**POLS 110 EA**

**American National Government: The Power of Individuals**

**DePauw University – Spring 2011**

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 2:30-4; Wednesdays 11-1:30 & 4-5.

Course Overview:

There are various lenses through which we can study the American national government. In this course we will pay particular attention to the influence of individuals on the institutions and policies of government. Politics, understood as how power is distributed, is key to understanding why governments are established with certain institutions, and how policy is created and later implemented. This course will focus on the individuals and groups who influence this distribution of power. Thus the primary question we will address throughout the semester is:

*What roles do individuals play in crafting American politics, whether they act alone (e.g., members of Congress, Supreme Court justices, or the President) or as part of a larger group (e.g., voters, lobbyists, and interest groups)?*

In the first half of the course we will examine the American political system through its constitutional foundation and the major institutions of government. In the second half of the course we will examine American political ideals and behavior. One objective of this course is to help you develop an understanding for how institutions function and why particular institutions (e.g., political parties, the bureaucracy, the Presidency) of the American system look the way they do. In particular, we will examine how America’s ideals and political culture affect the design of American institutions and political behavior (and vise versa). By the end of this course you should have a basic understanding of how the U.S. political system differs from other democracies.

You will develop the skills necessary to ask social science questions that can be empirically tested (e.g., Are parties stronger today than they were in the past? What factors influence voter turnout?). These skills will help you to be more critical consumers of information and arguments about the American national government and politics that you encounter in the future.

You will be exposed to the background and various view points to contemporary political issues. For instance, consider the following debates:

* Should members of Congress vote using their best judgment or simply relay the preferences of their constituents?
* Should Supreme Court justices have term limits? Should justices be elected? Should justices seek the “original meaning” of the Constitution?
* Should the US have mandatory voting? What are the problems with the US’s electoral system?
* Should the First Amendment protect hate speech? Does the Patriot Act violate American civil liberties? (If so, is that a problem?)

While you may already have an opinion on these issues, an additional objective of this course is to challenge you to consider the opposing sides of these (and any other) arguments, and to see that between the black and white of a yes/no or pro/con answer, there is a large grey area ripe for analysis, discussion, and compromise.

Courses Requirements:

* **Readings**: Readings are listed on the syllabus for each week, along with questions that you should consider while completing the readings. You are expected to have read and thought about the readings *prior* to coming to class. Should you fail to do the readings it will be evident in your lack of participation in class discussions. Chapters are to be read in their entirety, unless otherwise noted. On occasion an article relevant to the topic we are covering will be published and I will assign it on short notice. In that case I will email you an announcement and post the article on the moodle page.

There are **2 required** texts:

* Thomas Patterson. 2011. *We The People: A Concise Introduction to American Politics,* 9th Ed. McGraw Hill. ISBN: 978-0-07-337906-7
* Robert Dahl. 2003. *How Democratic is the American Constitution?* 2nd Ed. Yale University Press. ISBN: 978-0-300-09524-1

