

Lincoln University Fall 2014 Syllabus
POLSCI 10 – United States Government
3 units (45 lecture hours) Thursday 12:30 – 3:15
Dr. Eric Bergerud rickt2@prodigy.net

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 knowledge of the Constitution, we look at the most important political institutions as they work in the 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 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. As 2014 has national elections in November we will look at events and see connections between political theory and practice.

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. Grading essays is subjective, but the grades will be put into a numerical ratio:

Point/Grade Conversion

100-95	A	76-74	C
94-90	A-	73-70	C-
89-87	B+	69-67	D+
86-84	B	66-60	D
83-80	B-	59 or <	F
79-77	C+		

CONTACT BETWEEN INSTRUCTOR AND STUDENTS: I will have office hours between 3:15-3:30 Thursday and 3:30 – 4:00 on Monday at a room to be arranged. If you would like to arrange a different time I check my email often so please feel free to let me know about any questions or problems that might arise. 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 28: Introduction & Assessment; Historical Background

September 4: Constitution [Annotated Const; Article 1, Wilson Ch. 1]

September 11: Constitution [Annotated Const; Article II, III]

September 18: Constitution [Annotated Const; Article IV, V, VI, VII, Wilson Ch.2]

September 25: Constitution [Annotated Constitution; Amendments, Wilson Ch.3]

October 2: Political Parties [Wilson Ch. 6]

October 9: Elections [Wilson Ch. 7]

October 16: Midterm; Congress [Wilson Ch. 8]

October 23: Presidency [Wilson Ch. 9]

October 30: Federal Bureaucracy [Wilson Ch. 10]

November 6: Judiciary [Wilson Ch. 11]
November 13: Interest Groups and Press [Wilson Ch. 4]
November 20: Domestic & Regional Politics [Wilson Ch. 12]
November 27: Fall recess (no class)
December 4: Future of the American Model [Wilson Ch. 13]
December 9-14: Final Exams

Syllabus Updated: August 10, 2014