

Syllabus for POLI-100 Sec. 6: Introduction to Government in the United States

Monday and Wednesday, 10:00 – 10:50, Hamilton Hall, Room 100

Instructor

Dr. Thomas Carsey - carsey@unc.edu

317 Hamilton Hall, Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday, 1:30-3:00 or by appt., 962-1207

Teaching Assistants

Scott O'Brien - scobri@email.unc.edu

Sections (616) on Wed. 8-8:30; (605) on Wed. 5-5:50; (611) on Wed. 6-6:50

Patrick Wohlfarth - pcwohlf@email.unc.edu

Sections (604) on Wed. 5-5:50; (619) on Thurs. 6-6:50; (613) on Tues. 6-6:50

DeeDee Goolsby - dgoolsby@email.unc.edu

Sections (615) on Friday 1-1:50; (601) on Friday 10-10:50; (621) on Friday 3-3:50

Nick Pyeatt - npyeatt@email.unc.edu

Sections (608) Mon: 11-11:50; (614) Mon: 12-12:50; (602) Friday: 10-10:50

Nacona Nix - nnix@email.unc.edu

Sections (612) Mon: 6-6:50; (610) Wed: 4-4:50; (606) Wed: 6-6:50

Laura Shaffer - lashaffe@email.unc.edu

Sections (607) Mon: 9-9:50; (609) Mon: 1-1:50; (620) Mon: 3-3:50

Bruce Desmarais - bdesmara@email.unc.edu

Section (617) Wed: 1-1:50

Carl Najdek - najdek@email.unc.edu

Section (618) Wed: 11-11:50

Sarah Shair-Rosenfield - sarahsr@email.unc.edu

Grader

Course Description

This course provides an overview of Government in the United States, focusing almost exclusively on the national government. This is a tremendously broad topic – we cannot possibly cover all aspects of American national government in a single course, and we will not have sufficient time to cover any aspect in great detail. Rather, we will explore broad themes and major topics with an eye toward understanding the big picture of the political process in the U.S. Between lectures and the assigned readings (discussed below), you will get a fairly detailed description of government in the U.S. However, my primary objective is to move beyond simple description reaching for greater analytic and critical thinking regarding the political process in the U.S. Clearly, you will not be an expert on American Government, or any particular aspect of it, after completing this course. However, I do expect you to develop a better understanding of the government, how it operates, and why it operates the way it does by the end of the term. My goal is further to stimulate a curiosity in you regarding the political process that stimulates both further academic inquiry as well as more active and engaged citizenship over your lifetime. In that sense, this course is much more than a so-called “academic exercise.” It is designed to begin building a foundation to better equip you to fulfill your responsibilities in a democratic system.

This is a course in political science. Thus, we will spend some time considering different definitions and theories of politics. We will also take the term “science” seriously. We will not devote a great deal of attention to what we mean by the scientific method and how that applies to the study of politics. However, I want to make clear that it is precisely a scientific approach that we will be taking.

Political Science explores theories of how politics works rather than pursue mere description. Theories offer explanations for why things happen the way they do. Theories are necessarily abstract – boiling down explanations to fundamental principles. In the messy world of social science, this means that many of the specific details that surround any one political event or behavior are often set aside as we search for more general patterns or trends that emerge across multiple events or behaviors. Political Science also seeks to evaluate theories against empirical evidence. We seek explanation and understanding. We will not spend time debating ideological issues, what is “right” or “wrong” regarding particular political outcomes, or what is Truth. Ideological debates tend to generate much heat, but they often shed very little light on a subject. So, we will leave the ideological debates to the talking heads on TV, the street-corner protesters, the letters-to-the-editor pages, and to political campaigns.

Course Requirements

There are three books that are required for this course. They are:

We the People: A Concise Introduction to American Politics, 6th Edition (2006), by Thomas E. Patterson.

State of Denial: Bush at War, Part III (2006), by Bob Woodward

Showdown: The Struggle Between the Gingrich Congress and the Clinton White House (1996), by Elizabeth Drew.

All three should be available in the campus bookstore. The Patterson book is a standard American Government textbook. You will be assigned chapters in this book in conjunction with the lecture topics scheduled for each week. There may be additional readings assigned during the course of the semester. If so, you will be informed about them in class and via e-mail with ample time to complete the reading before it is discussed in class.

Students are expected to complete all reading assignments **BEFORE** coming to class. Each class meeting will proceed under the assumption that you have read the material. If you have questions about the readings, please ask them either in class or in the recitation sessions.