**\*\*All other readings will be posted on the class MOODLE page\*\***

**\*\*You are also required to keep up with current events – see below\*\***

* **Grading**

Participation: 10%

Quizzes: 12%

Written Assignments: 23%

Mid-term Exam: 25%

Final Exam: 30%

* **Exams & Quizzes**
	+ **Exams**: Lectures and class discussion are intended to supplement the readings, not duplicate them. Exams will draw upon both reading and class materials. Note the dates of your midterm and finals exams. **Makeup exams will not be given; plan your travels accordingly.**
	+ **Quizzes**: There will be 4-6 unannounced quizzes over the course of the semester that will cover assigned readings and current events. Your lowest quiz grade will be dropped. **There are no makeup quizzes**. Students who are absent for a quiz will have that quiz grade dropped. Students who miss more than one quiz will have their first missed quiz dropped and receive a grade of **zero** for any additional missed quizzes.
* **Written Assignments:** All assignments are to be typed and handed in at the **START** of class on the due date (unless otherwise noted). Late assignments will be **penalized 1% of your overall grade for each day late**.
	+ Instructions for the short assignments will be on the syllabus or announced in class and posted on the announcements page of the course Moodle page.
* **Participation**: *Simply showing up to class does not constitute participation*. You are expected to play an active role in class discussions. That said, simply speaking in class will not earn you a “good” participation grade. Those with the highest participation grades will ask insightful questions, and present arguments grounded in the class readings and research. There will be a **Moodle discussion group** where you may raise points that we did not have a chance to address in class, which can improve your participation grade.
	+ We will often discuss controversial political issues and I expect that you will be respectful of each other’s perspectives. Interruptions, slurs, or making fun of students or their views will not be tolerated.
* **Attendance:** I will take attendance every class and I expect you to be present. You are allowed **two** absences without penalty. You can use these as you like (e.g., illness, sports travel, interviews, sleep, etc.). Each absence beyond these 2 absences will result in a 1-point deduction from your final overall average.

Other important information:

* **Current Events**: Students are **REQUIRED** to be aware of current political events for class discussion and unannounced quizzes. I suggest that you read a national newspaper, such as the *New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, or the *Washington Post,* on a **daily basis**. Student’s often note, “there is so much in the news, what do I need to know?” Each of these newspapers has a “politics” section and you can subscribe to daily emails.
	+ **Tips**: I suggest making your web browser home page link to one of these newspapers. You can also download applications to smart phones that automatically keep you up-to-date on news, or have the headlines of the day automatically emailed to you. Finally, there are various few news podcasts/videos if you prefer to listen/watch your news.
* **Technology:**
	+ **Laptops** are **not** welcome in class, unless I instruct you to bring one. Should you need to use a laptop please provide proper documentation from DePauw’s Office of Disability Services.
	+ All **cell** **phones/Blackberries**, etc. should be **shut** **off** or set to **silent** – NOT VIBRATE – before arriving to class. The use or interruption of these devises during regular class time will result in a **reduction of your participation grade**, and during test periods will be treated as **cheating**.
* **Extra Credit:** There will be two opportunities for extra credit throughout the semester. Each will be worth 1 point towards your final grade. I will make announcements about these in class.
* **Communication and Email:** When emailing me please include your course number in the subject line. *A note on etiquette*: please use appropriate salutations and include your name in the closing. (Hint: you can’t go wrong with “Hi Professor Gallagher”). Please articulate the content of your message clearly and do not use text message or instant message speak. Finally, before you email me **please check the syllabus** and the **announcements page** of the moodle site to be sure that the answer to your question has not been previously addressed.
* **Academic Dishonesty –** Students are expected to abide by DePauw’s Academic Integrity policy, available in the *Student Handbook*. Cheating in any form, including plagiarism, will not be tolerated in this class. Plagiarism is copying from any source material (direct or paraphrasing of ideas), published or unpublished (this includes wikipedia!), without giving proper credit. I will post a link to the Chicago Manual of Style citation format on Moodle, although you are free to use any citation method you choose, as long as you are consistent. If caught cheating, you are liable to be failed for the assignment, failed for the course, placed on academic probation, or suspended from the university, depending on circumstances.
* **Students with Disabilities:** In compliance with the American Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, which prohibit discrimination based on disability, DePauw University is committed to providing equal access to academic programs and university-administered activities and reasonable modifications to students with disabilities. Students in need of special accommodations need to make the request for such services with the Coordinator of Student Disabilities Services, Pamela Roberts, 765-658-6267, Harrison Hall 302, as soon as possible. Please make an appointment to meet with me after you have received your letter from DSO.
* **This syllabus is subject to changes throughout the semester**

**Class and Reading Schedule**

Tuesday, January 31 (Class 1)

**Introduction to American Politics and Political Science**

*What is the purpose of Government? How are institutions formed?*

* "Living in Tents, and by the Rules, Under a Bridge." *NYT*. July 30, 2009.

