

Introduction to American Government

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Ladd 308

Office Hours: MW10:00 a.m. – noon; T/TH 3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.. and by appointment

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We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.

Declaration of Independence, 1776

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men and women are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions, 1848

When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was fall heir. This note was the promise that all men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Martin Luther King, Jr., *I Have a Dream*, 1963

Nothing is more certain than the indispensable necessity of government; and it is equally undeniable that whenever and however it is instituted, the people must cede to it some of their natural rights, in order to vest it with requisite powers.

John Jay, *Federalist Paper 2*, 1787

We would strongly recommend that the United States government face the Indian problem squarely. That it acknowledge to the nations of the world the international status of Indian nations as perhaps among the smallest and weakest nations of the world but yet as nations with an inherent right to political and cultural existence comparable to any other nation.

Vine Deloria, Jr. (Sioux), *Behind the Trail of Broken Treaties: An Indian Declaration of Independence*, 1974

Government is not reason. It is not eloquence. It is a force, like fire: a dangerous servant and a terrible master.

George Washington

Course Description

This introductory course critically examines United States national government with an emphasis on constitutionalism, Congress, the judiciary, the Presidency, the role of citizens, and the government-to-government relationship with Indian tribes.

Required Texts:

- American Government: Power and Purpose, Brief Tenth Edition, 2008 Election Update (L, G & S) Theodore J. Lowi, Benjamin Ginsberg, and Kenneth A. Shepsle
- *Federalist Papers*, (available on the internet)-see assignment section (FP)
- *The Great Law of Peace* (“Iroquois” Constitution) (available on the internet)

Additional Readings will be handed out in class (HO)

Course Requirements

1. Attendance is required. Participation in class discussion is expected
2. Constitution Quiz **Must receive a grade of 75% to pass the course**

The remainder of the requirements are to be negotiated by the class and must include the following:

~ a way for me to evaluate that you...

- have you read and understood course readings
- can apply course concepts to contemporary politics
- can research topics related to American Government
- can write a “scholarly” essay

~ a class project

~ at least 1 public speaking moment

Equity. I assume that if you stay in the course you have agreed to the terms of the course that you negotiated. I do not make exceptions for individual students; however, *some* parts of the syllabus may be collectively re-negotiated. Only formal, thoughtful, legible petitions, petitions that have been endorsed by every student on the class roster, will be considered.

Course Standards

Course Standards

Attendance. It counts. Poor attendance, defined as 3 or more absences, will result in your final grade being lowered. Tardiness counts as an absence.

Participation. I assume that if you stay in the course you agree to carefully prepare all class assignments and come to class ready to actively listen, take meaningful notes, and thoughtfully participate in class discussions.

Late Papers. I don't accept them... except under extraordinary circumstances and then only with *prior* permission

Academic Integrity. Do your own work.

This syllabus is a “living and flexible document.” I reserve the right to amend the syllabus, reading lists and assignments when “necessary and proper for carrying into the execution” the goals and objectives of the course.

Date	Topics and Assignments	Readings
1/20	Politics, Power and the American Government	
1/22	American Political System: An overview	FPs:1-2, 6, L, G & S: Ch1
	<i>Discussion Questions:</i> What is politics? What is power? What does political power look like?	
1/27	Constitutionalism: Historical Context	FPs: 10, 49, 51
1/29	American Indians, Europeans & British Colonies <i>Declaration of Independence, A3</i> <i>Articles of Confederation, http://www.usconstitution.net/articles.html</i> <i>US Constitution, A7</i> <i>The Great Law of Peace, http://www.constitution.org/cons/iroquois.htm</i> Constitutionalism: Historical Context, cont.	L, G & S: Ch 2
	<u>Class Activity:</u> As a class we will draft an essay discussing the similarities and differences between the <i>Declaration, Articles, US Constitution</i> and <i>The Great Law Of Peace</i>	
2/3	Federalism <u>Assignment:</u> bring in examples of Federalism	L, G & S: Ch 3 Constitution Art. IV, V, VI FPs: 10, 16, 51
2/5	Separation of Powers/Checks & Balances <u>Assignment:</u> bring in examples of SOP/C&B	Constitution: Art. I, II, III L, G & S: Ch 3 L, G & S: Ch 4
2/10	Constitutionalism: Limited Government/Individual Rights <u>Assignment:</u> bring in examples	Constitution: Art. VI Amendments I - X
2/12	Constitutionalism: Tribal Sovereignty <u>Assignment:</u> bring in examples of Tribal Sovereignty	Const.: Art. I, sec.8, cl. 3 Article VI
2/17	Congress: the First Branch of Government	L, G & S: Ch 5
2/19		Constitution: Article I Amendment XV
2/24	Presidency	FP: 70
2/26		Constitution: Article II, Amendments XX, XXII, XXV L, G & S: Ch 6
3/3	Executive Branch/ Mid-term Review	L, G & S: CH 7
3/5	Mid-term	
3/17	Judiciary	FP: 78; HO
3/19	Oral Arguments	L,G & S: Ch 8
3/24	Role of Citizen: Public Opinion	FPs: 49 & 50 L, G & S: Ch 9

3/26	Role of Citizen: Political Parties	L, G & S: Ch 11
4/7 & 4/9	Role of citizen: Elections	L, G & S: Ch 11 FP: 68 Constitution Amendments XII, XXIII, XXIV, XXVI
4/14 4/16	Role of Citizen: Interest Groups Social Movements	L, G & S: Ch 12 HO
4/21 4/23	Legislative Session: Reconciling Competing Interests	HO
12/8	Debrief	