

GOVT 203-01
U.S. Government
Spring 2002

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Class hours: MWR 9:05-10:00 a.m.

Office hours: MWR 11:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m., and by appointment.

This is an introductory course in how politics works in the United States and how it affects you. We will begin by looking at how the United States was established. Next, we will examine various forms of politics – who gets involved, how, and what power they have. Next, we will examine the national government – the president, the congress, the courts, and the bureaucracy. At the end, we will see how all these elements are involved in the making of public policy. Throughout, we will consider how democratic our political system is, and discuss current political issues.

You will learn by discussion and doing more than by lecture, so it is important that you come to class and participate. Learning by discussion works best if we have a variety of viewpoints and experiences in the classroom, and everyone is willing to share their thoughts and listen to everyone else. Part of your grade is based on your participation in this process.

You will be expected to:

1. Attend class regularly and on time. Missing 4 classes, or repeatedly showing up late, will reduce your grade. Do not make other appointments for this time slot.
2. Participate in class discussions and activities.
3. Do assigned reading before class so that you will be able to participate.
4. Ask questions if you do not understand something.
5. You must hand in assignments on time, and take exams on the scheduled days. **I may or may not allow make-ups, at my discretion.**
6. **Keep abreast of current events**, especially national political news!

HOW TO LEARN ABOUT CURRENT EVENTS

- Read a newspaper at least a few times a week. I recommend the New York Times, and can get you heavily discounted student subscriptions.
- Watch a TV news program that covers national political news.
- Listen to a radio news program that covers national political news. Try National Public Radio at 93.9 FM and 820 AM from 6-10 a.m. and 4-6 p.m.
- Look at news and political magazines. Take advantage of the Hayes Library's collection to check out the variety that is available. Newsmagazines like Newsweek and US News and World Report are in the Periodical Room, as are political magazines that range the political perspective from left (the Nation) to Clinton-New Democrat Liberal (the New Republic) to right (National Review).
- Watch C-SPAN and C-SPAN 2, the networks that show congress in action and cover other political events of interest.

Required: Greenberg and Page, The Struggle for Democracy. Harper Collins (any ed.)

Margaret Groarke, ed. Choices. Pearson Publishing, 2002.

Recommended: Diane Hacker. A Pocket Style Manual. This book, or another like it, will help you improve your writing by eliminating common errors and making your statements stronger.

Grade:

Assignments	30%
Midterm	30%
Final Exam	30%
Attendance and participation in class	10%

Week of January 22 **Introduction:** How the course will be organized; discussion of the course, its central focus on democracy, and current political events to watch.
Assignment: Read Chapter 1 of The Struggle for Democracy (hereafter G&P), and the Declaration of Independence (G&P p. A-3).

Week of January 28 **The Constitution:** What was the early U.S. like? How was the Constitution written? What structures of government did it establish? When you read the Federalist and Anti-Federalist papers, ask yourself what arguments the Federalists used to support passage of the Constitution, and what arguments the Anti-Federalists used to oppose it.
Assignment: G&P Chapter 2. Readings by Patrick Henry, Thurgood Marshall, and Lucretia Mott, et. al.

Week of February 4 **Federalism:** Why did the Founders establish a FEDERAL system? How does it affect us today?
Assignment: G&P Chapter 3. Choices: Derthick, "American Federalism: Half-Full or Half-Empty?"; Clinton, "Executive Order 13083"; Wildavsky, "Birthday Cake Federalism."

Week of February 11 **Civil Liberties, Civil Rights:** What rights and liberties do we have as Americans? Where do they come from? What threatens our rights?
Assignment: G&P Chapter 15. Choices: 4, 5, 6.

Week of February 18 **Congress:** How does Congress make law? What influences congressional decision-making? How well does Congress represent the people?
Assignment: G&P Chapter 11. Choices: 16, 17, 18, 25.

Week of February 25 **Presidency:** Executive and Legislative Powers: What is the president's role in government, and how has it grown through history? What powers does the president have, and what constrains his ability to do what he might like to do?
Assignment: G&P Chapter 12. Choices: 19, 20.

Week of March 4

MIDTERM EXAM, Thursday, March 7!

The Executive Branch (AKA the Federal Bureaucracy): The three million employees of the Executive Branch aren't elected either. How accountable are they? Why do people complain about bureaucracy?
Assignment: G&P Chapter 11. Choices: 24

Week of March 18 **The Courts:** What is the role of an appointed (not elected) Supreme Court in a democratic society? How do justices interpret the law?
Assignment: G&P Chapter 14. Choices: 21, 22, 23.

Week of March 25 **Public Opinion:** What is public opinion, and to what extent does it influence public policy?
Assignment: G&P Chapter 5; "How Polls are Conducted" at www.gallup.com/poll/faq000101.asp; "The Seven Stages of Public Opinion" at www.publicagenda.org/aboutpubopinion.aboutpubop7.htm; "20 Questions Journalists Should Ask about Poll Results" at www.publicagenda.org/aboutpubopinion.aboutpubop1.htm.

The Media: What roles do the media play in politics?
Assignment: G&P Chapter 6.

Week of April 1

No class Monday – Happy Easter!

Interest Groups and Lobbyists: How do interest groups influence political decisions? Do they allow for a variety of voices to be heard, or do they unfairly emphasize certain interests at the expense of others?
Assignment: G&P Chapter 7.

Week of April 8 **Social Protest Movements:** Here we will look at less conventional forms of political action. Why do people organize movements instead of interest groups? How is their role in politics different? Why is it sometimes hard to distinguish between them?
Assignment: G&P Chapter 8. Choices: 12.

Week of April 15 **Political Parties:** What do political parties do? Parties are often described as being in decline. If they were revitalized, could they make American politics more democratic?
Assignment: G&P Chapter 9. Choices: 9, 10, 11.

Week of April 22 **Voting and Elections:** Do elections matter? What "mandate," if any, did Clinton get in 1992 and 1996, or the Republican Congress in 1994? We will discuss these elections and their significance. We will also discuss how the franchise has expanded in the United States.
Assignment: G&P Chapter 10. Choices: 13, 14, 15.

Week of April 29 **The United States and the World**
Assignment: G&P Chapter 18. Choices: 27, 28.

May 6 **Last day of Class:** We will review for the exam, so bring your questions.

Final Exam