

# INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

## Political Science 105

Spring 2005/2006

Section 02 11:00 - 11:50 MWF

Section 03 1:00 - 1:50 MWF

Dr. William K. Hall

250 Bradley Hall

### OBJECTIVES OF THE COURSE

The major objective of this course is to provide you with both a broad overview as well as a more thorough grasp of the American political and governmental systems. During the semester, we will focus on the institutions, decision-making processes and politics of the national government. Upon completion of the course, you should be better able to describe, explain, analyze, evaluate, and participate in the political system.

### BOOKS FOR THE COURSE

Two paperback books are required for this course. They are available at the Bradley Bookstore:

Kerbel, Matthew R., American Government: Your Voice, Your Future, Atomic Dog Publishing, 2005.

Wasserman, Gary, Politics in Action: Cases in Modern American Government, Houghton-Mifflin Co., 2006.

The Kerbel textbook is based on the premise that for most of you, American national government/politics seem distant and irrelevant. It will not come as much of a surprise (I hope!), that the author argues that government/politics are totally important and relevant to each of you. Importance and relevance are the themes which tie the various chapters of his text together.

When you purchase the Kerbel textbook in Print Edition, you will receive the code necessary to access the text's Online Edition. Both the online version of the textbook as well as the "hard" copy have some very user-friendly "devices" in each chapter. Each chapter opens with an **outline** of what is contained in that chapter. You know immediately where the author is headed in each chapter. Material for each chapter is divided into relatively small **learning modules**.

Each chapter contains a number of "**boxes**" highlighting information presented in the

various learning modules. Unlike many American Government texts, “boxed information” is not secondary, relatively-unimportant add-on information attractively presented in a shaded box.... Materials contained in the boxes are integral to understanding each chapter. Students should treat the material in them accordingly. The **final section** of each chapter attempts to tie together the material in the chapter and the question(s) raised by the chapter. For example, in Chapter One, the final section returns to the main question raised in the first pages of the chapter—should you care about politics. Following the presentation of material in each chapter is a **chapter review**; a list of **key terms** with the location of those terms in the chapter; as well as a set of **multiple-guess questions** to test your understanding of the chapter’s material.

The Online Edition of the text allows for a wide range of searches to be run. You can search for specific words, phrases, concepts, etc. The “boxed” material in the printed edition can be found by clicking on the “Learn More” icons in the Online Edition. The Online Edition also allows you to “highlight” material in each chapter which then can be saved in a separate file for review prior to an examination. There are **interactive** figures and tables in the Online Edition. Students are urged to review pages *xviii* - *xx* of the Print Edition to learn about the various features of both the Online Edition as well as the Print Edition of the textbook.

## **CLASSROOM METHODS AND TECHNIQUES**

This course will feature a combination of some lecture and (I hope) lots of class discussion. When appropriate, we will devote time to analyzing and understanding the many facets of the current American political scene--e.g., what is shaping up to be the Armageddon of confirmation battles over the nomination of Judge Samuel Alito to the U.S. Supreme Court (to the vacancy created by the retirement of Justice Sandra Day O’Connor); the partisan battles over policy issues in the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress; the early skirmishes of the 2006 congressional election battles; the continuing political battles over the war in Iraq; and any new and interesting national or world events which occur during this semester. The use of specific, contemporary political events has proven to be a good way to explore and understand American government and politics.

## **KEEPING UP WITH THE NEWS**

Because we will make classroom use of political events and happenings beyond our classroom door, it is necessary as well as desirable for you to keep up with the news. Doing so enhances the value of this course for you as well as for your fellow class members.

If you have not already done so, you should establish a routine of reading a major daily newspaper (hard copy or online), watching TV news and commentary programs, listening to news on the radio, and/or following the news on the Internet. Establishing such a routine will put you in position to ask informed questions and make more rational contributions to our classroom discussions.

## GRADES

Your overall course grade will be weighted as follows:

Examination I	75 points
Examination II	75 points
Examination III	100 points
Projects	200 points
Class Participation	30 points

Course grades will be determined as follows:

A – 480 - 450
B – 449 - 420
C – 419 - 390
D – 389 - 360
F – 359 or less

## EXAMINATIONS

There will be three in-class examinations. The first examination will feature three pairs of essay questions. You will be asked to answer one question from each pair. The first examination (over Sections II, III and IV) will be given on Friday, March 10.

The second examination will also feature three pairs of essay questions. The second examination (over Sections V and VI) will be given on Wednesday, April 12.

The third examination will feature three pairs of essay questions plus a section of identification/short answer questions. The third examination (over Section VII) will be given during Final Exam Week:

**Section 02 12:00 - 1:30 p.m., Monday, May 8.**  
**Section 03 9:00 - 10:30 a.m., Friday, May 5.**

## **MAKE-UP EXAMINATIONS**

A make-up examination will be given only under the most extraordinary circumstances, and then only for a legitimate, excused absence. For example, a student who will be unavoidably absent on an examination day because of participation in official intercollegiate events (e.g., a member of the BU varsity coed Survivor” team) should see the instructor before the scheduled examination is given in order to discuss a make-up.

## **PROJECTS**

Many of the ten projects will consist of assignments from the Wasserman casebook. There will be several exercises not from the casebook.

## **CLASS PARTICIPATION**

I have five expectations of each student in my 105 class:

- (1) **That you will be attendance at ALL of our class sessions.** Students who miss four (4) or more class sessions will receive zero points for class participation.
- (2) That you read the assigned readings from Kerbel, Wasserman, and/or any class handouts—before coming to class.
- (3) That you will be aware of and knowledgeable about current political events, activities, and happenings.
- (4) That you come to class prepared to make a meaningful contribution to our class discussion.
- (5) That you will be an active participant and will make a meaningful contribution to our class discussion.

