

## Oxford College of Emory University

### POLS 100: National Politics

Spring 2008  
Seney 310  
1:00 - 2:15 TU & TH  
*Prerequisite: POLS 101*

**Katie Vigilante**  
[kvigila@learnlink.emory.edu](mailto:kvigila@learnlink.emory.edu)  
Office: Seney 307  
Office Hours by appointment  
770-784-4623

#### Course Objective

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the study of politics in the American system. To begin, we focus on the *fundamental* principles underlying American politics and her culture. As such, we examine the derivation of the term *politics* as applied to our system to understand better why power is distributed the way it is. Part of that distribution is founded in her Constitutional framework explicitly and some is not. A deeper exploration of this framework leads us to the causes of political stability and instability through a closer examination of public opinion, political participation, and campaigns and elections. We spend the remainder of the course assessing political institutions and processes from a *policymaking perspective*; we view policy as a malleable process, a process having changed with our culture and institutional interactions. We spend some time examining why some policy remains stagnate and why some policy shifts. A case study of U.S. environmental policy concludes this course to thread together our understanding of American culture, opinion, participation, institutions and political change.

#### Text

Wilson and Dilulio, Jr., *American Government*, 10th Edition  
Weekly *New York Times* (front and national pages); online is permissible but make sure you are reading first editions each day!

#### Grades

**2 non-cumulative exams (February 14<sup>th</sup> and March 20<sup>th</sup>) EACH worth 25% of a student's final grade.**

**5 out of 7 pop quizzes which include questions from the *Times* totaling 25% of your grade**

**1 final cumulative exam (May 1, 2008 from 2-5 pm)**

**Students are responsible for all assigned readings whether or not those readings are covered in the lectures.** Reading assignments should be completed **before** class lectures.

If you have questions, ask. I cannot address questions or concerns I am not aware of! I check my email several times daily. I am usually in my office on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays except during lectures. I will gladly schedule individual meetings with students.

I typically have review sessions and hand out review sheets before the exams; a learnlink conference has been established. Check it regularly to make sure you are keeping up with the course and any important announcement I may have. I check the conference regularly.

## **Course Outline**

### **PART I: The American System**

January 17

#### **Introduction**

Politics: What we mean by the term?  
Why should we care?  
Power, politics and legitimacy  
Democracy: US Application (pp.1-12)

January 22

#### **Democratic Theory**

Defining Political Power, Distribution of Power, and Political Change (pp. 1-16)

January 24

#### **American Political Culture**

Attitudinal Foundations of American Politics  
Defining Political Culture in general and in the American Context (pp. 75-97)

January 29

#### **Introduction to the U.S. Constitution.**

Creation, Debates, Compromises and Intentions (pp. 16-30)

January 31

#### **Constitutional Framework**

Individual Liberty v. Democracy  
Constitutional Guarantees and Equality  
Constitutional Reform (pp. 30-45)

February 5

#### **Federalism**

Debate and Meaning

Nullification, Dual Federalism and  
State Sovereignty  
Federal-State Relations & State rivalry (pp. 48-  
66)

February 7

**Federalism Continued**

Federal Aid = Federal Control?  
Devolution: Block Grants...what is driving  
devolution?  
Congress and Federalism (pp. 66-75)

February 12

Review/Catch-up etc.

**February 14**

**EXAM 1**

**PART II: Opinions, Interests and Organizations**

February 19

**Public Opinion Introduced**

Political Socialization (pp. 153- 162)

February 21

**Public Opinion Continued**

Cleavages  
Political Ideology (measurement and meaning)  
Political Elites and Opinion Leaders (pp. 162-  
176)

February 26

**Understanding Political Participation**

(pp. 177-197)

February 28

**The American Party System**

(pp. 197- 229)

March 4

**Elections and Campaigns**

Presidential v. Congressional  
Primary v. General (pp. 230-244)

March 6

**Money and Elections**

What decides the elections and what about  
policy? (pp. 244-263)

**March 10-14**

**OFF SPRING BREAK**

March 18

**Interest Groups**

Proliferation, Growth, Categorization  
Social Movements (pp. 264-290)

**MARCH 20**

**EXAM II**

**PART III: Political Institutions and Public Policy**

March 25

**Congress Introduced**

Members, Constituents, Representation,  
Relationships and Ideology (pp. 315-341)

March 27

**Congress Continued:**

Organization, Committees  
Enacting Legislation and Gridlock  
Polarization and Leadership  
The Creation of law (pp. 341-366)

April 1

**The American Presidency**

Evolution of the Office  
Electoral College (pp. 367-377)

April 3

PROFESSOR OUT

April 8

**Powers of the President**

Cabinet and Staff  
Character and Persuasion and Veto Powers  
Transitions (pp. 379-408)

April 10

**Bureaucracy Introduced**

Bureaucratic Growth  
(pp. 409- 427)

April 15

**Bureaucracies Continued:**

Bureaucratic Procedure  
Agency Alliance  
Oversight and Reform (pp. 427-436)

April 17

**The Judiciary**

Structure of Federal Courts

Jurisdiction

Getting to Court

The Supreme Court in Action

The Power of Federal Courts

Checks on Power (pp. 446-467)

April 22

**Public Policymaking Process Introduced**

Agenda Setting and Decision-Making

(pp. 468-478)

April 24

**Policymaking Continued**

Theories of Policy Making Explored

(pp. 468-490)

April 29

**Environmental Policy** (pp. 559-575)

**May 1**

**FINAL EXAM 2-5 PM**