Assignments and Grading

Research Participation: All students who are enrolled in POLI 100 are required to participate in research studies conducted in the Political Science Department. These will usually be research experiments. The total time commitment should not exceed 3 hours. Students who object to participating in these studies will have the opportunity to satisfy the research participation requirement in another way. Failure to complete the requirement will result in a grade of I (Incomplete).

Exams: There will be three exams in this course: two midterm exams and the final exam. Each of the midterm exams will count as 15% of your course grade. The final exam will count for 25% of your course grade. The midterms will NOT be cumulative in nature, but the final exam will include a cumulative component. Each exam will include a mixture of multiple choice and short answer questions. The material covered on the exams will be distributed roughly evenly between the readings and the main lectures. We will NOT have time to review all of the reading material during class, and there will be a significant amount of material presented during the lectures that is not in the readings. Thus, it is very important to both attend the lectures and do the readings if you hope to do well on the exams.

In-class Assignments: There will be six in-class assignments completed at various points during the semester. Only five of these will be counted toward your grade – thus one of the six can be dropped

without penalty. **These assignments must be completed in class – there will be no make-ups, no excused absences, no late papers accepted, etc. for these assignments.** This work will be collected and recorded, but not assigned a specific grade. Thus, as long as you take the assignments seriously and do your best, you will get full credit. Together, these assignments will count for 10% of your final grade. The timing of these assignments will generally NOT be announced in advance, so your regular attendance is important.

Recitation Sessions: Once a week students will participate in small group recitation sessions lead by one of the TAs for the course. **You MUST be registered for a discussion section for this course (numbered 100-601 through 621) in addition to being registered for this course in order to get credit for this course.** Students who fail to register for a section will receive an F for the course. The recitation sessions provide you with an opportunity to ask questions about the course lectures and readings. However, they will also involve additional assignments, including readings, in-class assignments, quizzes, and participation in group discussions. Your attendance, participation, and performance on assignments in your recitation section will count for 15% of your final grade for the course. The specific content of these assignments and discussions will be determined by your TAs. Attendance at the recitation sessions is expected – more than one unexcused absence will lower your grade. Thus, it is critical that you attend the recitation session AND that you attend the specific section for which you are registered as the assignments will likely differ from one section to the next. **Recitation sections will begin meeting on Tuesday, January 16th.**

Analytic Essays: Finally, you will complete Four (4) papers of 2 ½ to 3 pages each for this course. Each paper will count for 5% of your final grade for the course. These papers will take the form of analytic essays written in response to questions I provide. Your answers will make some use of material from the main lectures and text for the course, but will be focused on responses to the Woodward and Drew books. Virtually all of the discussion of these two books along with the analytic essays you will be writing will take place during your weekly recitation sessions. Each paper must be at least 2 ½ pages long, but no longer than 3 pages. Each paper should be typed, double spaced, and use standard margins and fonts (roughly 275-300 words per page). No cover sheets should be included. Just list your name, PID number, TA, and Essay number at the top of the paper (single space this so as not to use up too much space). Grades for papers that fall short of the length requirement will be lowered substantially. For papers longer than three pages, the TAs will be instructed to stop reading at the bottom of the third page and assign a grade. Papers will be due at your recitation meeting during the week indicated on the schedule. Grades on late papers will be lowered by 10 points (on a 0-100 scale) if they are turned in later that day, and an additional 10 points every day thereafter.

Final grades for the course will be based on the following scale. I reserve the right to make adjustments to individual grades based on overall performance in the course and/or extenuating circumstances. There is no overall grading curve. Furthermore, there will be no grading curve for the exams or in-class assignments. There may be a curve applied to the analytic essays to ensure that TAs are giving roughly the same average grades. There will be no extra credit.

Letter Grade	Percentage Score	Letter Grade	Percentage Score	Letter Grade	Percentage Score
A	93-100	B-	80-82	D+	67-69
A-	90-92	C+	77-79	D	63-66
B+	87-89	C	73-76	F	62 or below
B	83-87	C-	70-72		

As a reminder, the contributions of the various assignments to your final grade are as follows:

Midterm Exam 1:	15%
Midterm Exam 2:	15%
Final Exam:	25%
Analytic Papers	20% (5% for each of 4 papers)
In-class Assignments:	10%
Recitation Sections:	15%

Communication

I make every effort to communicate to you my expectations, your responsibilities, and the substantive information covered in this course. I will send e-mails to the entire class. I maintain a Blackboard site for the class, and I will make announcements and issue some reminders in class. Note that I will only send e-mail out to your UNC e-mail accounts as listed on the course roster in Blackboard. I will not keep track of any other e-mail addresses that you might use. I am also very easy to reach if you need to communicate with me. Come to my office hours, call my office, or even better, send me an e-mail. It is important for you to stay in touch, particularly if any problems arise. I don't like to change exam schedules. If a situation arises where I need to give a make-up exam, it will be given during the final week of the semester. I reserve the right to give a make-up exam that differs substantially from the normal exam in order to protect the integrity of the exam process. I or any faculty member will be much more understanding if you just communicate with us up front and early if there is a problem.

