

**INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN POLITICS  
POLITICAL SCIENCE 111, CHAMBERS 2068  
TUESDAYS AND THURSDAYS 11:30 a.m.-12:45 p.m.  
SPRING 2006**

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### **Course Objectives**

Introduction to American Politics is a survey of American government and politics. In addition to introducing fundamental principles, my goal is for each of you to develop the ability to analyze and understand politics. The topics we will cover are varied and vast. In addition to the institutions of Congress, the Presidency, and the Courts, we will also discuss political culture, public opinion, the media, and political behavior.

My role is to help you learn. Together, we will embark upon a journey. In order for you to learn the material adequately and develop a greater interest in the subject matter, we will engage in diverse activities including in class presentations, written papers, and examinations.

### **Course Requirements**

Each student's grade for the course will be based on several components:

- § One-page papers. During the semester, I will assign **3 papers**, each of which may be no longer than a single page. The grade for each of these papers will constitute 10 percent of the overall course grade. The average of the 3 papers will constitute **30 percent of the overall course grade**
  
- § In class presentations. Each student will make **2 in class presentations** at different points in the semester. The grade on each presentation will constitute 7.5 percent of the overall course grade. The average of the 2 presentation grades will constitute **15 percent of the overall course grade.**
  
- § Mid-term examination. **The Mid-term examination** is in class on October 6. The midterm will constitute **25 percent of the overall course grade.**
  
- § Final examination. The final examination is a self-scheduled exam to be taken during the exam period of December 9-15. It will constitute **25 percent of the overall course grade.**

Class attendance and participation. Students are expected to come to class prepared everyday. I will assess each student's attendance and performance in discussing events throughout the course. This assessment will make up **5 percent of the overall grade.**

All paper assignments are due at the start of class on the assigned date. Assignments turned in more than halfway through a class period will be considered late. For each 24-hour period that an assignment is late, the grade on that assignment will be penalized by 10 points. Exceptions will be considered for medical and other emergencies. Computer problems are not acceptable excuses for late work.

All work is bound by the Honor Code. All paper assignments must provide appropriate citations for any sources or information included in the paper. All work must be completed individually, with each student responsible for his or her own work.

All assignments will be graded on a 100 point scale. Failure to turn in any assignment (paper, presentation, exam, or in-class activity) will result in a numerical grade of 0 for that assignment. When calculating final grades, I will calculate the overall numerical averages and use the following table to convert them to letter grades.

Letter scale	Numerical ranges for final grade
A	93-100
A-	90-92
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	68-69
D	61-66
F	60 and below

### Assigned Readings

The two required texts are available for purchase in the bookstore:

1. *Government by the People*, by Burns, Peltason, Cronin, Magleby, O'brien, and Light
2. *America the Unusual*, by John Kingdon

In addition to the required texts, I will provide additional readings throughout the semester. Students are also **required** to read a major newspaper (New York Times; Washington Post; or Wall Street Journal) on a daily basis. We will discuss front page, political or national news stories at the beginning of each class period. I will call upon students randomly to lead these morning discussions and this will be a part of your class participation grade.

### Course Outline

DATE	TOPIC	ASSIGNMENT
January 10	Introduction/Overview of the Course	
January 12	Constitutional Democracy/American Ideology	Chapter 1 Burns Chapter 1 and Chapter 3 Kingdon
	<b>CONSTITUTIONAL PRINCIPALS; RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES</b>	
January 17-19	THE CONSTITUTION	Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 Burns <b>January 19--HAND OUT PAPER #1</b>
January 24	FEDERALISM, POLITICAL CULTURE AND IDEOLOGY	Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 Burns Chapters 2, 4, and 5 Kingdon
January 26- February 2	CIVIL RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES	Chapters 16, 17, 18 Burns
February 7-9	In class presentations	<b>February 9-- PAPER #1 DUE</b>
	<b>INSTITUTIONS OF GOVERNMENT</b>	
February 14	THE PRESIDENCY	Chapter 12 Burns
February 16-21	THE JUDICIARY	Chapter 15 Burns
February 23	<b>MID-TERM EXAM</b>	
February 28- March 2	Spring Break	
March 7-16	THE CONGRESS	<b>March 7--HANDOUT PAPER # 2</b> Chapter 11, Chapter 13, Chapter 14 Burns
March 21-23	In class presentations	<b>PAPER # 2 DUE March 23</b>
	<b>THE POLITICAL PROCESS/THE POLITICS OF NATIONAL POLICY</b>	
March 28-30	POLITICAL PARTIES and INTEREST GROUPS	Chapter 6 and Chapter 7

April 4-6	VOTING CAMPAIGNS AND ELECTIONS	Chapter 8 and Chapter 9
April 11-13	PUBLIC OPINION and THE MEDIA	Chapter 10 Burns <b>April 11--HANDOUT PAPER #3</b>
April 18	Easter Break	
April 20-25	POLITICS AND POPULAR CULTURE--MOVIE	
April 27	Catch-up/Make-up	<b>PAPER #3 DUE April 27</b>
self scheduled May 5-10	<b>FINAL EXAM</b>	