

AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

Political Science 2051
Louisiana State University

Spring 2015
MWF 9:30-10:20am
Coates Hall 145

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Office Hours: 10:30-11:30am, Wednesday and Friday, and by appointment

Course Description: As an overview of American government, this course explores how the American system of government came to be; the forces that shaped its development, and their continuing influence; its constitution, institutions, and processes.

Course Objectives: The primary learning objective of this course is to help citizens understand and perform their roles in a democratic society by imparting a basic knowledge and understanding of what the American political system is, how and why it works, and how it may be changed when it is seen to fail. This basic objective may be divided into more specific learning objectives:

1. To foster a dynamic and safe environment for intellectual curiosity, civil discussion, and growth as a class, as a democratic people, and as free individuals;
2. To critically examine the bases for our pursuit of political knowledge through serious consideration of the philosophic and historical origins that have shaped the creation and evolution of the American government and its constitution;
3. To increase our knowledge of our basic rights as citizens in this country;
4. To inform our awareness of the basic duties inhering our role as citizens in a democracy;
5. To critically and imaginatively explore the ways in which our governments influence our quality of life as citizens, and how we may influence our governments for change.

Additional Objectives: This course is an approved general education credit for the social sciences; and, as such, it is designed to contribute to your understanding of self and of culture. In this light, the course is intended to acquaint you with some of the classic narratives and philosophies of western civilization, so as to give you an understanding of other cultures and other times; to acquaint you with some of the moral and ethical issues of politics; and to encourage critical and analytical thinking, as well as a precise and graceful use of language. As a social science general education elective this course is designed to enhance your understanding of the informing factors of global interdependence, including economic forces, political dynamics, and cultural and linguistic difference.

WEEK 1 (Jan. 14, 16)—**Introduction**

Welcome!

Introduction to American Government

John Winthrop, A Modell of Christian Charity**

Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” and “I Have a Dream”**

PART I Formative Experiences

WEEK 2 (Jan. 21, 23; MLK Holiday is Jan. 19!)—**American Political Development**

Landy & Milkis, Chapter 1: Introduction

Declaration of Independence**

WEEK 3 (Jan. 26, 28, 30)—**Political Culture**

Landy & Milkis, Chapter 2: Political Inheritance and Political Culture

U.S. Constitution**

WEEK 4 (Feb. 2, 4, 6)—**Constitutional Development**

Landy & Milkis, Chapter 3: Contesting the Constitution

Federalist Papers 1, 2, 10, 51**

WEEK 5 (Feb. 9, 11, 13)—**Revolution and Regime**

Landy & Milkis, Chapter 4: Political Development

Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Four Freedoms speech**

Jane Addams, selected essays**

WEEK 6 (Feb. 20; Mardi Gras Holiday is Feb. 16-18!)

EXAM I Friday, Feb. 20

PART II Pivotal Relationships

WEEK 7 (Feb. 23, 25, 27)—**Confederate Republic**

Landy & Milkis, Chapter 5: Federalism

WEEK 8 (Mar. 2, 4, 6)—**Market and State**

Landy & Milkis, Chapter 6: Political Economy

PART III Governing Institutions

WEEK 9 (Mar. 9, 11, 13)—**Representation**

Landy & Milkis, Chapter 7: Congress

WEEK 10 (Mar. 16, 18, 20)—**Executive**

Landy & Milkis, Chapter 8: The Presidency

WEEK 11 (Mar. 23, 25, 27)—**Deliberation and Judgment**

Landy & Milkis, Chapter 9: The Judiciary

SHORT ESSAY DUE Friday, March 27

WEEK 12 (Mar. 30 and Apr. 1 only. April 3 is Good Friday—no school, Easter Break begins!)

EXAM II Wednesday, April 1

WEEK 13 (Easter Break!!! Have a restful and fun break! Come back well and whole.)

WEEK 14 (Apr. 13, 15, 17)—**Administrative Government**

Landy & Milkis, Chapter 10: Bureaucracy

PART IV Political Forces

WEEK 15 (Apr. 20, 22, 24)—**Political Groups and Competitions**

Landy & Milkis, Chapter 11: Parties, Campaigns, and Elections

WEEK 16 (Apr. 27, 29, May 1)

Landy & Milkis, Chapter 12: Participation, Public Opinion, and Media

Landy & Milkis, Chapter 13: Concluding Thoughts

WEEK 17 (Finals Week)

FINAL EXAM 10am-12 Noon, Monday, May 4

REQUIRED TEXTS

Marc Landy & Sidney M. Milkis, *American Government: Enduring Principles, Critical Choices* (3rd edition), Cambridge University Press. ISBN 978-1-107-65002-2

- Available online (Amazon, Abe Books, etc.), or at the LSU Bookstore. (Hint: Check out Amazon Prime for college students!)

Required readings marked with a double asterisk (**) are available on Moodle

Note: Students are also encouraged to take advantage of the various newspapers provided on campus and online. The New York Times and Wall Street Journal are worthwhile. In addition, you can set your Google News page to follow topics that especially interest you. Relevant news items will inform our class discussions, and bringing these to the attention of the class will enhance our discussions.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Exam I = 15%	Friday, February 20
Exam II = 20%	Wednesday, April 1
Final Exam = 30%	10am-12 Noon, Monday, May 4
Five quizzes = 25%	Unannounced. You will want to complete all reading assignments.
Two-page reflection paper = 10%	Friday, March 27

Grading Scale

A = 90-100%
B = 80-89.9%
C = 70-79.9
D = 60-69.9
F = <60%

Your course grade is based on three exams (15 percent, 20 percent, and 30 percent), five quizzes (5 percent each, for a total of 25 percent), and one short paper (10 percent). You will be provided with an opportunity to ask questions in advance of the exams. You will need a Scantron (the long, thin Scantron) for all of your exams (available at the LSU bookstore or free at the student government office). Your final exam is in our classroom, **10am-12 Noon, Monday, May 4, 2015**. You are encouraged to organize your own group study, as it facilitates your understanding of the material and challenges you to think about the major questions and arguments of each text. *All* late material will be penalized. Announcements and readings for **bonus opportunities** will be posted on Moodle or distributed in class. I reserve the right to administer unannounced bonus quizzes.

The short essay will consist of a two-page reflection paper. A list of suggested topics, as well as a detailed description of the nature of this assignment, will be provided for you. Your essay is due on **Friday, March 27, 2015**.

Reading, Attendance, and Academic Integrity

Your success in this class depends upon your consistent attendance and participation. Before each class period, you should read the assigned materials and thoughtfully consider their significance for our study. Of course, in order to facilitate analysis and ease of reference, you should **bring your copy of the text** to class. **At the end of each class period, I will announce the readings for the next class period.**

Etiquette and Electronics in Class

Classroom etiquette acknowledges that class time is set apart for a special purpose and requires students to respect others in word and in deed. Make sure you are ready to begin when our class starts and wait until it is over to pack your notes and belongings. Be attentive to what others say, and make an effort to contribute to class discussions. Know that, unless there is an emergency, leaving before class is over is unacceptable. **The use of laptops, tablets, and smart phones is *not* allowed in class,** except for official note-takers. Using pen and paper instead limits the distractions your laptop presents to you and your neighbor. Importantly, studies show, using pen and paper also contributes to better understanding and more effective learning overall. Audio recorders are allowed, but strictly for your personal use.

Moodle

Login to Moodle through your myLSU account to access readings (posted as PDF files or Internet links) and your grades.