

**Political Science 1113: American Government
Spring 2015**

Dr. Stephen C. Nemeth
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Class Time and Location:
TR 9:00-10:15
NRC 108

Office Hours:
MWF: 9:30-12:30;
TTH: 1:00-3:00

Undergraduate Teaching Assistant:
Collin McCarthy
collin.mccarthy@okstate.edu

Office hours and location:
By appointment only

Course Description:

The purpose of this course is to help you gain a functional understanding of American government as well as a better sense of the informal realities of politics. Students will leave this course with a better understanding of the institutions and behaviors of American politics and, where applicable, a greater confidence in their abilities to participate in it. Additionally, students will also gain the following from their participation in the course:

- A deeper understanding of how the primary institutions of the U.S. government work
- An appreciation of the way the American political system is unique compared to other countries in the world
- An appreciation of how people form their political attitudes and ideological attachments – and why reasonable people often disagree over politics
- An understanding of the primary ideologies in American politics (e.g. conservative, liberal, libertarian, etc...) and what the two main political parties stand for
- The ability to recognize the role of rhetoric in political debates
- Greater interest in politics, which is more pervasive in our lives – and less boring – that one typically thinks

Required Readings:

Geer, John, Wendy J. Schiller, Jeffrey A. Segal, and Dana K. Glencross. 2010. *Gateways to Democracy: An Introduction to American Government* (2nd ed.). Boston: Wadsworth

Priest, Dana and William Arkin. 2011. *Top Secret America: The Rise of the New American Security State*. New York: Back Bay Books.

I have also assigned various other readings. These are available on D2L (oc.okstate.edu). I reserve the right to change reading (articles, not books) at my discretion. If that does occur, I will provide ample warning.

Note – You must have access to MindTap, not just the textbook. That means if you bought a used copy of the book, it will not have access to MindTap, so you will not have what you need for the course. When you purchase the book at the bookstore (which are all NEW books), you will always be getting the book plus the MindTap access that you need. Please note though that this does not mean that you will not be able to sell your book back to a third party at the end of the semester, if you so choose.

Instructions for accessing MindTap with your access code will be provided. However, please note that you will not need your access code right away – there is a 21 day grace period for everyone at the beginning of the semester. At the end of the grace period, you will need the access code. **DO NOT LOSE YOUR ACCESS CODE!**

I am not following the text book in sequence. We will follow my preferred order of topics. Lectures are not a review of the reading, merely a complement.

Course Requirements and Grading:

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Weight</u>	<u>Due Date</u>
Assessments	20%	Various
Reading Quizzes (10)	20% (2% each)	Various
Exam I	20%	Thursday, February 12 th
Exam II	20%	Thursday, April 2 nd
Final Exam	20%	Thursday, May 7 th

Assessments – A wide variety of different types of assignments – review questions, graded activities and group assignments, and ungraded (full credit or no credit) activities - will take place in class. Most classes will have some form of student participation and they will be graded in some manner. Throughout the semester, I will discuss the assessments that have taken place as well as post the grades of completed assessments on D2L.

Reading Quizzes – There will be a total of twelve reading quizzes (roughly one per each chapter assigned from the text), which will be completed online through MindTap. Each reading quiz must be completed by the end of the day preceding the class session for which the chapter is due. For example, the deadline for the Chapter 3 reading quiz (if one occurs) is 11:59pm on Monday, January 26th (this is because the Chapter 3 reading is due on Tuesday, January 27th). For calculating your final grade I will only use the ten highest quizzes. More information for completing these quizzes will be provided before the deadline for completing the first quiz.

Exam I – This exam covers Part I of the course. The format of the test will be a mix of multiple-choice, short answer, and essay.

Exam II – This exam covers Part II of the course. The format of the test will be a mix of multiple-choice, short answer, and essay.

Final – This comprehensive exam concerns subject matter from the entire semester. The format of the test will be a mix of multiple-choice, short answer, and essay. The final will be in class and held from 8:00-9:50 am Thursday, May 7th.

Grades:

Grades will be based on a 100 point scale:

<u>Point Range</u>	<u>Final Course Letter Grade</u>
90 - 100	A
80 - 89.99	B

70 - 79.99	C
60 - 69.99	D
59.99 or below	F

Note: I will not round grades to the nearest whole number. I believe that this is the fairest way to determine your earned grade. I will not entertain requests to “bump up” your grade. Any concerns that you have about your grade need to be discussed with me during the semester, not after it has ended (with the exception of the final exam). Any requests for grade changes on tests, assignments, etc. during the semester need to be accompanied by a written statement detailing the request and the nature of the problem. The request must detail a substantive issue (clerical error, unclear question, mathematical error, etc...), frivolous requests will be denied. This will be followed up by an office meeting between the instructor and student. Grading challenges will never result in a lower grade.

