

## **Government 3**

### **The American Political System**

**Instructor:** Michael Herron

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**Office hours:** Monday, 3:00pm-4:00pm, and Wednesday, 3:00pm - 4:00pm

**Class meeting times:** Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, 11:15am-12:20pm, in Rockefeller 3

**X-hour:** Tuesday, 12:00pm-12:50pm, in Rockefeller 3

### **Course Description**

Government 3 provides an introduction to American politics with a focus on the key institutions that together constitute the American federal government and are responsible for federal policymaking. Students who take this course will learn about the history and functions of these institutions and will also learn about the behavioral side of American politics. Government 3 will develop various analytical frameworks for the study of politics and illustrate how modern analytical tools can be used to learn about the American political system. The analytical tools presented in Government 3 are applicable beyond the American context, and studying them will help students learn how modern political science is conducted.

After beginning with some motivating examples which highlight the difficulties inherent in democratic governance, the course turns to the Constitution and the principles embedded in it. Topics covered will include federalism, separation of powers, and the Bill of Rights. After covering these fundamentals, the course turns to the study of formal institutions. It introduces spatial voting theory and then covers Congress, the presidency, the federal bureaucracy, and the federal judiciary. The final section of Government 3 will cover behavioral aspects of American politics: elections, parties, and interest groups.

The United States Supreme Court is scheduled to hear a very important case, *Shelby County v. Holder*, on February 27, 2013. This hearing date is toward the end of the winter quarter, and the Court's decision in *Shelby County v. Holder* will not be issued until later in 2013. Nonetheless, *Shelby County v. Holder* touches on a number of important themes that will be discussed during Government 3, and as such aspects of this case will be woven into various facets of the course. Among other things students will be reading briefs and opinions pursuant to *Shelby County v. Holder*, and some assignments will involve this case as well.

### **Required Text**

The required text for Government 3 is *American Government: Power and Purpose*, 12th Core edition, by Theodore J. Lowi, Benjamin Ginsberg, Kenneth A. Shepsle, and Stephen Ansolabehere.

Other readings will be assigned and distributed as the course progresses.

### **Requirements and Grading**

Final course grades will be determined on the following basis:

- Midterm, 30% (Friday, February 1, in class).

- Various assignments, 35%.
- In-class reading quizzes, 5%.
- Final examination, 30% (Monday, March 11, 8:00am-11:00am), location to be determined by the registrar. See <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~reg/calendar/exams/12-13.html> for details.

There will be a variety of assignments throughout the course. Unless otherwise specified, students may work in groups of up to **four** on all assignments, and only one assignment should be turned in by a group that works together on it. By affixing one's name to a group assignment a student asserts that he or she understands what the group accomplished. Late assignments—defined as assignments handed in after the end of the class in which they are due—will not be accepted unless prior permission was given or there are extenuating circumstances, i.e., medical conditions. Only hard copy assignments will be accepted unless there are extenuating circumstances, i.e., unexpected travel away from campus.

The midterm and final examinations are closed-book and closed-notes, and electronic devices may not be used when completing these tests. Make-up exams will not be given, and a student who misses an exam will receive a score of zero on it unless he or she received permission to miss it. Neither the midterm nor the final examination will be given early unless there are extenuating circumstances. There is a seven day statute of limitations for grading appeals of any nature that begins on the day that a problem set or exam is returned. Final course grades will be curved.

Students in Government 3 are responsible for understanding the academic integrity rules in place at Dartmouth. Explanations of these rules can be found at <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~uja/honor/students.html>, and details about sources are available at <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~writing/sources>. Ignorance of the Academic Honor Principle will not be considered a mitigating excuse if a violation occurs. Beyond any penalties imposed as a consequence of an Academic Honor Principle investigation, any student who is found to have cheated or plagiarized on the midterm or the final examination will receive a failing grade in Government 3.

### **Schedule Changes**

Government 3 will not meet on January 21, February 8, or March 1. Government 3 will meet during its X-hour on January 22, February 5, and February 26. Other X-hours will be scheduled as needed.

### **Course Outline**

1. The analysis of politics and the democratic dilemma
  - (a) Principles of political analysis. Lowi Chapter 1.
  - (b) The problem of democratic choice; a simple model of preference aggregation and group choice; dictatorship, majority rule, and preference cycles; why we have institutions.
2. The United States Constitution
  - (a) Founding, ratification, amendments. Lowi Chapter 2.

- (b) Federalism and the separation of powers. Introduction to *Shelby County v. Holder*. Lowi Chapter 3.
  - (c) The Bill of Rights and Nationalization. Key amendments. Voting rights, the Voting Rights Act, and *Shelby County v. Holder*. Lowi Chapters 4 and 5.
- 3. Introduction to spatial voting. How majority rule voting institutions like courts and legislatures can be understood spatially.
- 4. Institutions
  - (a) Congress. Districting and disputes. Legislator preferences and NOMINATE. Lowi Chapter 6.
  - (b) The Presidency. Lowi Chapter 7.
  - (c) Federal judiciary. *Shelby County v. Holder*: oral arguments, amicus briefs. Lowi Chapter 9.
  - (d) Federal bureaucracy. Lowi Chapter 8.
- 5. Behavior
  - (a) Public opinion. Lowi Chapter 10. To be skipped if time is tight.
  - (b) Elections. Contemporary disputes and voting problems in Florida. Lowi Chapter 11.
  - (c) Political parties. Lowi Chapter 12.