Thursday, February 2 (Class 2)

**The Constitution**

*How democratic is the constitution? What steps have been taken to democratize the system of government established in the constitution? Why did the Framers establish a “republic”?*

* Patterson, Ch. 2 pp.26-41
* Dahl, “Ch. 1: Introduction: Fundamental Questions”
* Dahl, “Ch. 2: What the Framers Couldn’t Know” pp. 7-31
* *Federalist No. 10* (moodle version)

Tuesday, February 7 (Class 3)

**Comparing “Apples to Apples”: Institutional Exceptionalisms**

*What makes the American system of government exceptional compared to other advanced democracies?*

* Dahl, “Ch. 3: The Constitution as a Model: An American Illusion”
* Skim Dahl *Appendix B*
* Patterson, Ch. 2 41-60

Thursday, February 9 (Class 4)

**Institutions & Separation of Powers**

*How is power divided in the US government? Why does the US have a federal system? What powers fall to the states? What powers lie with the national government?*

* Patterson, Ch. 3
* *Federalist No. 51* – Found in Patterson pp. 656-658.

Tuesday, February 14 (Class 5)

**Congress: Representation & Members’ Careers**

*What are the powers of Congress? What are the differences in the two chambers of Congress? What does it mean for representatives to be single-minded reelection seekers? What are the consequences of incumbency?*

* Patterson, Ch. 11 *only* pp. 366-378
* David Mayhew. 1975. *Congress: The Electoral Connection*, pp. 13-17, 49-67, 73-76
* Constitution – Art I Sec 8

Thursday, February 16 (Class 6)

**Congress: Legislative Process & Change**

*What are the advantages/ disadvantages of the committee structure? How does a bill become a law? What changes could be made to improve representation in Congress?*

* Patterson, Ch. 11 pp. 379-405
* “A Filibuster Fix” *NYT* August 27, 2010
* “Build a Bigger House” *NYT* January 23, 2011

Tuesday, February 21 (Class 7)

**The Presidency: Constitutional Foundations and Understanding (Increases in?) Presidential Power**

*What powers and advantages does the president have? Is the presidency too weak? Too strong?*

* Patterson, Ch. 12 (skip 420-433)
* Richard Neustadt. 1991. *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents* (excerpt)
* Carl Canon. 2007. “Veto This!” *National Journal*.
* Constitution Art. II

Thursday, February 23 (Class 8)

**The Presidency: Presidential Character & Selection**

*How does a president’s character influence his power? Does the time make the man or does the man make the time? What are some weaknesses of Barber’s positive-negative/active-passive classification? Should the president be directly elected?*

* Michael Nelson. 2009. “The Psychological Presidency.” *The Presidency and the Political System. 9th Edition.*
* Patterson pp. 420-433

**\*\*Writing Assignment #1 DUE – Letter to your representative = 10%**

Write a letter (750-1000 words, double spaced, 12pt. font, 1” margins) to your representative in Congress (the member of the House of Representatives who represents your home district or any Indiana district) lobbying them on behalf of some issue that you feel strongly about. In your letter you must address the Representative’s party, time in office, the district they represent, what committees they sit on, and their general position on the issue you are writing about (in most cases they have outwardly made statements of support or opposition to an issue; alternatively, they may have voted for or against a bill that might signal their position). To find your representative go to the House’s webpage ([www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov)). In your letter you must make the argument in favor of your proposed cause; develop at least 3 arguments in favor of your position. Your arguments should be well reasoned and supported by **data** when appropriate. **This assignment will require you to do research on the issue**. You must consult and cite *at least three* sources for your policy augment (e.g. beyond the member’s website). Also, be clear whether you want them to support an existing bill or propose new legislation (you can search [www.thomas.gov](http://www.thomas.gov) to see if there are any current bills on the issue). You may use footnotes or a bibliography at the end of your letter for parenthetical citations to cite your sources.

