

POSC 2201
Introduction to American Politics
Dr. McGee Young
Department of Political Science
MWF 10-10:50
Lalumiere 272
Fall 2009

Office Hours: M 12:00-1:45; Tu 9-12; W 12:00-1:45
Contact: mcgee.young@mu.edu; 288-3296; @profyoung
Office: Physics 407

This course is meant to introduce you to the primary institutions, processes, and ideas that comprise the American political system. The study of American politics is the study of the development of the laws and institutions of government, the organization and mobilization of citizens, and the debates that have breathed life into our shared understanding of what a democracy entails. This course approaches the American political system from a developmental perspective, recognizing that politics is fluid, that both continuities and discontinuities across time are important, and that ultimately the search for power lies at the heart of political action.

The pedagogical aims of this course are twofold. First, it is designed to teach you about American politics. By the end of the semester you should be conversant in politics, able to derive your own opinions, and make sense of policy alternatives and their implications. Second, it is designed to develop your critical learning skills. You will improve your reasoning, your critical thinking, your writing, and your study habits. Recognizing that students express their achievements in different ways, I will assess your progress using a variety of techniques. First, we will have three exams – two midterms and a final exam – that will test your ability to synthesize course readings and lectures. Second, we will have writing assignments that utilize the D2L software that will require you to demonstrate research skills, writing skills, and analytical skills. Finally, there will be an expectation of class participation that will allow you to demonstrate your ability to express your ideas verbally. As part of the Core of Common Studies at Marquette, this course will contribute to students' attainment of the three learning objectives associated with the Social and Behavioral Sciences portion of the Core. These read: "At the completion of core studies, the student will be able to (1) Understand central concepts, theories, and methods used to explain individual and social behavior in one of the social and cultural disciplines. (2) Use knowledge of social scientific methods to analyze examples of individual and social behavior. (3) Evaluate the applicability of social scientific knowledge for understanding individual and social behavior in particular contexts.

American Politics and Citizenship: I will not grade you on your citizenship, but I do expect all students to recognize the fundamental mission of Marquette University and to find ways outside of class to become better, more engaged citizens. I especially encourage volunteer efforts in the local Milwaukee community. In the past students have worked as tutors, mentors, organizers, foreign language instructors, etc., and I encourage you to figure out what you may bring to the effort to improve our community.

Very Special Note about Academic Dishonesty: I am vigilant and unsparing when it comes to cheating, plagiarism, and other violations of the academic contract. Infractions will be dealt with swiftly and without mercy. If you are going to miss class or an assignment, the only way that I will be lenient is if you inform me ahead of time. There are no after the fact reprieves.

Attendance policy: You are required to attend all classes; there will be no after-the-fact excused absences. After you miss two classes, your participation grade will drop 10% for each additional class that you miss. You will not receive a passing grade if you miss more than ten classes.

Grades

Midterm Exams – 15% each

Final Exam – 30%

Writing Assignments – 30%

Class Participation – 10%

Readings

Daily: New York Times, Washington Post, Wall Street Journal, The Hill, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, McClatchy News Service

Weekly: National Journal, Congressional Quarterly, The Economist, The New Yorker

Blogs: Political Wire (www.politicalwire.com), Talking Points Memo (Dem) (www.talkingpointsmemo.com), Andrew Sullivan (Rep) (andrewsullivan.theatlantic.com), Daily Kos (Dem) (www.dailykos.com), Drudge Report (Rep) (www.drudgereport.com), Huffington Post (Dem) (www.huffingtonpost.com).

Required Books:

Marc Landy and Sidney Milkis, American Government: Balancing Democracy and Rights, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008)

Larry Bartels, Unequal Democracy: The Political Economy of the New Gilded Age (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

Books available at Bookmarq and Sweeney's.

