continued Chapter 9
4/27/10	Parties, Voting and Elections Lowi :Chapter 10 Assignment B-6 Due
4/29/10	Parties, Voting and Elections (Continued) Lowi Chapter 11
5/04/10	EXAMINATION
5/06/10	Final Exam Review