

Political Science 105
American Government & Politics
3.0 Credits

Spring Semester, 2017
University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh
Time: M, W, F 10:20-11:20
Classroom: Sage Hall 1232

Dr. James R. Simmons
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Office Hours: M/W 1:30-3:00
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Course Description

This course will provide an introductory, critical examination of the American political system in theory and practice. It will help introduce the student to some of the major social, ideological and economic features of American society that affect politics, the demands for government activity this environment generates, and the basic decision-making processes through which these pressures are converted into laws and public policies. Finally, we will look at the way in which the benefits and burdens from these governmental policies are distributed among the various individuals, social groups and institutions in the United States.

Signature Question: *How do people understand and engage in community life?*

LEARNING GOALS

The following goals are the primary learning objectives for this course. Upon completion of this class, students will be able to:

1. Describe core democratic principles such as majority rule, rights, liberty, freedom, and equality
2. Demonstrate the capacity to analyze current debates over the purpose for government and the political controversies in American history.
3. Explain and assess the role government institutions and the political process in shaping the American policy agenda
4. Understand and take principled positions on the fundamental issues affecting students, the general public, and the nation at-large.
5. Evaluate the governance roles of citizens, groups, and public officials

Assigned Readings

- Edward Greenberg & Benjamin Page (*Seventh Edition*). New York: Pearson Education, 2016.

General Education Objectives

- To contribute to a liberal education of students by clarifying the manifold ways in which government and politics influences the quality of their lives and shapes their opportunities for personal success and self-actualization.

- To prepare students for active citizenship by providing them with essential knowledge about the political process as well as useful participatory skills.
- To provide a rigorous intellectual environment in which students are given analytical tools, learn research methods and develop the capacity to clearly articulate their arguments, ideas and values.

Course Requirements and Assessment

- 1) Examinations (80%): Four exams based on lectures, discussion and the readings will be given. Examinations are made up of multiple-choice questions. The content of these exams will not be cumulative and the test dates will be announced in class prior to each exam.
- 2) Participation (10%): A significant part of each class period will be devoted to a discussion of the basic issues covered. Regular student attendance is expected and involvement in class discussions can improve your final grade by as much as one letter. Oral participation will be supplemented with several unannounced short quizzes.
- 4) Pre/Post Tests (5%): Students will take a pre-test and a post-test. The first of these tests will establish a benchmark for the student's general knowledge upon entering the class and the second will evaluate the student's learning by the end of the semester.
- 5) Course Retrospective (5%): Students will write a short 1 to 2-page evaluative paper that examines the strengths and weaknesses of the course from their own perspective and then explain what they think they learned about government and politics from the class over the semester. These papers should be submitted to the course D2L Dropbox and to your ePortfolio on-line.

Outline and Assignments

Topics:

Readings Schedule:

Greenberg and Page *Text*

I. Democratic Structure

A. Democracy	Chapter	1
B. Constitution		2
C. Federal System		3
D. Economy and Society		4
Exam One		

II. Political Linkage

A. Public Opinion	Chapter	5
B. Mass Media		6
C. Interest Groups		7

D. Social Movements		8
E. Parties and Elections		9-10
Exam Two		
III. Institutions and Processes		
A. Congress	Chapter	11
B. Presidency		12
C. Bureaucracy		13
D. Judiciary		14
Exam Three		
IV. Public Policy Formation		
A. Civil Liberties	Chapter	15
B. Rights and Equality		16
C. Domestic Policy		17
D. Foreign and Defense		18
Exam Four		

Approximately two class periods will be spent on most course topics. But deviation from the order and time devoted to each topic is likely.