

Introduction to American Politics

PO 211*

Professor Andrew Reeves

3:30–5PM; Tuesdays and Thursdays

1 Contact Information

Professor: Andrew Reeves

Email: areeves@bu.edu

Url: <http://people.bu.edu/areeves>

Office Location: PLS-210

Office Phone: 617/353-5284

Office Hours: Wednesdays 3PM to 4:30PM; Thursdays 1PM to 2:30PM; or, by appointment.

Course Home Page: http://courseinfo.bu.edu/courses/08fallcaspo211_a1/

Course Location: STO B50

Teaching Fellows: Peter Litt (pcl1@bu.edu); Laura Lucas (lucasc@bu.edu); and, Alex Whalen (awhalen@bu.edu).

2 An Overview of the Course

This course is an introduction to the origins, development, and operation of American government. It will analyze the actors, institutions, and outcomes of the American political system. Since this is an introductory course, there is an emphasis on describing as well as explaining the development of governance in the United States. Since this is a broad survey of an expansive topic, depth is sacrificed for breadth.

The goal is to provide the student with a basic understanding of the workings of the U.S. Congress, the presidency, the courts, and other related actors and institutions of American government. By its end, the student should be a more discriminating consumer (and maybe producer) of political information.

*See the course web page at http://courseinfo.bu.edu/courses/08fallcaspo211_a1/ for the most up to date version of this document. **This version: Tuesday 2nd September, 2008; 16:31.**

3 Expectations

Students are expected to:

- attend a twice weekly lecture and a once weekly section. The lecture will consist of a presentation of the material by the professor, while the weekly sections will be discussion driven and led by one of three section leaders. Attendance is recorded at weekly sections but not at lecture;
- complete the reading assignments described in the course schedule. All reading should be completed before the lecture on the topic;
- regularly check the course web page;
- stay up to date on current developments in American politics by reading *The New York Times*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, or various news aggregating websites such as RealClearPolitics.com;
- adhere to all ethical codes set forth by Boston University. Please carefully review the College of Arts and Sciences Academic Conduct Code at <http://www.bu.edu/cas/academics/programs/conductcode.html>. Cases of academic misconduct will be referred to the Office of the Dean.

4 Grading and Course Policies

If students have any questions about course policies or grading then they should consult the professor or teaching fellows by email or during office hours.

4.1 Grading

Students will be evaluated on their attendance and performance on assignments in section; a midterm and final exam; and unannounced quizzes in lecture. Final course grades will be calculated as follows:

Pop Quizzes (in lecture) 5% The pop quizzes will consist of questions based on lecture and the assigned reading.

Section Attendance and Assignments 20% At each section, attendance will be taken. Teaching fellows may also assign short assignments.

Midterm Exam 35% The midterm exam will consist of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions.

Final Exam 40% The final exam will consist of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions.

4.2 Course Policies

Academic Integrity. Plagiarism is unacceptable. The student should see the professor or teaching fellows if he or she has the slightest question about or concern of potentially committing this most horrendous academic offense.

Late work. Late work is not accepted, quizzes cannot be rescheduled, and exams will be rescheduled only under extraordinary (and well-documented) circumstances.

Regrades. A student may feel that their assignment has been unfairly graded by the TF and wish to request that the professor regrade the assignment. If a student wishes to do so, he or she must prepare a one page memo describing why they feel they have been wronged and submit it in hard copy to the professor within twenty-four hours of receiving the grade. If the professor accepts the request, he will regrade the *entire* assignment and *may* render a lower grade than original. Except in the case of an obvious oversight on the teaching staff, there will be no partial or spot regrades of an assignment.

5 Required Texts

The following texts are required for this course and will be made available for purchase at the University bookstore.

Lowi, T. J., Ginsberg, B., and Shepsle, K. A. (2007). *American Government: Power and Purpose*. W.W. Norton, tenth edition. ISBN: 978-0393930825.

Shafritz, J. M. and Weinberg, L. S. (2005). *Classics in American Government*. Wadsworth Publishing, third edition. ISBN: 978-0534602710.

Hereafter, Lowi et al. is abbreviated as LG&S and Shafritz and Weinberg is abbreviated as S&W.

Course Schedule

September 2 Introduction

September 4 and 9 The Founding

Reading: In LG&S, Chapter 1 and 2. In S&W, Section 1: Readings #1 – #8.

September 11 and 16 Federalism

Reading: In LG&S, Chapter 3. In S&W, Section 2: Readings #9 – #13.

September 18 and 23 Civil Liberties and Civil Rights

Reading: LG&S, Chapter 4. In S&W, Sections 3 and 4: Readings #14 – # 26.

September 25 and 30 The Congress

Reading: In LG&S, Chapter 5. In S&W, Section 10: Readings #51 – #54.

October 2 and 7 The Presidency

Reading: LG&S, Chapter 6. In S&W, Section 11: Readings #55 – #62.

October 6 Last day to withdraw without a ‘W.’

October 9 The Bureaucracy

Reading: In LG&S Chapter 7.

October 14 No Class.

October 16 and 21 The Courts

Reading: In LG&S Chapter 8. In S&W, Section 12: Readings #63 – #67.

October 23 Midterm Exam Review

October 28 Midterm Exam Tuesday, October 28

October 30 Presidential Elections

November 4 and 6 Elections

Reading: In LG&S Chapter 10. In S&W, Section 7: Readings #38 – #42.

November 10 Last day to withdraw with a 'W'.

November 11 No Class.

November 13 and 18 Public Opinion

Reading: In LG&S, Chapter 9. In S&W, Section 5: Readings #27 – #31.

November 20 and 25 Political Parties

Reading: In LG&S Chapter 11. In S&W, Section 6: Readings #32 – #37.

November 27 No Class.

December 2 Interest Groups

Reading: In LG&S Chapter 12. In S&W, Section 8: Readings #43 – #46.

December 4 The Media

Reading: In LG&S Chapter 13. In S&W, Section 9: Readings #47 – #50.

December 9 Public Policy and the Economy

Reading: In LG&S Chapter 14. In S&W, Section 13: Readings #68 to #72.

December 11 Wrap-up.

Final Exam