

Political Science 216: American National Government

PSCI 216 L18 (14648)

Fall 2009

Northeastern Illinois University

Mon. and Wed., 9:10-10:25, El Centro 106

Noon-3pm; or by appointment

Instructor: Jason Stodolka
Email: stodolka@gmail.com

Office Hours: Mon. and Weds. 10:30-11:30
Virtual Office Hours: Tues. and Thurs. afternoons

Disclaimer:

Information in this syllabus is subject to change over the course of the semester. Any changes will be announced in advance.

Course Description and Objectives:

In general, we, as a society, believe that every person living in the United States should have at least a basic understanding of how their government and politics operate. At the core of democratic principles, after all, is the requirement that the people are able to articulate informed opinions and bring them to bear on the functioning of government. We hold these ideas in such high esteem that that a number of formal requirements are placed on citizenship such as required high school government classes and civics tests for naturalized citizens. But if these other avenues provide sufficient knowledge, why this course? Will it not just be a repeat of the things you already know and have been taught?

Simply: No. This course (and any other political science course you might take as a college student) is designed to move you beyond the basic knowledge you have experiences before and to make you think critically about the things that are happening around you. Like previous courses you may have taken, the first objective of this course is to provide you with information. In addition, though, I hope to aid you in developing your critical and analytical thinking skills. In the end, you should be well on your way to developing your own view of American politics and government.

Course Textbook:

Edward S. Greenberg and Benjamin I. Page, *The Struggle for Democracy*, 8th ed. This is not the newest edition of the book, but is recent. If you can find a 6th or 7th edition of the same book, that will probably work pretty well, but don't go much older than that.

Blackboard:

I will make at least some use of the Blackboard course management system throughout the semester. Assignments, readings, study guides, etc., may be placed on Blackboard from time to time. It will be necessary for you to access Blackboard on an at least semi-regular basis.

Attendance and Absences:

Absences will be excused for illness with a note signed by a doctor, for participation in University functions (conferences, athletic events, etc.), and for other reasons as I see fit, **provided I have given prior consent**. Coming to class unprepared (as in, telling me you didn't do that day's work,

or it is painfully obvious that you haven't done that day's work) counts as an unexcused absence. Please note, not all excuses will be considered valid for an excused absence.

Personal Electronic Devices:

Please be courteous to me, your classmates, and yourself. Turn off your phones, iPods, and/or any other personal electronic devices you might carry with you. **DO NOT ANSWER PHONE CALLS OR TEXT MESSAGES DURING CLASS.** I reserve the right to answer calls or text messages that interrupt class progress and/or deduct 1% from your final course grade each time class is interrupted by your electronics.

Laptop computers: you are certainly welcome to use a laptop computer for class. But web browsing, facebooking, emailing, etc. are not appropriate during class. If you are using your computer for non-class related purposes, you are subject to the same consequences outlined above.

Course Assignments:

Instructions for each assignment will be distributed at least one week before they are due. Late assignments will not be accepted, except in documented emergencies. You will not be able to make up an exam, except in the case of a documented emergency.

Grades:

Participation and Attendance	100 pts	10% of final grade
Assignments (4)	200	20%
Exams (4)	400	40%
Final Paper	50	5%
Media Journal	100	10%
Final Exam	150	15%
TOTAL	1000 points	

Academic Integrity

The following are the prohibited in accordance with the University's Student Conduct Code (<http://www.neiu.edu/~DeanSt/survival/conduct.pdf>):

1. Cheating. Use or attempted use of any unauthorized assistance in taking an exam, test, quiz, or other assignment. (Please note, cheating on exams includes all required University, state, and/or national assessment exams.)
2. Encouraging Academic Dishonesty. Intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to persuade and/or influence another to violate the University's rules, policies, and regulations governing academic integrity.
3. Fabrication. Deliberate falsification or design of any material or excerpt in an academic assignment or exercise.
4. Plagiarism. Appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and thoughts of another author and representation of them as one's original work. This includes (1) paraphrasing another's ideas or conclusions without acknowledgement; (2) lifting of entire paragraphs, chapters, etc. from another's work; and (3) submission as one's own work, any work prepared by another person or agency.

Tentative Course Schedule:

Week 1

Monday, August 31 Introduction
Reading Assignment for Next Time: G&P Chapter 1

Wednesday, September 2 The Basics
Reading Assignment for Next Time: G&P Chapter 2; The U.S. Constitution (in the Appendix of G&P)

Week 2

Monday, September 7 NO CLASS—LABOR DAY

Wednesday, September 9 The Constitution
Reading Assignment for Next Time: G&P Chapter 3

Week 3

Monday, September 14 Federalism
Reading Assignment for Next Time: G&P Chapter 4

Wednesday, September 16 Politics in the United States
Review for Exam

Week 4

Monday, September 21 EXAM 1
Reading Assignment for Next Time: G&P Chapter 5

Wednesday, September 23 Public Opinion, Part 1

Week 5

Monday, September 28 Public Opinion, Part 2: Understanding Public Opinion
Public Opinion Assignment Due
Reading Assignment for Next Time: G&P Chapter 6

Wednesday, September 30 Media, Part 1

Week 6

Monday, October 5 Media, Part 2
Media Assignment Due
Reading Assignment for Next Time: G&P Chapter 7

Wednesday, October 7 Interest Groups
Reading Assignment for Next Time: G&P Chapter 8

Week 7

Monday, October 12 Social Movements
Reading Assignment for Next Time: G&P Chapter 9

Wednesday, October 14 Political Parties, Part 1

Week 8

Monday, October 19 Political Parties, Part 2
Political Parties Presentations
Reading Assignment for Next Time: G&P Chapter 10

Wednesday, October 21 Participation, Voting, and Elections, Part 1

Week 9

Monday, October 26 Participation, Voting, and Elections, Part 2
Participation Assignment Due
Review for Exam
Wednesday, October 28 EXAM 2
Reading Assignment for Next Time: G&P Chapter 11

Week 10

Monday, November 2 Congress
Reading Assignment for Next Time: G&P Chapter 12
Wednesday, November 4 The Presidency
Reading Assignment for Next Time: G&P Chapter 13

Week 11

Monday, November 9 The Bureaucracy
Reading Assignment for Next Time: G&P Chapter 14
Wednesday, November 11 The Courts
Review for Exam

Week 12

Monday, November 16 EXAM 3
Reading Assignment for Next Time: G&P Chapter 15
Wednesday, November 18 Civil Liberties
Reading Assignment for Next Time: G&P Chapter 16

Week 13

Monday, November 23 Civil Rights
Reading Assignment for Next Time: G&P Chapter 17
Wednesday, November 25 Domestic Policy
CivLib/CivRights Assignment Due
Reading Assignment for Next Time: G&P Chapter 18

Week 14

Monday, November 30 The United States in the World
Wednesday, December 2 EXAM 4

Week 15

Monday, December 7 Catch-up Day
Semester Paper Due
Completed Media Journals Due
Wednesday, December 9 Final Exam Review

Final Exam

Wednesday, December 16, 10:00-11:50