Note that textbooks are tax deductible this year as part of the economic stimulus bill

Course Schedule

- August 31 - Introduction to Course; Landy and Milkis, Chapter 1
- September 2 – Political Culture - What does it mean to be American? Landy and Milkis Chapter 2, read the Declaration of Independence
- September 4 – University mandated assessment exam; attendance required.

- September 7 – Labor Day
- September 9 - Larry Bartels, Unequal Democracy, Chapter 1
- September 11 – Bartels, Chapter 2

- September 14 - The Constitutional Debate, Landy and Milkis, Chapter 3, p. 77-109, Federalist Papers #10, 51
- September 16 - The Constitution - Landy and Milkis, Chapter 3, p. 109-122, and read the Constitution
- September 18 – Bartels, Chapter 3

- September 21 - American Political Development, 19th Century and Progressive Era, Landy and Milkis, Chapter 4, p. 126-158
- September 23 - American Political Development, 20th Century and beyond, Landy and Milkis, Chapter 4, p. 158-180
- September 25 – Finish American Political Development

- September 28 – Bartels, Chapter 4
- September 30 – Exam review
- October 2 - First Exam

- October 5 - Federalism in American Politics, Landy and Milkis, Chapter 5, p. 190-238.
- October 7 - Political Economy in the 19th Century and Progressive Era, Landy and Milkis, Chapter 5, p. 243-271
- October 9 - Political Economy Continued

- October 12 - Political Economy in the New Deal and beyond, Landy and Milkis, Chapter 5, p. 271-297
- October 14 - Hurricane Katrina: Can the United States respond to crisis? Landy and Milkis, p. 300-304; **First Writing Assignment Due in Class.**
- October 16 - Bartels, Unequal Democracy, Ch. 5.

- October 19 – Bartels, Chapter 6
- October 21 – Bartels, Chapter 7
- October 23 – Fall Break

- October 26 - The Origins and Development of Congress, Landy and Milkis, Chapter 7, p. 306-328
- October 28 - The Professionalization of Congress, Landy and Milkis Chapter 7, p. 328-349
- October 30 – The Modern Congress, Landy and Milkis, p. 349-366

- November 2 – Second Exam
- November 4 - The Origins and Development of the Presidency, Landy and Milkis, Chapter 8, p. 373-397
- November 6 - The Modern Presidency, Landy and Milkis, p. 397-415

- November 9 - The Presidency Reconsidered, Landy and Milkis, Chapter 8, p. 415-433
- November 11 – Stephen Skowronek, The Politics Presidents Make (on D2L)

- November 13 – The Origins and Development of the Judiciary, Landy and Milkis, Chapter 9, p. 439-464
- November 16 - Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, Landy and Milkis, Chapter 9, p. 464-496
- November 18 - The Origins and Development of Bureaucracy in the United States, Landy and Milkis, Chapter 10, p. 501-528
- November 20 - The Modern Bureaucracy, Landy and Milkis, Chapter 10, p. 528-551
- November 23 - GWOT: Empire of Liberty or Merely Empire? Landy and Milkis, p. 556-562. **Second Writing Assignment Due in Class.**
- November 25-27 – Thanksgiving Break
- November 30 - Political Parties and Elections - Origins and 19th Century, Landy and Milkis Chapter 11, p. 564-593
- December 2 - Political Parties and Elections - 20th Century and beyond, Landy and Milkis, Chapter 11, p. 593-629.
- December 4 - Political Participation, Landy and Milkis, Chapter 12, p. 630-661
- December 7 - Rights Consciousness and Public Opinion, Landy and Milkis, Chapter 12, p. 661-684
- December 9 - Political Change and Public Policy, the strange case of No Child Left Behind, Landy and Milkis, p. 686-692; Bartels, Chapter 9. **Third Writing Assignment Due in Class.**
- December 11 - Wrap up and Conclusion, Landy and Milkis, Chapter 13; Bartels, Chapter 10.
- December 14 – 8-10 am - Final Exam Scheduled