

Introduction to American Government

Fall 2011

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Office Hours

Mon 10:30 a.m. – noon
Th 1:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

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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

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

George Washington

Men are ambitious, vindictive, and rapacious...

Hamilton, *Federalist Paper #6*

Learning Goals

This introductory course critically examines how the United States national government functions with regard to:

- A. • the legacy of the Founding
 - the significance of the formal constitutional structure of the US government on Congress, the Presidency, the Judiciary, the states, and Indian Tribes
 - war
- B. • Through readings students will be introduced to the field of political science
- C. • Through writing assignments students will have opportunities to further develop critical thinking and writing skills

Required Materials:

- American Government: Power and Purpose, Brief Eleventh Edition, 2010 (**L, G & S**)
Theodore J. Lowi, Benjamin Ginsberg, Kenneth A. Shepsle, and Ansolabehere
- Debating Democracy, 7th ed. (**DD**)
- *Federalist Papers*, (available on the internet)-see assignment section (**FP**)
- Subscribe to ABC News The Note; <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/>, click on Subscribe to ABC News The Note and sign up for the note and enter the relevant information
- *Lots of additional Readings will be handed out in class* (**HO**)
- Read all assignments and critically think about the implications of each author's arguments with regard to the course learning objectives *before* class.

Course Requirements

Attendance. It counts. Poor attendance, defined as 3 or more absences, will result in your final grade being lowered by 2.5% for each class missed. Tardiness counts as an absence.

Academic Integrity. Read the article, “*Ethics of Scholarship A Note to Skidmore Student,*” that is attached to the syllabus.

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.

If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need academic accommodation, you must formally request accommodation from Meg Hegener, Coordinator for Students with Disabilities. You will also need to provide documentation which verifies the existence of a disability and supports your request. For further information, please call 580-8150, or stop by the office of Student Academic Services in Starbuck Center.

Grading

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|---------------------|-----|
| • Constitution exam | 15% |
| • first paper | 20% |
| • midterm | 20% |
| • second paper | 20% |
| • final Exam | 25% |

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.