Teaching Assistant

Collin McCarthy will serve as the undergraduate teaching assistant for the course. He will be available to meet with students by appointment only. Please contact Collin to make an appointment if you would like his assistance with a class matter, especially if I am unavailable. In addition to meeting with students, Collin will assist with all manner of class activities, assignments, etc...

Absence & Make-Up Policy

While I have no attendance policy per se, 20% of your grade comes from in-class work, meaning that excessive absences can be quite detrimental to your grade. There are times however, where missing class is unavoidable (as in the case of illness, family emergencies, the law, etc...). In those cases, I will offer you an opportunity to avoid losing credit for missed work. This opportunity does come with strings attached though

- Contact me ahead of time if you will miss a class (or if this is impossible, as soon as you can afterwards). Let me know briefly why you will miss class. Documentation, personal or medical details are not necessary unless I specifically request them.
- Review the posted PowerPoint (made available on D2L one to two days after class).
- After reviewing the PowerPoint, please visit the TA during an arranged time to make up any in-class work from that day. If there is no assessment from the day’s class that is suitable to be made-up, the TA will have alternative work that may be completed for make-up credit.
- If you have followed the rules AND created made-up work of PASSING quality, I will remove the zero for that specific assessment. You will not receive a grade but you will also not have a zero, so this will neither help nor hurt your grade. If the work is NOT OF PASSING QUALITY, the zero will remain. As a result, please be sure to have done all of the previous before contacting the TA.
- Assessments must be made up within one week of the class that was missed.
- Make-up can only be completed with the TA, so be sure to pay attention to the one week deadline and to the TA’s availability. If you are unable to arrange a suitable time with the TA, we can arrange an alternative time for completing make-up work. If we do this however, I will request proof of your conflict with the TA’s available time.
- You may take advantage of this offer no more than 3 times. After this point, all missed assessments will remain zeros.

In-Class Policies

Be respectful of others.

All of us care about the future of our country & the world, but our opinions about how to get there differ. Please be tolerant of others' views and opinions. Disrespectful behavior or rude comments will not be tolerated.

Use of a computer (or tablet, etc...) during lecture is generally not permitted. I will make exceptions when you convince me that the use of a computer is necessary to your success in the course. However, there are two stipulations: 1. You must speak to me in person about your desire to use a computer in class and 2. You must sit in the front row of the lecture hall. If I grant you this exception and a teaching assistant or I notice you using your computer for any activity not related to class, the privilege of using a computer in class will be withdrawn.

Texting or other uses of a phone during class are not permitted. Please turn your ring tones to silent or vibrate. If you are expecting a call, please let me know beforehand. When the call comes, please leave discretely and answer the call outside of the class. Otherwise, put your phone away.

Note:

- **Contacting Me:** Email and office hours are the best way to contact me. You may also try to contact me using the phone number listed above. If you cannot make my office hours, I am happy to try to arrange an alternate time.
- **Email Address:** When contacting me or the undergraduate teaching assistant, you must use your Oklahoma State email address. To protect your privacy, we reserve the right not to respond to any message sent from a different email address. Please note that all class-wide emails will be sent to your school email address. If this mail is forwarded to another account, it is your responsibility to receive messages that we send.
- **Email Etiquette:** In order that your email is not overlooked, please put POLS 1113 [your name] in the subject line. So, if a Frank Eaton were in my class (and it would be very entertaining if he were), his email to me would say "POLS 1113 Frank Eaton" in the subject line. Please allow 24 hours for a response. Please be courteous in your emails, have a proper salutation, and signature. This will be important in your future lives (trust me!).
- **Technology:** There will, like most courses here, a website for the class on D2L (oc.okstate.edu). Non-text book readings, the syllabus, and information about deadlines, assignments, etc... will be posted there. Each student is responsible for checking the website for announcements and to retrieve any assignment in a timely manner. The instructor is not responsible for any technical difficulties encountered when accessing the course website. If you do, there is a "Student Help" link on D2L. Technical difficulties with the course website do not serve as an excuse for late assignments.
- **Incomplete Policy:** University Policy states that "a student must satisfactorily complete the *majority* of course work, and average 'D' or better on work to date,

but has been ‘unavoidably prevented from completing the remaining work of the course’”.

