

Introduction to American Government

POLI 2051-02
Classroom: 116 Stubbs
Class Dates: Monday-Wednesday-Friday
Class Time: 1:30-2:20

Mr. Thomas Varacalli
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Course Description and Objectives:

The purpose of this course is to introduce undergraduate students to the various components of American government. The first part of the course begins with a brief historical overview of the American Founding, with a particular emphasis on the structure of the American Constitution. The second part explores the various institutional structures of American government. The course concludes with a brief overview of various extraneous factors that affect governance.

As a general education elective in the social sciences, this course is designed to prepare students to meet the following competency requirements: “*LSU graduates will demonstrate an understanding of the informing factors of global independence, including economic forces, political dynamics, and cultural and linguistic differences.*”

Time Requirements:

Please keep in mind the university’s definition of work required for each credit hour: “not less than one hour (50 minutes) of lecture/classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours out-of-class student work across 15 weeks for one semester.” Given that this is a 3-hour course, this means that students are expected to devote a total of 9 hours of work each week: 3 hours in the classroom and an additional 6 hours of course related work outside the classroom (for this class it means reading, studying, and working on the course assignments).

Required Text:

Theodore J. Lowi, Benjamin Ginsberg, Kenneth A. Shepsle, and Stephen Ansolabehere, *American Government: Power & Purpose*, 13th Edition (Brief) (New York: W.W. Norton, 2014). [ISBN: 978-0-393-92246-2 (pbk)]

All other course readings will be posted on Moodle.

Grading System and Class Requirements:

Test #1: 20%
Test #2: 20%
Test #3: 20%
Final Examination: 20%
Book Review: 20%

Tests #1-3 will take place in class. They will consist mainly of objective questions (multiple choice, true and false, and/or mix-and-match). The dates of these tests are provided in the “Course Readings” section of the syllabus.

The *final examination* will take place on Friday, May 8 in Stubbs 116 from 10 A.M. – Noon.

Instructions for the *Book Review*: Students will be expected to select an academic book from the list of books provided at the end of the syllabus. They must read this book throughout the semester independently. A book review of *at least 1200 words* will be due on Friday, April 24. The book review must include a brief summary of the book, an analysis of the book’s thesis, and an examination of the various methods employed within the book. Further instructions about the book review will be given in February.

The following grading scale will be used in this class:

A = 90-100

B = 80-89

C = 70-79

D = 60-69

F = 59 or lower

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*** There will be *no* make-ups for tests, unless for severe emergency.

*** A late assignment will be docked a letter grade for every day it is late.

Notice on Attendance

In order to receive a passable grade, students are required to attend class. For every three (3) unexcused absences, the student’s grade will be lowered a full-letter grade. Examples of excused absences, which will not endanger a student’s grade, are familial emergencies and duties (e.g. a sudden death, attending a wedding, etc.) and severe illness.

Students must read the assigned daily readings. They should be ready to discuss the subject at hand. Bring the assigned book or reading to class.

Please do not be tardy. If you are late, please enter the classroom as quietly as possible and sit at the first available seat in order to avoid being a distraction to your professor and to your fellow classmates.

Fundamental Points

Cheating and Collusion: Students guilty of cheating exams or colluding will immediately be brought to the dean for disciplinary action.

Classroom Conduct: Fooling around with classmates, texting, passing notes, not paying attention, etc. will not be tolerated. Be attentive and courteous to your professor and your fellow colleagues. Students must abide by the LSU Code of Student Conduct: (<http://www.lsu.edu/judicialaffairs>).

Electronics: Laptops, phones, I-Pads, e-readers, and other electronics may not be used, unless they are for the sole purpose of taking notes.

Food: Students must refrain from eating in the classroom. A discreet drink is permissible.

Moodle: To access the course's Moodle page, please sign into your My LSU account. Contact the professor immediately if you cannot access it.

Plagiarism: Students guilty of plagiarism will immediately be brought to the attention of the dean for disciplinary action. There is a no tolerance policy about plagiarism, i.e. no "second chances." In order to avoid cases of plagiarism, please make sure to cite accurately and appropriately your sources. Familiarize yourself with the latest volume of the Chicago Book of Style, which is available at the Middleton Library's Reference Desk.

Special Needs: For students who have special needs or require accommodations through Disability Services, please advise me of your situation so arrangements can be made.

