PSCI 200: LIBERAL DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA
MWF 10:10-11:00

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Office Hours: MW 2-4; Tuesday 1-3; and by appointment

1. Course Objectives

This course is designed as a broad overview of the American political system and is suitable for both political science students as well as those from other majors. This class has three main goals. First, this course should prepare you to be an active participant in political life and an intelligent consumer of political information. Secondly, this class will help you develop the skills necessary to think critically about political problems and to develop potential solutions. Finally, this class will give you the foundation needed to pursue more advanced topics within American politics and political science.

2. Student Responsibilities and Grading

This class will involve critical analysis and discussion of the assigned texts. Students are expected to complete the readings in advance and come to class prepared to discuss them. Regular attendance is necessary for your success in this class. Lectures and discussions will often contain information not found in the readings. Active and valuable contributions to class discussion are part of your final grade. To ensure that students are completing the reading assignments, periodic quizzes may be given.

Grades will be determined as follows:

- Paper #1 (5 to 7 pages): 30%
- Paper #2 (5 to 7 pages): 30%
- Participation/Quizzes: 10%
- Final Exam (3 hours): 30%

*Papers:* There will be two papers assigned during the semester. Papers should be analytical in nature and not simply summaries of the readings. Papers must be typed, double-spaced, and in Times New Roman, 12 point. Papers should be well-organized, well-written, and proofread. Paper grades will be based on the originality and clarity of the thesis, the logic, persuasiveness and depth of the argument, the evidence provided, and on organization and style. Paper topics will be distributed in class. Paper #1 will be due on October 1. Paper #2 will be due on November 28.
Papers must be handed in at the start of class on the day they are due. Late papers will be marked down one letter grade for the first day they are late and one-half a letter grade for each day thereafter (this includes weekends).

**Final Exam:** The final exam will be 3 hours and will be administered on December 17, 6:30 p.m. The final will consist of IDs and two essay questions. A selection of essay questions will be distributed on the last day of class; two of them will be on the final exam.

**Academic Honesty:** Please consult the *Student Handbook* for the College’s policy on academic honesty. Plagiarism of any kind will not be tolerated. All papers must have proper citations. If you are unclear on when and/or how to cite a work, please see me. You are encouraged to discuss your papers with your fellow classmates and/or me while working on them.

**Disabilities:** If you have a disability that will affect your participation in class please let me know and contact Erin Salva, Coordinator of Disability Services, at x5453 or by email.

### 3. Readings

- John Agresto, *The Supreme Court and Constitutional Democracy*
- Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde, *Change and Continuity in the 2008 and 2010 Elections*
- David Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection*
- Richard Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents*
- Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, vol. 1

Additional readings will also be placed on Moodle.
4. Class Schedule

August

31 Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collection Action*, selection. (Moodle)

I. The Political Ideas of the Founders

September

3 Tocqueville, Introduction (pp. 3-15) and Part 1, Chapter 2 (pp. 27-45).

5 Constitution of the United States

   Federalist Paper #84

7 Articles of Confederation

   Federalist Papers #1-6, 15, 23

10 Federalist Papers #9, #10, #14, #37

12 Federalist Papers #47, 48, 51

14 Federalist Papers #52, 54, 56, 57, 62, 63

17 Federalist Papers #39, 49, 50

19 The Federal Farmer, Letters 1-3

   Brutus, Letter 1

II. Federalism

21 Landy and Milkis, Chapter 5

   Federalist Papers #17, 45, 46

   Tocqueville, Part 1, Chapter 5 (pp. 56-93).


**III. Public Opinion and Political Participation**

26 Landy and Milkis, Chapter 12

Tocqueville, Part 2, Chapter 7 & 8 (pp. 235-264).


**OCTOBER**

1 Benjamin Page and Martin Shapiro, 1992. *The Rational Public*, selections (Moodle)


**IV. Political Parties**

5 Milkis and Landy, Chapter 11

John Aldrich, *Why Parties?*, selections (Moodle)

Tocqueville, Part 2, Chapters 2-4 (pp. 166-186).

8 Sarah Binder. 2001. “Can the Parties Govern?” (Moodle)

Morris P. Fiorina. 2006. “Parties as Problem Solvers.” (Moodle)

**V. Campaigns and Elections**
10  Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde, Chapters 1 and 2
12  Fall Break
15  Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde, Chapters 5 and 6
17  Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde, Chapter 7
19  Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde, Chapter 8
22  Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde, Chapters 10 and 11

VI. Congress

24, 26 Mayhew, Congress: The Electoral Connection, Introduction and Chapter 1

29, 31 Mayhew, Congress: The Electoral Connection, Chapter 2

November


Alan Abramowitz, “Mr. Mayhew, Meet Mr. Delay.” 2001. (Moodle)


5  Thomas Mann and Norman Ornstein, “Is Congress Still A Broken Branch?”, 2009. (Moodle)

Milkis and Landy, Chapter 7

7  Election Wrap-up

VII. The Presidency

9  The Federalist Papers #70, 71, 72, 73

Milkis and Landy, Chapter 8

12  Neustadt, Presidental Power, Prefaces and pp. 3-28

14  Neustadt, Presidental Power, pp. 29-72.

19, 21, 23 Thanksgiving Break


**VIII. Bureaucracy**

28 Landy and Milkis, Chapter 10.


**IX. Courts**

**DECEMBER**

3 Tocqueville, Part 1, Chapter 6 (pp. 93-99).

Federalist Papers #78, 81

Milkis and Landy, Chapter 9


**X. American’s Liberal Democracy in Perspective**


12 Tocqueville, Part 2, Chapter 6 (pp. 220-235) and pp. 348-384.


14 Conclusion