- **Syllabus Changes:** I reserve the right to change the syllabus during the semester. Such changes may be the addition of new readings, new policies, etc... If I do this, I will make an announcement of the change in class and on the class website.

University Guidelines:

Please see the attached document regarding university policies and procedures.

Course Outline:

Note: All reading should be completed BEFORE class on the date for which they are listed

PART I – FOUNDATIONS

Week 1: PRELIMINARIES

Tuesday, January 13th: Introduction

- Reading: N/A

Thursday, January 15th: Our Country’s Politics

- Reading: Geer et al. (2010). APPENDIX B.

Week 2: THE CONSTITUTION

Tuesday, January 20th: Creating our Constitution

- Reading: Geer et al. 2010. Chapter 2. & APPENDIX C.

Thursday, January 22nd: The Constitution Today

- Reading: Priest & Arkin 2011. Chapters 1-2

Week 3: FEDERALISM

Tuesday, January 27th: Feds vs. States

- Reading: Geer et al. 2010. Chapter 3

Thursday, January 29th: Federalism Post 9/11

- Reading: Priest & Arkin 2011. Chapter 3

Week 4: CIVIL LIBERTIES I

Tuesday, February 3rd: Your Rights

- Reading: Geer et al. 2010. Chapter 4.

Thursday, February 5th: Your Rights Post 9/11

- Reading: Priest & Arkin 2011. Chapter 4.

Week 5: CIVIL LIBERTIES II

Tuesday, February 10th:

- Reading: Priest & Arkin 2011. Chapter 6 & 7

Thursday, February 12th: EXAM I

- Reading: N/A

PART II – INSTITUTIONS OF GOVERNMENT

Week 6: LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

Tuesday, February 17th: Congress

- Reading: Geer et al. 2010. Chapter 11

Thursday, February 19th: Reforming Congress?

- Reading: Bartlett, Bruce. 2014. "Enlarging the House of Representatives." January 7. http://economix.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/01/07/enlarging-the-house-of-representatives/?_r=0 (January 8, 2015)

Week 7: EXECUTIVE BRANCH

Tuesday, February 24th: The Presidency

- Reading: Geer et al. 2010. Chapter 12

Thursday, February 26th: The Modern Presidency

- Reading: Priest & Arkin 2011. Chapter 5

Week 8: THE BUREAUCRACY

Tuesday, March 3rd: Civil Servants, etc...

- Reading: Geer et al. 2010. Chapter 13

Thursday, March 5th: Contract This!

- Reading: Priest & Arkin 2011. Chapters 8 & 9

Week 9: JUDICIAL BRANCH

Tuesday, March 10th: The Supreme Court

- Reading: Geer et al. 2010. Chapter 14

Thursday, March 12th: Reforming the Court

- Reading: Barnes, Robert. 2009. "Legal Experts Propose Limiting Justices' Powers, Terms." February 23. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/02/22/AR2009022201863.html>. (January 8, 2015).

Week 10: SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS

Week 11: CAMPAIGNING AND ELECTIONS

Tuesday, March 24th: The Process

- Reading: Geer et al. 2010. Chapter 10

Thursday, March 26th: Why Run for Office?

- Reading: Goldmacher, Shane. 2013. "Why Would Anyone Want to Run for Congress?" April 18. <http://www.nationaljournal.com/magazine/why-would-anyone-want-to-run-for-congress-20130418> (January 8, 2015).

PART III – THE MODERN AMERICAN POLITICAL SYSTEM

Week 12: PUBLIC OPINION

Tuesday, March 31st: The American Voters

- Reading: Geer et al. 2010. Chapter 6

Thursday, April 2nd: EXAM II

- Reading: N/A

Week 13: THE MEDIA

Tuesday, April 7th: The Influence of the Press

- Reading: Geer et al. 2010. Chapter 7

Thursday, April 9th: Studying the Press

- Reading: N/A

Week 14: INTEREST GROUPS

Tuesday, April 14th: Money Talks...

- Reading: Geer et al. 2010. Chapter 8

Thursday, April 16th: The Heavenly Chorus...

- Reading: N/A

Week 15: POLITICAL PARTIES

Tuesday, April 21st: The Influence of Parties

- Reading: Geer et al. 2010. Chapter 9

Thursday, April 23rd: The Future of Parties

- Reading: N/A

Week 16: CIVIL RIGHTS

Tuesday, April 28th: The Founders' Promise

- Reading: Geer et al. 2010. Chapter 5

Thursday, April 30th: Final Exam Review

- Reading: N/A

FINAL – 8:00-9:50am Thursday, May 7th