

Lincoln University
United States Government (POLSCI 10) Fall 2011
Prof. Eric Bergerud 510-525-0930 rickt2@prodigy.net
3 Units = 45 Lecture Hours Monday 3:30 – 6:15 PM

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course is an introductory survey of the institutions and processes of government in the United States. Although we examine the basic structure of state governments, the major emphasis is on the Federal Government. The course includes a close reading of the United States Constitution. Building upon knowledge of the Constitution, we will look at the most important political institutions as they work in the real world. Institutions studied include Congress, the Presidency, the courts and the national security apparatus. We also try to identify the interaction between political structure, ideology, public opinion, the press, money and the press of external events.

SCOPE: In this course we shall examine the American political system. Although we will cover theory, the emphasis will be on the practical realities of day to day politics. We will concentrate on the federal level, but also look states and localities.

PURPOSE: American culture is extremely political. Hopefully, students will profit from understanding the basic structure of the US political system and how it is reflected in the American economic and social systems. Like all governments, the American model seeks to achieve basic social, economic and cultural goals. We shall examine how much of the American model is useful to other societies. In addition, like all courses in the social sciences, the study of government will help the students develop analytical skills. Also, because the lectures and the exams essay are very important, students will improve their English language skills.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES: There are no prerequisites for this class. Attendance is mandatory. Students are urged to complete the appropriate reading assignments before the lectures. It is very important that students be attentive in lecture and take notes as the lectures will have a different emphasis than the readings. Questions and discussions in class are strongly encouraged. It is very important to have an orderly atmosphere during lectures. Therefore cell phones should be turned off and conversation between students is discouraged.

The text is American Government (Brief Edition) by James Q. Wilson. I will show students where to buy an inexpensive used copy of this book. There will also be several copies on reserve in the library. In addition we will closely examine an annotated copy of the US Constitution which I will provide. Text assignments are listed below.

FORMAT AND GRADES: This course will be based on a standard lecture format. Questions, comments and discussion are very welcome. The grades will be based on the outcome of one midterm and a final exam. The exams will be essay in nature. The essays will be very broad and I will discuss their scope prior to exams. We shall also discuss the basic techniques of building an orderly argument suitable for the exams. The Standard A-F grades will be given. Approximately 1/3 of the grade is based on the midterm and 2/3 on the final. However, I do take into consideration a favorable trajectory between the midterm and final when deciding the course grade. Bad attendance results in a grade penalty.

CONTACT BETWEEN INSTRUCTOR AND STUDENTS: I will have office hours between 3:00-3:30 and 6:15-6:45 on Monday at a room to be arranged. If you would like to arrange a different time on Monday or Wednesday afternoon we can arrange it. At the top of the page is my home office phone number: if something comes up you are welcome to give me a call. If I am not in, leave your name and phone number (please speak clearly) on the answering machine and I will reach you as soon as possible. I ask that you use my home email address (rickt2@prodigy.net). My school email is bergerud@lincolnuca.edu but this will be forwarded and it is easier to go direct.

SCHEDULE: (Chapter assignments given in [])

August 24: Introduction & Assessment; Historical Background
August 31: Constitution [Annotated Const; Article 1, Wilson Ch.1]
September 7: Constitution [Annotated Const; Article II, III]
September 14: Constitution [Annotated Const; Article IV, V, VI, VII, Wilson Ch.2]
September 21: Constitution [Annotated Constitution; Amendments, Wilson Ch.3]
September 28: Political Parties [Wilson Ch. 6]
October 5: Elections [Wilson Ch. 7]
October 12: Midterm; Congress [Wilson Ch. 8]
October 19: Presidency [Wilson Ch. 9]
October 26: Federal Bureaucracy [Wilson Ch. 10]
November 2: Judiciary [Wilson Ch. 11]
November 9: Interest Groups and Press [Wilson Ch. 4]
November 16: Domestic & Regional Politics [Wilson Ch. 12]
November 23: Holiday
November 30: Future of the American Model [Wilson Ch. 13]
December 5-10: Final Exams

Syllabus Revised: 8/22/2011