

American Politics: Honors
POS 2041
Fall 2007

Dr. Jocelyn Jones Evans
Office Hours: TR 12:30-2:30
W 3:00-5:00
and by appointment

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Course Description

This course is designed to introduce you to the world of American politics. Throughout the semester, we will examine the institutions and political processes of American national government. We will review the Constitution, the ideological and cultural bases of American politics, the role of political parties, elections and interest groups, and the policy-making processes in the Congress, the presidency and courts. But why study old, dusty documents and the intricacies of a complex political system? We live in a unique governmental system that grants us the opportunity to affect change in the world around us. We each have many civil rights and liberties that allow us to express ourselves without fear of oppression. We each take for granted many services that allow us to live productive, healthy lives. This class will open our eyes to the role of government and politics in society today and give us a clearer understanding of the ways in which politics shapes each of our lives in clear and meaningful ways.

Student Objectives

The specific objectives for students of this course are four-fold. First, will learn how the institutions and processes of their government operate. Secondly, they will think critically about politics and the impacts of political decision-making. Third, they will understand firsthand our political system's development through an analysis of historical primary documents. Finally, it is my hope that this class will spark an enduring appreciation of and interest in the political system that extends way beyond this semester.

Required Texts

Americans Governing. 2006-2007. Soomo Publishing. (<http://americansgoverning.org/>)

Additional readings available through elearning course page.

Grading Policy

Your grade will be based on two exams given during the semester, a paper, and a series of online assignments to be completed before the classes listed in the course schedule. The dates for the exams are listed on the syllabus. Except under extreme emergencies, the student wishing a make-up exam must call or stop by my office, in advance, to provide the reason for not taking the exam at the scheduled time. The student is not guaranteed the opportunity to make up the exam. The decision is up to the instructor. No one may take the final exam early. The weights for each exam and assignment are listed below.

Grading Scheme					
Midterm Exam	25%	A	93-100%	C	73-76%
Final Exam	30%	A-	90-92%	C-	70-72%
Paper	20%	B+	87-89%	D+	66-69%
AG Assignments	25%	B	83-86%	D-	60-65%
		B-	80-82%	F	0-59%
		C+	77-79%		

Tentative Course Schedule

Date	Topic	Assignment
8/28	Handout Syllabus	Set up an account with soomo.org And work through Preamble to Constitution
8/30	No Class	Degrees of Democracy David Gilbert
9/4	The Roots of Democracy	Where is the Love? Let's Put Politics Behind Us...
9/6	The Constitution – Historical Development	Right to Revolution Federalist 10 Federal Farmer Declaration of Independence
9/11	The Constitution – Historical Development	The U.S. Constitution Constitution Timeline
9/13	The Constitution – Principles / Amendment	Government's in the Late 20 th Century Can It Happen in Iraq?
9/18	Federalism – Structure and evolution	American Federalism: 1776 – 1997 Hammer v. Dagenhart U.S. v. Darby U.S. v. Lopez Governor Barnett Goes Up Against JFK
9/20	Civil Liberties – The Bill of Rights	Roe v. Wade Federalist 84 Brutus on the Lack of a Bill of Rights
9/25	Civil Liberties – Modern Questions	Bioterrorism and Civil Liberties Bong Hits for Jesus
9/27	Civil Rights – Suffrage	Iron Jawed Angels Brown v. Board Letter from a Birmingham Jail I Have a Dream
10/2	Civil Rights Movement(s)	Geography of a Movement John Lewis
10/4	Congress – Constitutional Framework	Federalist 63 Annotated Constitution Learn About Congress
10/9	Congress – Organization and Function	The Legislative Process How Members Vote
10/11	Midterm Exam	
10/16	Presidency – Constitutional Framework	Federalist 51 Federalist 70, 71, 73 U.S. v. Nixon
10/18	Presidency – Public Opinion and Policymaking	Presidential Tapes War Powers Resolution Force in Iraq
10/23	Budgeting/ Bureaucracy	Borg: Enemy or Us? Rendezvous with Destiny
10/25	Judiciary – Constitutional Framework	The Power of the Judiciary Federalist 78 U.S. Federal Courts Structure
10/30	Judicial Appointments, Decision-Making,	Brennan and Bork Interpreting the

	and Policy	Constitution How They Rule
11/1	Political Socialization / News Media	Howard Dean Street Fight
11/6	Political Parties – Structure	The Party People
11/8	Political Parties – Role	2004 Party Platforms
11/13	Elections – Constitutional Design	How Did George W. Bush Beat Al Gore? Elizabeth the Elector
11/15	Elections – Campaign Finance	Brandon Brown – Running for Congress Campaign Commercials
11/20	Voting	Hip Hop Dreams Printergate Got Religion?
11/22	No Class – Thanksgiving Break	
11/27	Interest Groups	Sandra Froman Profile Lobbyist for a Day
11/29	Public Policy Papers Due	Is Spreading Democracy Our Duty? Budget Simulation How Welfare Reform Changed America
12/4	The Future of Democracy	One State, Two State, Red State, Blue State Is Knowledge Power?
12/6	Discuss Papers and Review for Final	
12/11	Final Exam	11:00-1:30

Online Assignments

As part of your grade, you will be required to complete assignments using the resources provided by Soomo Publishing. The URL for our course material is: <http://americansgoverning.org/>. You will need to go to the site, sign up as a new student, and choose the course associated with **POS 2041**. Your performance on the assignments will be averaged, and the sum of these assignments will be worth 25% of your final grade.

Paper Details

For the paper you are required to compare contemporary politics with the original vision of the framers of the Constitution using the primary documents assigned in class. The area of focus is completely up to you. The paper should be 10-12 pages in length (double-spaced) and should outline the following: the relevant fundamental principle of democracy at play in the original structuring of the institution, the subsequent evolution of the institution, the contemporary scene defining the institution, specific points of difference between the original vision and the current context, and the implications of these differences for democratic government. I am looking for you to incorporate the text material, lecture material, online resource material (if appropriate), and personal experience. You should cite at least 5 primary sources, and at least 5 scholarly sources in evaluating the evolution of debate concerning the original idea, principle, or concept. You will be graded on substance, style, and form.

Expectations for Academic Conduct/ Plagiarism Policy:

As members of the University of West Florida, we commit ourselves to honesty. As we strive for excellence in performance, integrity – personal and institutional – is our most precious asset. Honesty in our academic work is vital, and we will not knowingly act in ways which erode that integrity. Accordingly, we pledge not to cheat, not to tolerate cheating, nor to plagiarize the work of others. We pledge to share community resources in ways that are responsible and that comply with established policies of fairness. Cooperation and competition are means to high achievement and are encouraged. Indeed, cooperation is expected unless our directive is to individual performance. We will compete

constructively and professionally for the purpose of stimulating high performance standards. Finally, we accept adherence to this set of expectations for academic conduct as a condition of membership in the UWF academic community.

Assistance:

Students with special needs who require specific examination-related or other course-related accommodations should contact Barbara Fitzpatrick, Director of Disabled Student Services (DSS), dss@uwf.edu, (850) 474-2387. DSS will provide the student with a letter for the instructor that will specify any recommended accommodations.

Student Conduct in the Classroom:

Classroom disruption will not be tolerated. The professor reserves the right to dismiss any student for disruptive behavior. According to the Office of Student Affairs, this includes, “behavior a reasonable person would view as substantially or repeatedly interfering with the conduct of a class.”