

# American Politics and Government

Political Science 101  
Fall 2008

Section 006 (MW 11:30am – 12:45pm), Room J 154  
Section 007 (MW 1:00pm – 2:15pm), Room I 114

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This course is designed to provide an introduction to the major institutions of American national government as well as the most important political processes (both within government and in its interaction with society over time). We will use this knowledge to consider some of the major controversies, criticisms, and suggestions for reform in American politics.

## REQUIRED TEXTS

The following books are required for the course and are available in the campus bookstore.

Schmidt, Shelley, and Bardes, American Government and Politics Today, Thirteenth Edition (2007), Wadsworth (ISBN 0495007374).  
Illinois Handbook of Government 2005-2006.

## GRADING

I will assign grades on a standard 10-point scale (A 90-100, B 80-89, etc.), according to the following breakdown:

Exams (4):	50% (12.5% each)
Participation:	10%
Newsmaker Assignment:	10%
Court Case Group Presentations:	10%
Research Paper:	20%

## EXAMS

There will be four exams; all will feature short-answer and essay questions. You will have one hour and fifteen minutes to complete each exam. The main source of exam questions will be the study questions that will be handed out for each chapter/lecture. The exams will be drawn roughly equally from the text and from lecture. Review sheets before each exam will narrow down the study questions from which the exam questions will be drawn and you will have a choice of questions to answer on the exams. The final exam will NOT be comprehensive.

## *PARTICIPATION*

Attendance in this class is mandatory and also a good idea. We will emphasize classroom participation, both formally and informally. You must read the materials and be prepared to discuss them in class. Questions about the book, lectures, and current political events are all welcomed. Small assignments given in class will also contribute toward the participation grade. Participation (including attendance) is 10% of your course grade.

*As a courtesy to the instructor and your fellow students, please turn off (or put in silent mode) all cell phones before entering the classroom.*

## *“NEWSMAKER” ASSIGNMENT*

Early in the semester, you will fill out a form on the course website to be assigned a “newsmaker.” You will write about and report on this person twice during the semester. On **September 3**, you will turn in a one-page resume for this person (3% of your course grade). Later in the semester, you’ll write up and report in class on a time when this person was “in the news” (7% of your course grade). The date on which you’ll report on your newsmaker will be given to you when you fill out the original form assigning you the person. Detailed requirements for each stage of this assignment will be given on the course website.

## *COURT CASE GROUP PRESENTATIONS*

In late September, when we’re studying civil liberties and civil rights, the class will be broken up into five groups to make brief (no more than ten minutes) presentations on key Supreme Court cases. Excerpts from the cases will be available on the course website and each group will be expected to prepare a written summary and an oral presentation. Again, detailed requirements and specific dates will follow.

## *RESEARCH PAPER*

On **December 3**, you’ll turn in a short (5-7 page) research paper (20% of your course grade). You’ll choose from among several specific topics such as campaign finance reform. The topics and a detailed set of guidelines for sources and citations will be handed out well in advance.

Remember: a research paper is *based on* sources you’ve read and considered, but it must be written in your own words. It is NOT a collation of quotes, either attributed or not. Plagiarism will be dealt with severely - see the statement at the end of the syllabus. If you are at all unclear about this, ask me questions.

## *COURSE WEBSITE*

The course website ([americanpolitics.anarres.com/index-hc.html](http://americanpolitics.anarres.com/index-hc.html)) includes all handouts given out in class, as well as some assignments (e.g. the Newsmaker assignment) which are available only on the website. In addition, the PowerPoint lecture presentations are also available on the website. Downloading the PowerPoint presentations should be a supplement to class attendance, not a substitute, and should be seen as an aid to understanding the content of the course, not as the course itself.

## ACADEMIC HONESTY POLICY

**Cases involving academic dishonesty in this course may result in failure for the assignment or the course. See below for Harper College's statement on this issue.**

Harper College is strongly committed to the promotion of high ethical standards. Such standards can best be accomplished in an environment where honesty and integrity are practiced.

For this reason the College strongly condemns academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty includes cheating, plagiarism or other improper appropriation of another's work as one's own and falsifying records to advance one's academic standing.

Cheating includes but is not limited to copying answers, stealing and/or disseminating tests or answer keys, using someone else's data in preparation of reports or assignments and assisting others in such practices.

Plagiarism involves the presentation of another person's words, ideas, or work as one's own. It includes but is not limited to copying any material, (written or non-written) without proper acknowledgement of its source, and paraphrasing another's work or ideas without proper acknowledgement.

Falsifying records includes but is not limited to falsifying or improperly altering college records and documents, or knowingly supplying false or misleading information to others (e.g. the College, other educational institutions or prospective employers).

Any form of academic dishonesty as defined by the faculty member or department is a serious offense requiring disciplinary measures. Discipline for academic dishonesty involving a specific course shall be first determined by the instructor of the course and may include failure of the specific assignment, project or test or failure of the course. The student may appeal the instructor's decision in accordance with the College's Student Academic Complaint Procedures. In cases of academic dishonesty the faculty assigned grade supersedes a student-initiated withdrawal. In cases where disciplinary measures beyond course failure may be deemed appropriate or dishonesty that is not related to a specific course, the student may be disciplined in accordance with the Student Conduct Policy with the appropriate vice president involved in the decision.

(William Rainey Harper College Catalog 2006-2007, p. 26; [http://www.harpercollege.edu/catalog/2006/2006\\_07sec2.pdf](http://www.harpercollege.edu/catalog/2006/2006_07sec2.pdf))

## COURSE SCHEDULE (READINGS, EXAMS, & RESEARCH ASSIGNMENTS)

This schedule is subject to change – any changes will be announced in class and on the website.

<b>Week of:</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Chapter</b>	<b>Assignments</b>
Aug. 25	Introduction	1	
Sep. 3	The Founding	2	Newsmaker Resume due Sept. 3
Sep. 8	Federalism	3	
Sep. 15	Civil Liberties	4	<b>EXAM 1: September 17</b>
Sep. 22	Civil Liberties	4	Court Case Group Presentations
Sep. 29	Civil Rights	5	Court Case Group Presentations
Oct. 6	Public Opinion	6	Ideology Survey due October 13
Oct. 13	Media	10	<b>EXAM 2: October 15</b>
Oct. 20	Media	10	Newsmaker Presentations begin
Oct. 27	Elections	8, 9	
Nov. 3	Interest Groups	7	
Nov. 10	Interest Groups	7	<b>EXAM 3: November 12</b>
Nov. 17	Congress	11	
Nov. 24	Congress	11	
Dec. 1	Presidency	12	<b>RESEARCH PAPER DUE Dec. 3</b>
Dec. 8	Courts	14	
Dec. 15	<b>FINAL EXAM</b>		<b>Sec. 6: Monday, 12/15 1:45pm</b> <b>Sec. 7: Wednesday, 12/ 17 1:45pm</b>