

POS 2042
Introduction to American Government
Spring 2009
M, W, F 11:00 to 11:50 am

Dr. Kevin A. Hill
Office: DM 480
E-Mail: khill@fiu.edu
Office Hours: M, W, F: 12 noon until 12:50 pm

Introduction

This course presents an overview of the political system of the United States. It is a requirement for anyone seeking to major in political science, and it also serves as an FIU core curriculum social science course. Thus, there will be a lot of us in this class who have never taken a political science course. That does not mean we are going to “dumb down” the course. It will be challenging and interesting, but we will try to avoid excessive social science jargon terms while making our examination of American politics both academic and practical.

The study of American government is a huge subject. So, this course will cover mostly U.S. government at the federal level, with a special emphasis on the Constitution of the United States and how it has evolved in the past 220 years.

Requirements

A. Readings.

Shea, Green, and Smith. 2009. *Living Democracy: Brief National Edition* (2nd edition). Pearson/Prentice-Hall.

B. Graded Assignments

There will be two midterm exams and a final exam. Please note that the exams are not cumulative, and that all will be multiple-choice exams.

| | | |
|---------------|--------------------------|----------------|
| Midterm Exams | February 13 and March 13 | 66% (33% each) |
| Final Exam | Exam Week | 34% |

C. Class Policies

Read these policies carefully, as they constitute a binding agreement between me as an instructor and you as a student.

1. All grades are based on a 100-point grade scale, with the following letters and corresponding numbers:

| | | | | | | | |
|----|----------|----|----------|----|----------|----|----------|
| A | 95-100 | B | 85-87.99 | C | 75-77.99 | D | 65-67.99 |
| A- | 90-94.99 | B- | 80-84.99 | C- | 70-74.99 | D- | 60-64.99 |
| B+ | 88-89.99 | C+ | 78-79.99 | D+ | 68-69.99 | F | 0-59.99 |

2. I will not argue about grades, nor will I change them except if there is a calculation error. If you are unhappy with either your final grade or an assignment grade, you need to take it up through the University student grievance procedure. I will not re-grade exams or papers, I do not read first drafts of papers, and I do not change grades no matter how much you might try to browbeat me about them.

3. You will be tested on both lecture and reading material on the midterms and the final.

4. Don't let me catch you cheating. Cheaters will be referred to the University authorities, with my recommendation that they be suspended from the University for not less than one academic year. You will also, at a very minimum, fail the course. Also, please remember that those caught cheating will have a notation made in their University records that they have been found guilty of academic misconduct. **THIS CAN AND WILL KEEP YOU OUT OF LAW SCHOOL, SO DO NOT BE TEMPTED TO CHEAT IN ANY WAY.** It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the University's definitions of cheating and general academic misconduct. They can be found in your student handbook.

6. There is to be no leaving class early without my EXPRESS PERMISSION IN ADVANCE at the beginning of the session. If you have to leave early, you should not come to class that day. Leaving early is disruptive to the other students, and will not be tolerated.

There is no class attendance policy. It is up to you to show up to class (ON TIME!!). There will be no extra penalty for missing class. Likewise, there is no extra credit attached to good or perfect attendance. Please realize, however, that students who are in class everyday will invariably do much better on their graded assignments than those who miss class more than occasionally.

Class Outline

Part I. Rights, responsibilities, and democracy

Introduction to Class

Constitutional foundations of American government Ch. 2

Federalism Ch. 3

Civil liberties I: freedom of expression Ch. 5

Civil liberties II: privacy and due process Ch. 5

Civil rights I: race and ethnicity Ch. 5

Civil rights II: gender Ch. 5

Elections and Voting Ch. 12

Political Parties Ch. 13

Interest Groups Ch. 11

Public Opinion Ch. 9

The Media Ch. 10

Part II. Political Institutions

Congress I: Running for Congress Ch. 12

Congress II: Constitutional functions and organization Ch. 6

Congress III: The Lawmaking Process Ch. 6

The President I: Running for President Ch. 12

The President II: Constitutional responsibilities Ch. 7

The President III: The Modern President Ch. 7

The Judiciary I: the dual state-federal system Ch. 4

Important Dates:

| | | |
|-------------|----------------|--------------|
| January 19 | NO CLASS | MLK Holiday |
| February 13 | Midterm Exam 1 | |
| March 13 | Midterm Exam 2 | |
| March 16-21 | NO CLASS | Spring Break |
| April 17 | Last class Day | |