Tuesday, February 28 (Class 9)

**Presidential Selection & The Electoral College**

* Dahl, “Ch. 4: Electing the President”
* NPR Listen: “Why the electoral college is bad for America”

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4115994>

* NPR Listen: “Debating the Merits of the Electoral College”

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4127863>

Thursday, March 1 (Class 10)

**Executive Institutions: The National Bureaucracy**

*What policy areas require a large national bureaucracy? Where do you see the influence of the national bureaucracy in your life?*

* National Security Inc. *Washington Post*
* Patterson Ch. 13

Tuesday, March 6 (Class 11)

**Foreign Policy – Institutional Interactions**

*Why does the president have so many advantages when it comes to foreign policy? What types of constraints are there on presidential foreign policy decision-making?*

* Jon Pevehouse and William Howell. 2007. “When Congress Stops Wars.” *Foreign Affairs*.
* “Obama’s War Over Terror” *NYT* January 17, 2010
* Foreign Policy and the President’s Irrelevance. February 2008. Found at <http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/foreign_policy_and_presidents_irrelevance>

Thursday, March 8 (Class 12)

**Political Culture & American Cultural Exceptionalism**

*What ideals characterize American political culture?*

* Patterson Ch. 1

*\*Mon. March 12 – Progress Reports*

Tuesday, March 13 (Class 13)

**\*\*MIDTERM EXAM\*\***

Thursday, March 15 (Class 14)

**American Political Behavior - What happened to American Civic Engagement?**

*Why has there been a decrease in American civic engagement? Has 9/11 had a permanent influence on civic engagement?*

* Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone* (excerpt)
* *Still Bowling Alone? The 9/11 split*

Tuesday, March 20 (Class 15)

**The Culture War**

*Is the US really experiencing a culture war? What are the various types of polarization that political scientists can look at to answer this question?*

* Morris Fiorina. 2004. “What Culture Wars?” *Hoover Digest*. Available at: http://www.hoover.org/publications/digest/3010006.html
* Alan Abramowitz and Kyle Saunders. 2005. “Why Can’t We All Just Get Along? The Reality of a Polarized America” *The Journal of Applied Research in Contemporary Politics*.
	+ \**note: focus on their main arguments; don’t worry about understanding all the statistics.*
* David Campbell. 2006. “A House Divided: What Social Science Has to Say About the Culture War”. *William and Mary Bill of Rights Journal*.

Thursday, March 22 (Class 16)

**Parties**

*Are parties weak or strong in the US? Why?*

* Patterson, Ch. 8 & 196-205
* “Why I’m Leaving the Senate” Evan Bayh *NYT* Feb. 20, 2010.

*\*Friday, March 23 – Last Day to Drop Course*

Tuesday, March 27 & Thursday, March 29 – **No Class: Spring Break**

Tuesday, April 3 (Class 17)

**Voting and Elections**

*How well does the system work? Who votes? Who does not vote?*

* Patterson, Ch. 7
* Robert Pastor. 2005. “America Observed.” *The American Prospect*.
* Listen to NPR “Is ‘Compulsory Voting’ the Answer?”

Thursday, April 5 (Class 18)

**Lobbying and Interest Groups**

*What is pluralism? Are interest groups helpful or harmful for democracy?*

* Patterson, Ch. 9
* “Three of every four oil and gas lobbyists worked for the federal government.” *Washington Post*

Tuesday, April 10 (Class 19)

**Campaigning**

**Movie: *Can Mr. Smith Get to Washington Anymore?***

* No reading Assignment

**\*\*Writing Assignment 2 –** **Movie Reflection** **= 6%**

Write an essay (500-700 words, double spaced, 12pt. font, 1” margins) reflecting on the movie in light of what you have learned so far this semester. In other words, your opinion of the movie is not the focus of your response and do not just summarize the movie. Rather, your focus should be how the movie illustrated/ contradicted/enlightened what you have learned thus far in POLS 110. Your essay should draw on readings and class discussions. A hard copy must be handed in at the start of class **Thursday, April 12**.

