POSC 2201 - American Politics

Spring 2013

Prof. John McAdams
417 Physics
Phone: 288-3425
Office Hours: MW 1:00-3:00, Tu 10:00-noon (and by appointment)

Course Objectives:

The course will both describe and analyze the American political system, with primary emphasis at the federal level. A particular concern will be the extent to which, and the ways in which, public opinion is translated into policy. That is to say, is the system actually “democratic” and if so how? Are there systematic distortions in the processes that translate public preferences into policy?

Texts:


Students should check Sweeney’s College Books for the best prices on textbooks. A variety of student study resources will be available on D2L. With the exception of readings that cannot be put on library reserve, none of those will be required material.

Requirements:

Attendance is optional, although it will be extremely difficult to achieve a good grade without regular attendance. All readings are required. Most are available on library reserve, and those not on reserve should be available in D2L. All (besides the required texts) will be made available in a xeroxed packet.

There will be one or more opportunities for extra credit for attending campus events – designated by the instructor – including talks, panels, roundtables and such that pertain to American politics. There may also be an extra credit showing of a video in the evening.

Grading:

There will be eleven short objective quizzes during the term, which will test both assigned readings and class material. They will be announced in advance. There will be a mid-term exam on the designated day during mid-term week, a second exam near the end of the semester and a final
exam, all of which will include objective and essay portions. The grade will consist of the final (30%), exams (20% each) and the quizzes (30%).

Course Outline:

I. Introduction – Theories of American Politics

Wilson, Chap. 1

II. The Philosophy of the Founders

Wilson, Chap. 2
Federalist numbers 10 and 51 in Wilson
The U.S. Constitution in Wilson
Declaration of Independence, Wilson

III. Public Opinion

Wilson, Chap. 7

IV. The Media

Wilson, Chap. 12
Peters, Chap. 1
William Nesbitt, “How Three Newspapers Handled a Story,” Chapter 4 of *Interpreting the Newspaper in the Classroom*.
“Roe Warriors: The Media’s Pro-Abortion Bias,” Media Research Center Special Report.
“A Load of Hot Air” The BBC, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/magazine/4923504.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/magazine/4923504.stm)

V. Elections and Voter Behavior

Wilson, Chap. 10

Exam One – Wednesday, March 6th
VI. Interest Groups

Wilson, Chap. 11, 17
Peters, Chap. 2

VII. The Parties

Wilson, Chap. 9
Mike Royko, The Boss, in Peter Woll (ed.) *Behind the Scenes in American Government*

VIII. The Congress

Wilson, Chap. 13
Peters, Chap. 7

IX. Social Welfare Policy

Wilson, Chap. 19

**Exam Two: Monday, April 22nd**

X. The Presidency

Wilson, Chap. 14
Peters, Chap. 8
XI. Bureaucracy

Wilson, Chap. 15
Peters, Chap. 3, 5, 6.
Dave Barry, “America’s Toilets – they stink” (on reserve)

XII. Courts

Wilson, Chap. 16

XIII. Conclusion

Wilson, Chap. 22
Peters, Chap. 9

**Final: Thursday, May 9 (8:00 a.m.)**