## **EXTRA-CREDIT WORK**

There is no such thing as extra-credit work in this course.

## **ACADEMIC DISHONESTY**

Students are expected to maintain complete academic integrity. Failure to do so will result in a zero (0) for the assignment/exam. Cheating and plagiarism have no place in an academic setting. While I encourage students to discuss the material covered in class among themselves, all work submitted for assignments and exams must be your own!

## **THE CLASH OF IDEAS**

We will be dealing with an array of issues on which many individuals have strong opinions. All viewpoints are welcome in this class so long as they are expressed in thoughtful, courteous and tolerant ways.

## **CELLPHONE FREE ZONE**

As a courtesy to others in this class, please shut your cellphone OFF when coming into our class. Although many of you may regard this as cruel and unusual punishment, please plan to leave your cellphone off until you are out of our classroom. Should your cellphone ring during our class, not only would it be bad karma, it will very likely inflict damage on your grade in this course....

## **OFFICE HOURS**

Although you will see me three times a week in the classroom, it is possible you will want/need to see me in my office (**426-C Bradley Hall**). Any time I am in my office, you are welcome. I make a special effort to be available to students, especially at these scheduled office hours:

Monday	9:15 - 10:45, 2:00 - 3:30
Tuesday	9:15 - 11:45, 3:00 - 3:30
Wednesday	9:15 - 10:45, 2:00 - 3:30
Thursday	9:15 - 11:45
Friday	9:15 - 10:45, 2:00 - 3:00

Should you need to reach me by phone, my office phone is 677-2495. If I am not available when you call, you may leave a voice-mail message for me, or you can reach the departmental administrative assistant at 677-2502 and leave a message with her. I can also be reached by email at: [hall@bradley.edu](mailto:hall@bradley.edu)

# **COURSE OUTLINE AND SCHEDULE**

## **I. COURSE INTRODUCTION**

**January 18 – Introduction to Course and Useful Orientation**

## **II. SHOULD WE CARE AND WHY SHOULD WE CARE ABOUT AMERICAN POLITICS**

**January 20 – “What, me care?” (Alfred E. Neuman–sort of)**

Reading:

Kerbel, Chapter #1 (pp. 2-19)

Wasserman, Chapter #1 (pp. 1-14)

## **III. FOUNDATIONS FOR AMERICAN DEMOCRACY: SETTING THE GROUND RULES FOR POLITICS**

**A. January 23, 25, 27, 30 and February 1 – The Constitution**

Reading:

Kerbel, Chapter #2 (pp. 20-48)

**B. February 3 and 6 – Federalism: Dividing Political Power Among Levels of Government**

Reading:

Kerbel, Chapter #2 [part] (pp. 40-46)

Wasserman, Chapter #2 (pp. 15-24)

## **IV. APPLYING THE GROUND RULES**

**A. February 8, 10 and 13 – Interpreting and Applying the Constitution: The Constitution Is What the Judges Say It Is**

Reading:

Kerbel, Chapter #12 (pp. 356-387)

Wasserman, Chapter #13 (pp. 156-168)

**B. February 15, 17, 20 and 22 – Protecting Civil Liberties in a Changing World**

Reading:

Kerbel, Chapter #13 (pp. 390-419)

Wasserman, Chapter #4 (pp. 39-48)

**C. February 24, 27, March 1, 3, 6 and 8 – Establishing Civil Rights**

Reading:

Kerbel, Chapter #14 (pp. 420-447)

Wasserman, Chapter #3 (pp. 25-38)

\*\*\*\*\* EXAM I on Friday, March 10 \*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\* SPRING BREAK – No Class on March 13, 15 or 17 \*\*\*\*\*

**V. MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK–I**

**A. March 20, 22 and 24 – The Power of Public Opinion**

Reading:

Kerbel, Chapter #3 (pp. 50-84)

Wasserman, Chapter #5 (pp. 49-59)

**B. March 27 and 29 – The Influences of the Mass Media**

Reading:

Kerbel, Chapter #5 (pp. 122-155)

Wasserman, Chapter #9 (pp. 98-112)

\*\*\*\*\* No Class on Friday, March 31 \*\*\*\*\*

**VI. MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK–II**

**A. April 3 and 5 – Political Parties: Our Connection To Government and Those Who Govern**

Reading:

Kerbel, Chapter #6 (pp. 156-181)

Wasserman, Chapter #7 (pp. 73-84)

**B. April 7 and 10 – Interest Groups: Our Access to Government and Those Who Govern**

Reading:

Kerbel, Chapter #8 (pp. 214-247)

Wasserman, Chapter #8 (pp. 85-97)

**\*\*\*\*\* EXAM II on Wednesday, April 12 \*\*\*\*\***

**VII. INSTITUTIONS AND PROCESSES OF DEMOCRACY**

**A. April 14 and 17 – Electing Congress and the President**

Reading:

Kerbel, Chapter #7 (pp. 182-213)

Wasserman, Chapter #6 (pp. 60-72)

**B. April 19, 21 and 24 – Congress: The Institution, the People and the Process**

Reading:

Kerbel, Chapter #9 (pp. 250-289)

Wasserman, Chapter #10 (pp. 113-127)

**C. April 26, 28 and May 1 – The Presidency, the President, and the Executive Branch**

Reading:

Kerbel, Chapters #10 and #11 (pp. 290-325, 326-354)

Wasserman, Chapters #11 and #12 (pp. 128-142, 143-155)

**\*\*\*\*\* EXAM III – As per the *Academic Handbook* exam schedule \*\*\*\*\***

**Section 02 12:00 - 1:30 p.m., Monday, May 8**

**Section 03 9:00 - 10:30 a.m., Friday, May 5**