Thursday, April 12 (Class 20)

**Public Opinion and the Media**

*How does public opinion influence policy making? How does the media influence public opinion? What influence does the government have on both public opinion and the media?*

* Patterson, Ch. 6 (skip 196-204) & Ch. 10

Tuesday, April 17 (Class 21)

**Public Opinion Polls: What are the numbers really telling us?**

*What are the some of the common problems with surveys and public opinion polls?*

* Herbert Asher. “Advice to Poll Consumers ”
* “Public Opinion Polling”

**\*\*Assignment #3 Public Opinion Poll = 7%. You will have time to work with your partners on this during class. Your final assignment needs to be uploaded to the moodle site by 8am Thursday, April 19.**

In class we will examine the interaction between the media, public opinion, and policy outcomes. The objective of this assignment is to have you apply the lessons from your readings to some recent polls. Overall this practical application will make you more informed consumers of polling data in the future. Working in a group of 3-4 students you will:

1. Find a recent (within the past 3 years) public opinion poll. You may choose to focus on one question or some set of related questions - the topic of which is completely your choice. You must post a link to the poll so others can find it online.

* Two useful sources of public opinion data are the Pew Center (www.pewresearch.org) and the Gallup organization (www.gallup.com). Both are non-partisan public opinion research centers that conduct polls on a daily basis. You are not obligated to use them – they’re just a useful starting point.

2. Write a 3-4-paragraph analysis of the poll. In your analysis be sure to:

* Describe the poll (who was administering/ sponsoring it, what question(s) were asked, and why were they relevant (i.e.: explain the importance of the issue). Explain the main finding(s) of the poll and how it can be interpreted (you may offer multiple interpretations). Discuss the relevant population and sample size of the poll. Be sure to include the sampling error.
* Critically assess the (potential) problems with the poll (consult the required readings, as well as your text); these problems should be specific to your poll. In other words, I don't want an explanation of all the problems with polls in general, but rather I want you to focus on the problems that are relevant to the poll that you chose. \***Your grade will largely rest on the depth of your analysis of the problems with the poll.**\*

Thursday, April 19 (Class 22)

**The Supreme Court - The Institution**

*What checks does the Supreme Court have over other branches of government? What factors affect compliance with the court’s decisions?*

* Patterson, Ch. 14
* Constitution Art. III

Tuesday, April 24 (Class 23)

**Supreme Court – Justices’ Decision Making**

*What factors influence the decision making of Supreme Court justices? What is originalism?*

* Debate on Constitutional Interpretation – Scalia vs. Breyer

Thursday, April 26 (Class 24)

**Civil Liberties**

*What rights are protected in the constitution? Are there others that are protected but not explicitly written? Are there limits on these rights?*

* Patterson, Ch. 4

Tuesday, May 1 (Class 25)

**Civil Liberties During War: The USA PATRIOT Act**

* TBD

Thursday, May 3 (Class 26)

**The History of the Civil Rights Movement**

*How did individuals contribute the development of the civil rights movement? What have been the consequences of the movement?*

* Patterson, Ch. 5

Tuesday, May 8 (Class 27)

**Civil Rights and Representation – Women in Office**

*Is symbolic representation necessary for a healthy democracy? Why aren’t there more women in elected office?*

* “Black? White? Asian? More Young Americans Choose All of the Above.” *NYT*. January 29, 2011.
* Ann Friedman. July/Aug 2008. “Beyond Hillary: Strength in Numbers.” *The American Prospect.*
* Lawless and Fox. 2008. “Why Are Women Still Not Running For Office?” pp. 1-16 (try skimming the Appendix to get a better sense of their survey method).

Thursday, May 10 (Class 28) – Last day of Classes

**Political Participation and the Power of Us**

*What should be the policy priorities of the national government? What can we do to become more involved in shaping the national government?*