

POLI 2051-1 American Government

Professor Christopher Kenny

Spring 2014 T/Th 10:30-11:50; 5 Lockett

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Office Hours: 9:00-10:20 T/Th and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to acquaint you with the fundamentals of American government and politics; to improve your skills in evaluating and analyzing issues in American politics. The class will be organized into three main sections. The first describes the foundations of our American system including the constitution, federalism (briefly), and questions concerning the democratic nature of our government (civil rights and liberties). The second section examines political participation and the role that parties, elections, interest groups, and the media play in the political process. In this section we will be addressing several goals for general education courses including but not limited to the nature of the human person when we discuss how individuals come to hold certain beliefs and attitudes, and approaches to social analysis when we discuss how public opinion is measured using examples from our in-class survey. The third section covers the American political institutions (the congress, presidency, judiciary, and bureaucracy) and takes a look at how the game of politics is really played. In this section we will again address certain general education goals including the patterns by which societies organize how people relate not only to each other but to the world around them when we discuss the institutions of government. Reading the book *Hardball* will also help provide us with the ability to deal with moral and ethical issues.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Three tests will be given in this class. Each is worth 100 points. The dates are listed in the Class Schedule and Reading Assignments section of this syllabus. All reading materials and lectures are fair game. In addition, there will be a quiz given one week before each test (total of three). You will be allowed to drop your lowest quiz score. The remaining two will be worth 50 points each. Quizzes will cover material from the readings only. The format of the exams and quizzes will be discussed prior to the first test. All makeups will be given the second hour of the final exam. Your grade will be determined as follows:

360 - 400 (90%)	A
320 - 359 (80%)	B
270 - 319 (67.5%)	C
230 - 269 (57.5%)	D
below 230	F

Class attendance is expected. It is quite possible that the lectures will contain material not found in either of the books, and that not all of the reading material will be covered in lectures. In addition, attending class can earn you bonus points. On random days throughout the semester you will be asked to give your opinion on various controversies in American politics. These "attendance checks" are worth 1 point each and can be added directly to your total. It is therefore in your interest to attend class as often as possible.

TEXTBOOKS

Required texts for this class: *The Struggle for Democracy 2012 Election ed.* by Greenberg and Page.
Hardball by Christopher Matthews.

CLASS SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

Week	Topic	Reading Assignment
1/16	Course Overview	
1/21-1/23	Introduction Last day to drop w/o W (1/24) Final add date (1/27)	Chapter 1
1/28-1/30	The Constitution	Chapter 2 Constitution (MPSL) Federalist #10, #51 (MPSL) Declaration of Independence (MPSL)
2/4-2/6	Federalism, Civil Liberties	Chapters 3,15
2/11	<u>Quiz#1 over Chapters 1-3,15,16</u>	
2/13	Civil Rights	Chapter 16
EXAM #1 Tuesday, February 18 IN CLASS		
2/20	Public Opinion	Chapter 5
2/25-2/27	Public Opinion/New Media	Chapters 5,6
3/4-3/6	MARDI GRAS/Interest Groups	Chapter 7
3/11-3/13	Interest Groups/Political Parties	Chapters 7,9
3/18	Political Parties/Elections	Chapters 9,10
3/20	<u>Quiz#2 over Chapters 5-7,9,10</u>	
3/25	Elections	Chapter 10
EXAM #2 Thursday, March 27 IN CLASS		
3/27-4/1	The Congress	Chapter 11
4/8-4/10	Presidency	Chapter 12
4/15-4/17	SPRING BREAK	
4/22-4/24	The Bureaucracy/The Courts	Chapters 13,14
4/29	<u>Quiz#2 over Chapters 11-14</u>	
5/1	Hardball	Hardball

EXAM #3 Tuesday, May 6 7:30-9:30 AM

Note: All readings (except Hardball) are from Greenberg and Page. (MPSL) means the reading is found in the My PoliSci Lab that accompanies the text.