

POS 110
Dr. Lamkin
Spring 2009

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“If a nation expects to be ignorant and free in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be.” Thomas Jefferson

"It may be that as a free society as we have known it carries in itself the forces of its own destruction, that once freedom has been achieved it is taken for granted and ceases to be valued, and that the free growth of ideas which is the essence of a free society will bring about the destruction of the foundations on which it depends."

Friedrich Hayek

Course Objectives:

This semester we will have three primary objectives. First, an attempt will be made to familiarize each student with the unique constitutional framework of American government. We will learn how the constitutional principles of federalism, separation of power and checks and balances establish the ground rules for governmental decision making and political competition and conflict that all political decision making inevitably creates. We will also attempt to develop a clearer understanding of the historical evolution of our constitutional guarantees of individual freedoms. Secondly, we will examine the institutions of national government. We will learn how decision-making power is distributed between the Congress, President, and the Courts. Finally, we will analyze the influence of individuals, interest groups and political parties in American politics. We will examine the relationship between public opinion and the “politics” of governmental decision making. We will learn more about interest groups and their influence on all aspects of political decision making. Finally, we will attempt to understand the role of political parties in national elections.

Required Text:

American Government: Brief Version, James Q. Wilson

Office Hours: GCC: M,W,F 9-10, T,R 10-11 or by appointment

Course and Grading Policies:

It has been my experience teaching this class at the University of Toronto, Arizona State and GCC that those students who don't have the time to **regularly** attend class and to complete the assigned reading rarely pass. Unless you already know much more than the average citizen about American government and politics, this class will require a **sustained commitment** of **time** and **effort**. Be honest with yourself, if because of work and social obligations, you do not have the time to attend class and to complete

about a chapter of challenging reading a week, this may not be the class for you.

I will take attendance as required by the State of Arizona for the first 45 days of the semester. Anyone missing more than 3 classes without notifying me of your desire to remain in the class will be dropped by the 45th day. After the 45th day I will stop taking attendance and if it is your desire to drop the class **you** must take the initiative.

It will be possible to earn up to 450 points this semester. There will be four unit take home quizzes worth 25 points each. There will be three unit exams worth 50 points each. You will be required to write two short essays worth 50 points each. The final unit #4 exam will be embedded within a 100 point final exam. Grades will be determined as follows. It will take at least 382.5 points to earn an A (85%), it will take at least 326 points to earn a B (72.5%), it will take at least 270 points to earn a C (60%), and it will take at least 225 points to earn a D (50%).

I do not give make exams!! If you cannot take an exam for any reason, you must notify me prior to the exam. (You have both my phone number and my email address.) If you notify me ahead of time, we will attempt to reschedule your exam. If this proves to be impossible, you will be allowed to take the next exam for double points. When you fail to notify me ahead of time, you will take the next unit exam for double points minus 10.

At the start of each unit you will receive 50 multiple choice questions based upon the assigned reading. You can treat this as an open-book take-home quiz, completing the questions as you complete the assigned reading. Each homework assignment is due the day of the corresponding unit exam. Your answers are to be handed in on a properly filled out **scantron** sheet. Any homework which is handed in late will be assessed a 5-pt penalty. No late homework will be accepted after I return the graded assignment. **You are not to work with anyone else on the homework! When students hand in the same work both will earn a zero for that assignment.**

Spring Reading Assignments and Exam Schedule:

Unit 1 Reading Assignment: Chapters 2 and 5
February 13: Unit Exam (Homework #1)

Unit 2 Reading Assignment Chapters 6 and 7
March 13: Unit Exam (Homework #2)

Unit 3 Reading Assignment: Chapters 9 and 13
April 4: Unit Exam (Homework #3)

Unit 4 Reading Assignment Chapters 10 and 14
May 7: Unit Exam and Final Exam combo (Homework #4)