

POSC109 THE AMERICAN POLITICAL SYSTEM

Fall Semester 2009
TTh 10:00-11:15am
Guilford House 323

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Office Hours: Wednesday 2:00-4:00pm, or by appointment

Course Website: <http://politicalscience.case.edu/faculty/beckwith/kb109.htm>

COURSE OUTLINE AND REQUIREMENTS

POSC109, The American Political System, is an introduction to the US political system, with a focus on national governing institutions, constitutional constraints, and the impacts of mass participation and electoral democracy. The course focuses on the political and economic development and national construction of the United States. In so doing, this course considers fundamental national values such as liberty, equality, racism, and democracy, in terms of the impact of these values upon the construction of the nation and of their negotiation in practice across two centuries.

The course is divided into three major sections. The first focuses on civil society and the state, the mechanisms of national government elaborated in the Constitution, and their relationship to the economic system. In the second section of the course, we examine the relationship between state and citizen, and the ways in which political power achieves expression in a democratic state. We will consider public opinion, the role of the media, the formation of interest groups and political parties, and the means by which citizens organize to have an influence on governing officials. The third section of the course is devoted to an investigation of the three major branches of national government: the Congress, the Presidency, and the federal court system. The course concludes with a consideration of governance and democracy in contemporary U.S. politics.

Evaluation of student performance in this course will be based on the following criteria. First, students will complete two in-class examinations, each of which accounts for 25 percent of the final grade. Second, students will complete a final examination, which accounts for 40 percent of the final course grade.

Finally, each student is expected to attend class and to be prepared for each class meeting by having read, in advance, the materials assigned for that day. Students should be prepared to discuss the material in detail in class every day. All students are expected to participate and to present themselves in class in a professional manner. Professionalism refers to adherence to standards of behavior and performance expected from political scientists. This includes, but is not limited to, courteous behavior in class; attention to other speakers; engagement with the work at hand; and, of course, adherence to university standards of academic integrity. Students are expected, and obliged, to comport themselves, in class, in a professional manner. Informed class participation and professionalism are requirements of the course, and account for the remaining 10 percent of the final course grade.

Due dates for examinations are indicated in the reading schedule, below. Please note that students are expected to be present in class for all scheduled exams, including the final examination.

Books required for this course are listed below and are available for purchase in the University Bookstore:

Larry Bartels, *Unequal Democracy*
Robert Dahl, *How Democratic Is the American Constitution?*
Theodore Lowi, Benjamin Ginsberg, and Kenneth Shepsle,
American Government: Power and Purpose (core 10th ed., 2008 Election Update)
David M. O'Brien, *Storm Center: The Supreme Court in American Politics*(8th ed.)

Additional readings are available through electronic journals or JSTOR, through the Kelvin Smith Library website, or on the course webpage at <http://politicalscience.case.edu/faculty/beckwith/kb109.htm>. Each student should print a hardcopy of every additional assigned reading for his or her own research purposes. Please note that this is a requirement of the course.

Students are encouraged to read the *New York Times* daily, either as hard copy or online. Copies of the *Times* are available on campus and in the University Bookstore.

Standards of professionalism and academic integrity are integral components of this course. Students are reminded that they are obliged to understand, to uphold, and to comply with the Academic Integrity Policy of the University. A copy of the Code may be found online at

<http://www.case.edu/provost/ugstudies/acintegrity.htm>

Students who do not understand this Policy after having read it should make an appointment to see me to discuss it; indeed, I welcome this discussion and encourage students to see me in advance of any assignment about which they have doubts or questions. It is a course requirement that students read the University's Academic Integrity Policy.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

August 25 **Introduction to the Course**

August 27 **Civil Society and the State**

READ: Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*, Chapter 1 and the *Constitution of the United States*; Dahl, *How Democratic Is the American Constitution?*, Chapter 1, pp. 2-10.

September 1 **Liberty, Equality, and the Political Construction of State Institutions**

READ: Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*, Chapter 2; Dahl, *How Democratic Is the American Constitution?*, Chapter 2

September 3 READ: Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*, Chapter 3; Dahl, *How Democratic Is the American Constitution?*, Chapter 3

NOTE: NO CLASS MEETING TODAY; PROFESSOR BECKWITH WILL BE ATTENDING THE AMERICAN POLITICAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION MEETINGS.

September 8 READ: Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*, Chapter 4

September 10 READ: James Madison, Federalist Paper #10, in Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*

REVIEW: *The Constitution of the United States*

September 15 DISCUSSION

September 17 **Democracy and Political Participation**

READ: Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*, Chapter 9

September 22 READ: John Gaventa, *Power and Powerlessness*, Chapter 1 [available on course webpage at www.case.edu/artsci/posc/kb109.htm]

September 24 READ: John Mueller, "Democracy and Ralph's Pretty Good Grocery," *American Journal of Political Science*, 36 (4), November 1992: 983-1003 [available on line at JSTOR]

REVIEW: James Madison, Federalist Paper #10, in Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*

September 29 READ: Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*, Chapter 12

October 1 FIRST EXAMINATION

October 6 READ: Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*, Chapter 9

October 8 READ: Bartels, *Unequal Democracy*, Chapters 1 and 2

October 13 READ: Bartels, *Unequal Democracy*, Chapters 3 and 4

October 15 READ: Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*, Chapter 10; Bartels, *Unequal Democracy*, Chapter 5

October 20 FALL BREAK

October 22 **Political Parties and Elections**

READ: Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*, Chapter 11

October 27 READ: Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*, Chapter 10

October 29 REVIEW: Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*, Chapter 12

November 3 READ: Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*, Chapter 13

November 5 SECOND EXAMINATION

November 10 **Congress: Legislating, Representing, Deliberating**

READ: Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*, Chapter 5

REVIEW: *The Constitution of the United States*

November 12 READ: Bartels, *Unequal Democracy*, Chapters 6 and 7

November 17 **The Presidency and Executive Powers**

READ: Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*, Chapter 6; Dahl, *How Democratic Is the American Constitution?*, Chapter 4

REVIEW: *The Constitution of the United States*

November 19 READ: David P. Auerswald and Peter F. Cowhey, "Ballotbox Diplomacy: The War Powers Resolution and the Use of Force," *International Studies Quarterly*, 41 (3), September 1997 [available through JSTOR]; and *The War Powers Resolution of 1973* [available at <http://usinfo.state.gov/usa/infousa/laws/majorlaw/warpower.htm>]; and *Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002* [available at <http://www.thomas.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?c107:5:./temp/~c107SGto5n:>]

November 24 **The Supreme Court and the Federal Court System**

READ: Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*, Chapter 8

REVIEW: Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, *American Government*, Chapter 4

November 26 THANKSGIVING BREAK

December 1 **The Supreme Court and the Federal Court System**

READ: O'Brien, *Storm Center*, Chapters 1, 4, and 5

December 3 READ: **How Democratic Is the US Political System?**

READ: Dahl, *How Democratic Is the American Constitution?*, Chapters 5, 6, and 7

FINAL EXAMINATION ON TUESDAY, DECEMBER 15, 12:30-3:30PM