

**INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN POLITICS
POLITICAL SCIENCE 111 CHAMBERS 2068
MONDAY, WEDNESDAY, AND FRIDAY 9:30a.m. – 10:20a.m.**

Fall 2004

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“The authenticity of American democracy cannot be successfully challenged. Whatever may have been its defects and limitations, and these have always been many and severe, it was and is one of the realities of history”

- George S. Counts, The Prospects of American Democracy, 1938, p. 12

“Let us dare to read, think, speak and write. Let every order and degree among the people rouse their attention and animate their resolution.”

- John Adams, 1765

“The unwritten constitution, even more than the written one, is a reflection of the basic political philosophy of the people, a reflection of their traditional prejudices and attitudes, often incoherent and not explicitly formulated by the average citizen. . . . The main issue had to do [in time of American Revolution] with what the public considers the proper sources of basic authority, and behind that authority, the ultimate source of truth for the resolution of great public issues.”

- Don K. Price, America’s Unwritten Constitution, 1983, p.9

“We believe the 9/11 attacks revealed four kinds of failures: in imagination, policy, capabilities and management.”

- The 9/11 Commission Report 2004

The Constitution undoubtedly serves as the touchstone of our government and, to a lesser extent, our politics. What Americans, however, fail to adequately acknowledge is the changing nature of our constitution through shifting interpretations within our contemporary political culture. This is not to suggest that the Constitution has been completely transformed by Supreme Court cases or political practices. Citizens need to be more attuned to the “the living constitution” as one political scientist described it. Edward Corwin, noted Constitutional scholar, was fond of quoting Gouverneur Morris’ remarks at the Constitutional Convention that the document was “an experiment.”

Furthermore, Election 2000 revealed that the majority of American voters were woefully ignorant of the Electoral College. For millions of Americans, the Electoral College was at best anachronistic and at worst un-American. Despite the confusion following the presidential election of 2000, most Americans resumed their political lives, and the midterm elections of 2002 showed no effects on the minds of the voters. Attention has turned away from any discussion of the mechanism; focus instead is on the war in Iraq, jobs, and the economy.

This course is NOT intended to be general survey of American government. Nor is it a more elaborate and intensive version of a high school civics class. At least a basic understanding of American government is presupposed. As our main textbook by Landy and Milkis emphasizes, the philosophies and the practices of American government cannot be adequately discussed outside of their political context. In short, knowledge of our politics must be embedded in an understanding of what we consider to be fundamental principles, what we see as the challenges of politics, and what we often don’t realize to be a political culture.

One good example of these somewhat messy dynamics of American government can be seen in the 9/11 Commission Report. Here one of the chief culprits of American anticipation of and response to the attack was a lack of bureaucratic imagination. The separation of powers and the realities of contemporary policy and political demands necessitate a highly analytical and sometimes critical at American government and the prospects for democracy.

COURSE TEXTBOOKS:

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|---------------------------|--|
| Landy & Milkis | <u>American Government: Balancing Democracy & Rights</u> |
| Kernall & Smith | <u>Principles & Practices of American Politics</u> |
| Dahl | <u>How Democratic Is The American Constitution</u> |
| Polsby & Wildavsky | <u>Presidential Elections</u> |
| Wayne | <u>Is This Anyway To Run A Democracy?</u> |
| <u>The New York Times</u> | mandatory subscription available – Bookstore |

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & GRADING

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|----------------------------------|-----|
| <u>Federalist Paper</u> analysis | 10% |
| Discussion | 5% |
| Paper 1 | 15% |
| Midterm | 25% |
| Paper 2 | 20% |
| Final | 25% |

Examinations: All examinations are essay in format. Study sheets will be given out approximately one week prior to the scheduled examination. Students may work in groups. This in no way violates the Honor Code. Students do not bring outlines or any notes with them to the day of the examination. Care must be taken in preparation for the final examination. Course grades may fluctuate, and students mistakenly assume that their final will almost assuredly be higher than other grades in the class. Grades do not build on one another. Notice that the second paper is counted at a higher percentage in order to encourage better papers on the second attempt.

Class Preparation: Students who wish to succeed in this class must read and prepare materials prior to class. They should be comfortable with class discussion. In the event that it is obvious to me that the majority of students are ill prepared for class, quizzes or in class essays will be assigned and such grades will be incorporated into the final average with any accommodations to other percentage as stated above.

Students are expected to be comfortable to feel to engage in lively discussion but must respect the opinions of others. We will be taking a page from the sports show Pardon The Interruption in that we will have “five good minutes.” During this time students may discuss anything political, especially what is current. This allocation of “five good minutes” will always take place even if we lag a bit in lecture/discussion.

Papers:

There are three formal assignments for this class. There is no split grading, e.g. content/writing. Your ability to make a coherent and persuasive argument and presentation of evidence/analysis is critical to your paper.

- Federalist Paper assignment: This is the most abbreviated of your papers. It should consist of no more than three typed pages in which you provide a summary of your randomly assigned Federalist Paper. You need to identify the title and the author of the Paper and the provision of the constitution under consideration. Following these mechanics, you need to provide a summary of the provision and the

argument being made. You need to analyze the provision with an eye toward its relevance to the Constitution as a whole. You should discuss the evidence employed to construct the argument. Conclude with your reaction to the Paper and its argument. *I would ask you use only this primary source. You should put in quotation marks any direct quote, but there is no need for documentation of page or author of Federalist Paper.