A Note on Academic Honesty

In order for me to evaluate your work fairly, you have to do your own work. It is much easier to study, work hard, and complete your own assignments than it is to try and figure out some way to "beat the system" without getting caught. Cheating, plagiarism, and all other forms of academic dishonesty are pretty easy to spot and come with severe consequences. All students should familiarize themselves with the Academic Honor Code at UNC (<http://honor.unc.edu/honor/code.html>). Students caught cheating in any form in this course may receive an F for the course and may be turned over for further disciplinary action by the University. By taking this class, you have committed to comply with all aspects of the Honor Code regarding all aspects of this course.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should; (1) contact the office of Learning Disabilities at UNC (<http://www.unc.edu/depts/lds/index.html>), (2) bring a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done during the first week of class.

Responsibilities

The success of this course depends upon all of us meeting our responsibilities. Myself and the TAs are responsible for being prepared each week to present and discuss course material, for challengingly you academically and stimulating your curiosity, and for being available for and responsive to your questions and inquiries. You are responsible for being prepared each week as well, for asking questions when you are confused and actively engaging the material, for doing your own work, for meeting the course requirements, and for pushing yourselves to get the most out of this course that you can. Ultimately, this is your education and you should take responsibility for it.

Course Schedule

The schedule provided serves as a guideline for the semester. As we proceed, we may discover that some topics take a bit longer than expected to cover while others take less time. We may also add or change a few of the topics along the way. Readings associated with each topic are listed on the schedule and should be read by you prior to coming to class. It may be the case that additional readings will be assigned during the semester. Those readings will be provided for you either in class or online. Announcements regarding such changes will be made in class and distributed to students via e-mail. However, the dates for the exams will NOT change, nor will the due date for the paper.

Daily Schedule

Wed. Jan. 10 th	First Day of Class
Mon. Jan. 15 th	MLK Day – No Class
Wed. Jan. 17 th	Introduction: Read Patterson Chapter 1
Mon. Jan. 22 nd	The Constitution: Read Patterson Chapter 2
Wed. Jan. 24 th	The Constitution/Federalism: Read Patterson Chapter 3
Mon. Jan. 29 th	Federalism
Wed. Jan. 31 st	Civil Liberties: Read Patterson Chapter 4
Mon. Feb. 5 th	Civil Liberties/Equal Rights: Read Patterson Chapter 5 Analytic Paper #1 Due in Recitation Section This Week
Wed. Feb. 7 th	Equal Rights
Mon. Feb. 12 th	Catch-up and Review
Wed. Feb. 14 th	Midterm Exam 1
Mon. Feb 19 th	Presidency: Read Patterson Chapter 12
Wed. Feb 21 st	Presidency Bureaucracy: Read Patterson Chapter 13
Mon. Feb 26 th	Bureaucracy
Wed. Feb. 28 th	Congress: Read Patterson Chapter 11
Mon. March 5 th	Congress Analytic Paper #2 Due in Recitation Section This Week
Wed. March 7 th	Interest Groups: Read Patterson Chapter 9
March 12 th -16 th	Spring Break – No Classes
Mon. March 19 th	The Courts: Read Patterson Chapter 14
Wed. March 21 st	The Courts
Mon. March 26 th	Catch-up and Review
Wed. March 28 th	Midterm Exam 2
Mon. April 2 nd	Public Opinion: Read Patterson Chapter 6 Analytic Paper #3 Due in Recitation Section this Week
Wed. April 4 th	Public Opinion
Mon. April 9 th	Voting: Read Patterson Chapter 7
Wed. April 11 th	Voting
Mon. April 16 th	Parties and Campaigns: Read Patterson Chapter 8
Wed. April 18 th	Parties and Campaigns
Mon. April 23 rd	The Media: Read Patterson Chapter 10 Analytic Paper #4 Due in Recitation Section this Week
Wed. April 24 th	Catch-up and Review Last Class Meeting
Mon. May 7 th	Final Exam 8:00 A.M. Hamilton Hall Room 100