Course Readings:

Week 1

W., 1/14: Introduction to the Course

Segment I: The Philosophy and Constitutionalism of the United States

F., 1/16: Natural Rights and the Philosophy of the Declaration of Independence

Read: Chapter 2 of Lowi, p. 24-28

Declaration of Independence in Lowi, p. A3-A6

Abraham Lincoln, *Gettysburg Address* [on Moodle]

Martin Luther King Jr., *Letter from the Birmingham Jail* [on Moodle]

Week 2

M., 1/19: No class – Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday

W., 1/21: The Articles of Confederation and the Constitutional Convention

Read: Chapter 2 of Lowi, p. 29-36

The Articles of Confederation in Lowi, p. A7-A12

F., 1/23: The Structure of the American Constitution

Read: Chapter 2 of Lowi, p. 36-46

The Constitution of the United States in Lowi, p. A13-A23

Week 3

- M., 1/26: Federalists and Anti-Federalists
Read: James Madison, *Federalist #10* and *#51* in Lowi, p. A34-A42
Anonymous, *Federalist Farmer #1* [on Moodle]
- W., 1/28: The Bill of Rights
Read: Chapter 4 of Lowi, p. 93-105
- F., 1/30: The Seventeen Other Amendments of the United States Constitution
Read: Chapter 2 of Lowi, p. 47-56
Amendments to the United States Constitution in Lowi, p. A24-A33

Week 4:

- M., 2/2: Civil Liberties
Read: Chapter 4 of Lowi, p. 84-93
- W., 2/4: Civil Rights
Read: Chapter 4 of Lowi, p. 105-129
- F., 2/6: **Examination #1 (on Chapters 2, 4 and Supporting Documents)**

Segment II: The Structure of the United States Government

Week 5:

- M., 2/9: Federalism
Read: Chapter 3 of Lowi, p. 58-77
- W., 2/11: Federalism Continued
- F., 2/13: The Separation of Powers
Read: Chapter 3 of Lowi, p. 77-83

Week 6:

- M., 2/16: No class – Mardi Gras Break
- W., 2/18: Introduction to the Legislative Branch
Read: Chapter 5 of Lowi, p. 130-145
- F., 2/20: Congressional Lawmaking
Read: Chapter 5 of Lowi, p. 145-167

Week 7:

- M., 2/23: An Introduction to State Legislators
Read: Keith E. Hamm and Gary F. Moncrief, “Legislative Politics in the States”
in *Politics in the American States*, p. 163-207 [on Moodle]
- W., 2/25: The Presidency
Read: Chapter 6 of Lowi, p. 168-185
- F., 2/27: Presidential Government
Read: Chapter 6 of Lowi, p. 186-203

- Week 8:
M., 3/2: Governors
Read: Alan Rosenthal, "Playing the Hands They Are Dealt" in *The Best Job in Politics: Exploring How Governors Succeed as Policy Leaders*, p. 24-54
[available on Moodle]
W., 3/4: Review Period/Catch-Up Day
F., 3/6: **Examination #2 (on Chapters 3, 5, 6 and supporting documents)**
- Week 9:
M., 3/9: Bureaucracy and the Executive Branch
Read: Chapter 7 of Lowi, p. 204-219
W., 3/11: Bureaucracy Continued
Read: Chapter 7 of Lowi, p. 220-236
F., 3/13: Critiques of Bureaucracy and Administrative Law
Read: Philip Hamburger, "Is Administrative Law Unlawful?" [selections on Moodle]
Thomas G. West, "Progressivism and the Transformation of American Government" in *The Progressive Revolution in Politics and Political Science*, p. 13-33 [on Moodle]
- Week 10:
M., 3/16: The Judiciary
Read: Chapter 8 of Lowi, p. 238-256
W., 3/18: The Supreme Court
Read: Chapter 8 of Lowi, p. 256-272
F., 3/20: The State Courts
Read: Melinda Gann Hall, "State Courts: Politics and the Judicial Process" in *Politics in the American States*, p. 251-278 [on Moodle]
- Week 11:
M., 3/23: Elections
Read: Chapter 10 of Lowi, p. 312-333
W., 3/25: How Voters Decide
Read: Chapter 10 of Lowi, p. 333-348
F., 3/27: Analysis of the Elections of 2012 and 2014
Read: Chapter 10 of Lowi, p. 348-356
- Week 12:
M., 3/30: **Examination #3 (on Chapters 7, 8, 10 and supporting documents)**
W., 4/1: Political Parties
Read: Chapter 11 of Lowi, p. 358-379
F., 4/3: No Class – Spring Break
- Week 13:
M., 4/6: No Class – Spring Break
W., 4/8: No Class – Spring Break
F., 4/10: No Class – Spring Break