- Paper # 1 assignment: “Fundamentals Examined and Evolved”: This more extensive and more formal paper. This paper revolves around founding principles and contemporary politics. This paper will range in length from 8 to 10 pages. You will receive a more extensive description of this project after the first 2 weeks of class.
- Paper # 2 assignment: “Elections – Constitution, Collectives, Campaigns, & Citizenship.” This is the most extensive and most formal paper. This paper revolves around your readings on presidential elections, voting behavior, and campaigns. It will also be enhanced by your attention to the dynamics to Election 2004 in the media. This paper will be approximately 10 to 15 pages in length. A more elaborate description of this paper will be handed out after the second week of class.

Attendance: Students are expected to attend class. Attendance will be taken and noted. Attendance will be considered as a part of your discussion grade, and should you be, as they say in the NCAA basketball, “on the bubble,” attendance might prove to be the nudge in grade categories. College policies state that students missing in excess of one-fourth of scheduled classes will receive a failing grade in the course, no questions asked.

Office Hours:

Office: 2040 Chambers
Hours: 10:20 -11:20 MWF
W 1-3pm
Thursday by appointment
Other hours by appointment
Students are welcome to “drop by” but recognize that I may not always be available even if I am in my office.
Office telephone: 2458
Home 892-9874 (only if needed; no calls after 9pm)
E-mail: suroberts@davidson.edu

I will respond as quickly as I can to your questions. I will not answer e-mails immediately. Committee work may, at times, necessitate my absence at office hours. I will send out e-mails to the class as whole from time to times.

TOPICS AND READINGS:*

**Readings are not necessarily “reviewed” in class. For the most part, clear and distinct reference will be made to the assigned texts, but class is not designed to “go over” the text. Students should, however, come to class fully prepared.*

I. “Self – Evident” Truths

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|----------|---------------------------------|---|
| M Aug 23 | Introduction | |
| W Aug 25 | Landy/Milkis | Ch 1:Liberty, Equality, Democracy |
| F Aug 27 | Landy/Milkis Kernall & Smith | Ch 2:Political Cultural Ch 1: Designing Institutions |
| M Aug 30 | Dahl | Ch 1: Intro to Fundamental Questions Ch 2: What the Founders Didn’t Know |

II. Constitution: Founders & Framework Revisited

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| W Sep 1 | Landy/Milkis | Ch 3: The Constitution |
| F Sep 3 | continued <u>Federalist Paper</u> assigned | |
| M Sep 6 | continued Kernall & Smith | Ch 2: Constitutional Framework |
| W Sep 8 | continued Presentation of <u>Federalist Paper</u> | |
| F Sep 10 | Presentation of <u>Federalist Paper</u> | |
| M Sep 13 | Wayne | Ch 1: Issues of Democratic Government Ch 2: Civic Foundations... Democracy |
| W Sep 15 | Dahl Landy/Milkis | Ch 3: Constitution. . American Illusion Ch 4: Political Development |
| F Sep 17 | continued | |

III. Decentralization: Democracy & Federalism

M Sep 20 Landy/Milksi Ch 5: Federalism
W Sep 22 continued
F Sep 24 continued
 Kernall & Smith Ch 3: Federalism

IV. “It’s My Party”

M Sep 27 Landy/Milkis Ch 11: Political Parties
 Kernall & Smith Ch 12” Parties
W Sep 29 continued
F Oct 1 continued

M Oct 4

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| MIDTERM EXAMINATION: Sections I - III |
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V. Presidency: Evolution & Election

W Oct 6 Landy/Milkis Ch 8: Presidency
F Oct 8 continued

FALL BREAK - October 9 – 12

W Oct 13 continued
 Kernall & Smith Ch 7: Presidency
F Oct 15 Dahl Ch 4: Electing The President
 Wayne Ch 6: A Govt That Looks Like America
 ******Paper #1 is DUE BY MIDNIGHT!!!!!!**
M Oct 18 Polsby & Wildavsky Strategic Environment
 Ch 1: Voters
 Ch 2: Groups
W Oct 20 Polsby & Wildavsky Ch 3: Rules & Procedures
F Oct 22 continued
M Oct 25 Polsby & Wildavsky Sequences
 Ch 4: Nomination Process
W Oct 27 Polsby & Wildavsky Ch 5: The Campaign

Wayne Ch 7: Promise & Peril .Polling

F Oct 29 continued

*****Mallard Creek Church Barbeque Date TBA (mid October)
Please try to attend; we will try to go as a group. Pork N' Politics!!**

M Nov 1 continued

TUESDAY = ELECTION DAY

W Nov 3 Election Post-Mortem

F Nov 5 Election Post-Mortem continued

M Nov 8 Polsby & Wildavsky Ch 6: Appraisals
Ch 7 American Politics & Democracy

VI. Congress: Legislating, Deliberating or Obstructing?

W Nov 10 Landy/Milkis Ch 7: Congress
Kernall & Smith Ch 6: Congress

F Nov 12 continued
****PAPER # 2 = DUE BY MIDNIGHT!!!!!!**

M Nov 15 continued

W Nov 17 continued

VII. The Judiciary: Inhterpretation versus Politics

F Nov 19 Landy/Milkis Ch 9 Judiciary
Kernall & Smith Ch 9: Judiciary

M Nov 22 continued

W Nov 24 **THANKSGIVING BREAK**

M Nov 29 continued
Wayne Ch 10: Does A Real ..Judicial Review?

VIII The Enduring Debate

W Dec 1 Dahl Ch 5: How Well ..Constitutional Reform
Ch 6: Why Not . . Democratic Constitution

Ch 7: Prospects. . . Democratic Constitution

F Dec 3 continued
Wayne

Ch 12: Is This Any Way. . Government?

M Dec 6 *Optional day at professor's discretion*

W Dec 8 *Optional day at professor's discretion*

Thursday December 9 = Reading Day

F Dec 10 – midday Dec 16 = Examinations