

## Government of the United States

Political Science 1041, CRN:83637

Fall 2008

(T R: 12:30-1:50 pm at General Classroom 118)

Instructor: Dukhong Kim

Office Hours: T R: 2:20-3:20

or by appointment

### Contact Information

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### Course Description

The goals of this course are to gain a clear idea of how the American political system - as a democratic government - was created and reformed, to understand how it works, and to evaluate whether it lives up to the standards of a democracy. To achieve these goals, we will explore the theories of democracy and government which provided a basis for the construction of the American political system; examine how the system originated and has been maintained through the interaction between major actors in the political arena; and study the role and function of the major political institutions, both formal (i.e., Congress, the Presidency, the Courts) and informal (e.g., public opinion, the mass media, and interest groups).

In surveying the American political system, we focus on theoretical concepts and frameworks which provide criteria for the evaluation of the system. We will analyze *why* and *how* political actors (both elites and the public) create and change political institutions and rules over the years. Specifically, we want to address the following questions: Why was the Constitution created as it was? How has it changed? How are individuals' rights protected and expanded? How do local, state, and national governments interact under federalism? How does public opinion influence decision making? Are American citizens capable of making reasonable choices in elections and informed opinions on policies? How do interest groups and the mass media mediate citizens' choices and opinions? How do political parties attempt to mobilize and organize citizens to gain political power? How do the President, Congress, and the Supreme Court make policies and interact with each other? And how do international politics affect the American political system?

**Teaching format:** The class will be a combination of lecture and discussion. I will lecture based on the text book, covering the main points of the chapters and providing illustrations from the readings or current news sources. To encourage discussion, I will regularly ask questions of the class. Students are strongly encouraged to bring their own questions, comments, and ideas to participate in the discussion.

**Evaluation:** Grades will be determined as follows.

1. Midterm exam (25%)

2. Final exam (35%)
3. Essays (25%)
4. Participation (15%)

**Exams:** There will be two exams - midterm and final. Both exams will include short identification and multiple choice questions. The final will be cumulative, but will be weighted toward the topics covered after the midterm. The questions will be drawn from the text book and the readings.

**Essays:** Each student must write two short essays on the questions that are listed below after they read the relevant texts. The length of the essays should be 4-5 pages double spaced with 12 font size and one-inch margins (maximum length is 5 pages). The essays need to address the questions directly with coherent arguments and evidence to support your main thesis. The due dates of the essays are Sept. 16 and Nov. 6. Students should submit a hard copy of the essay to the instructor by the end of the class on the due date. Students are encouraged to use the essay materials for discussions or presentations.

**Discussion:** I believe in the exchange of ideas, discussions, and debates as important tools for learning about American politics. Thus, it is important to engage in constructive debates in the class as well as to make good comments on the subjects and issues. It is necessary to read the text and the other books in advance to prepare and participate in the discussions.

**Attendance and presentation:** As there will be no separate discussion sessions it is strongly recommended to attend the class. You can use up to 3 exemptions not to lose points for missing the class. For medical or non-medical emergencies, you need to submit to me or my TA proof of such events (e.g., doctor's note). There will be two times of presenting the materials on the 2 books. The format of presentation will be discussed more later.

**Note:** Students should turn off their cell phones before class, and should refrain from surfing the internet or responding to email or IM during class.

**Newspapers:** I strongly recommend that you to read newspapers (e.g., *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, or *The Washington Post* ) to keep up with current domestic and international affairs and to bring comments to discuss in the class .

**Grading standard:** Letter grades will be assigned according to the following scoring scheme.  
A range: 90-100% ;B range: 80-89%;C range: 70-79%; D range: 60-69%; F range: below 60%

**Note:** If an emergency arises during the semester that makes fulfillment of class requirements difficult, please discuss the situation with me as early as possible, so we can discuss how to resolve the problem and maintain your good standing. Also if you need special assistance, you need to inform me on the first day of class.

**Academic honesty:** Students should follow the University regulations regarding academic integrity which are laid out in the *Student Honor Code*. Students are strongly advised to read and familiarize themselves with these regulations. If students violate standards of academic honesty -i.e., by cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, or academic interference- they will get a failing grade for the class and may face expulsion from the University.

### Required Texts:

1. Janda, Kenneth, Jeffrey M. Berry, and Jerry Goldman. 2007. *The Challenge of Democracy* 9th edition. New York: Houghton Mifflin. <sup>1</sup>
2. Ellis, Joseph J. 2000. *Founding Brothers*. New York: Vintage Books. <sup>2</sup>
3. Wattenberg, Martin P. 2007. *Is Voting for Young People?*. New York: Pearson Longman.

COD below refers to *The Challenge of Democracy* and BB to Blackboard.

### Reading schedule<sup>3</sup>

Week 1 (Aug. 26/28): Introduction and Theory of Democracy

Reading assignment: COD ch. 1

Week 2 (Sept 2/4): Theory of Democracy (cont'd) and the Constitution

Reading assignment: COD ch.2 and 3

Week 3 (Sept 9/11): Federalism and Public opinion

Reading assignment: COD Ch. 4, Articles of Confederation and the U.S. Constitution; COD ch. 5

Week 4 (Sept. 16/18): Ellis' book , The mass media

Reading assignment: COD ch. 6

Ellis' *Founding Brothers* pp 3-205.

Essay question (Due on Sept 16): Were the founding fathers men of character and not driven by personal political ambition?

Week 5 (Sept 23/25): Parties and Voting

Reading assignment : COD ch. 7 and ch. 8

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<sup>1</sup>You may use earlier edition.

<sup>2</sup>The book and the related essay question are borrowed from professor John Geer, who is Professor in the Department of Political Science at Vanderbilt University. His syllabus is available at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/home/htdocs/psci/geer/docs/psci100f06.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup>This schedule is subject to change according to the progress of the class.

Week 6 (Sept 30/ Oct 2): Campaigning and Interest groups  
Reading assignment: COD ch. 9, and 10

Week 7 (Oct 7/9): Midterm review, Mid-term

Week 8 (Oct 14/16): Congress  
Reading assignment: COD ch.11

Week 9 (Oct 21/23)): The Presidency and the Bureaucracy  
Reading assignment: COD ch. 12 ch.13

Week 10 (Oct 28/30): The Courts  
Reading assignment: COD ch.14

Week 11 (Nov 4/6): Civil Liberties and Young voters  
Reading assignment: COD ch. 15

Wattenberg's *Is Voting for Young People?* Essay question (Due Nov 6): Can we expect that American youth would be able to fulfill their duty as citizens in a democratic society?

No class on Nov. 11

Week 12 (Nov 13/18): Civil Rights and Video  
Reading assignment: COD ch. 16

Week 13 (Nov 20/25): Economic and Foreign Policy making  
Reading assignment: COD ch. 18-20

No class on Nov. 27 (Thanksgiving break)

Week 14 (Dec 2/4): Final review, Final exam (10:30am - 1:00pm)