- Week 14:
M., 4/13: History of Political Parties
Read: Chapter 11 of Lowi, p. 380-393
W., 4/15: The Democratic Party
Read: *The 2012 Democratic Party Platform* [on Moodle]
F., 4/17: The Republican Party
Read: *The 2012 Republican Party Platform* [on Moodle]

Segment III: Public Opinion and Extraneous Factors Affecting the American Republic

- Week 15:
M., 4/20: Public Opinion
Read: Chapter 9 of Lowi, p. 274-300
W., 4/22: The Media
Read: Chapter 9 of Lowi, p. 300-310
Ramon Lopez, "Why Jon Stewart Is Bad for America" [link on Moodle]
F., 4/24: No class – Book Review due by e-mail at 11:59 P.M.

- Week 16:
M., 4/27: Interest Groups
Read: Chapter 12 of Lowi, p. 394-406
W., 4/29: The Tactics of Interest Groups
Read: Chapter 12 of Lowi, p. 406-424
F., 5/1: Review/Catch-Up

Final Examination: Friday, May 8 at 10A.M.-Noon
(Chapters on 9, 11, 12, supporting documents)

Syllabus Appendix

Book Review: Choose one of the following monographs to review.

On the American Founding:

Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*

Charles Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the United States* [Progressive critique of the American Founding]

M.E. Bradford, *Original Intentions* [States-rights oriented interpretation of the United States]

David Hendrickson, *Peace Pact: The Lost World of the American Founding*

Pauline Maier, *Ratification* [In-depth history of the ratification of the United States]

Vincent Philip Munoz, *God and the Founders: Madison, Washington, and Jefferson*

Herbert Storing, *What the Antifederalists Were For*

Gordon Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* [A modern classic history of the American Founding]

On Slavery and Race:

R. Bentley Anderson, *Black, White, and Catholic: New Orleans Inter-racialism*

Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made*

Martin Luther King, *Strength to Love* [collection of King's sermons]

Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas, *The Lincoln-Douglas Debates* [Famous series of debate in 1858]

Richard Valelly, *The Two Reconstructions: The Struggle for Black Enfranchisement*

Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery* [Autobiography of Booker T. Washington]

On American Progressivism/Liberalism:

Richard Gamble, *The War of Righteousness: Progressive Christianity, the Great War, and the Messianic Nation*

Henry George, *Progress and Poverty* [Classic Progressive text]

Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform* [a classic; explores populism and progressivism]

Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Political Thought*

Daniel Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings* [Explores how European ideas affected American thought in late 19th c.]

William Graham Sumner, *What the Social Classes Owe to Each Other* [Primary Source: Social Darwinism]

Woodrow Wilson, *Congressional Government* [Classic Progressive text]

On American Conservatism:

Barry Goldwater, *The Conscience of a Conservative* [classic conservative/libertarian text]

Russell Kirk, *The Conservative Mind: From Burke to Eliot* [touches upon European conservatism, too]

Russell Kirk, *The Roots of the American Order*

George H. Nash, *The Intellectual Conservative Movement since 1945*

George H. Nash, *Reappraising the Right*

Rick Perlstein, *The Invisible Bridge: The Fall of Nixon and Rise of Reagan* [liberal historian]

Richard Weaver, *Ideas Have Consequences* [primary source responsible for reviving conservatism in 1940s]

On the Various Institutions of the United States:

R. Douglas Arnold, *The Logic of Congressional Action*

Lawrence Baum, *The Puzzle of Judicial Politics*

Edward S. Corwin, *The "Higher Law" Background of American Constitutional Law*

Richard Fenno, *Home Style: House Members in Their Districts*

Philip Hamburger, *Separation of Church and State*

Philip Hamburger, *Law and Judicial Duty*

Jack Knight, *The Choices Justices Make*

Kieth Krehbiel, *Pivotal Politics: A Theory of U.S. Lawmaking*

David Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection*

Sidney M. Milkis, *The American Presidency: Origins and Development, 1776-2011*

David K. Nichols, *The Myth of the Modern Presidency*

Thomas E. Ricks, *The Generals: American Military Command from World War II to Today*

Jeffrey A. Segal and Harold J. Spaeth, *The Supreme Court and the Attitudinal Model Revisited*

Steven Skowronek, *The Policies Presidents Make*

Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Strategy and Policy*