

**POS 1041**  
**Section 3**  
**AMERICAN GOVERNMENT: NATIONAL**

**Dr. Cherie Maestas**  
Office Hours: Wed. 1:30 – 3:00  
and by appointment

Phone: 644-7324  
Email: Cherie.Maestas@fsu.edu  
Office: Bellamy 558

**Course Overview**

The purpose of this course is to critically examine the forces that influence political decisions in the United States. Central to this is the development of a theoretical understanding of how representation occurs in the American political system. Through the semester, we will examine the foundations and structure of government in the United States, the linkages between citizens and their government and how individuals in the different branches of government respond to citizen interests. As part of the learning process, we will evaluate the structure and function of the American political system: How is American government supposed to work? Where does it fail and why? What suggestions have been made for change? How might such changes affect the representative process?

**Grade Components**

2 Midcourse Exams (drop lowest midcourse exam score)	40%
Cumulative Final Exam	40%
In class quizzes and exercises	20%

*Exams*

There will be three multiple choice exams given during the semester. Because a number of the topics we study will build on earlier course material, a portion of each exam is necessarily cumulative and the final exam will be cumulative. Please be aware, multiple choice exams are not easy exams. You will need a thorough understanding of the material to perform well on these exams.

You may drop the lowest of the first two exams. All students **MUST** take the final exam. Please note, I do not normally give make up exams. You are expected to be present for each exam. Make-up examinations will be given only in *extreme, and well documented* circumstances (e.g. documented illness or death in the immediate family) and must be discussed with me *prior to* the exam date.

*Quizzes and class participation*

During the semester, I will give EIGHT random, unannounced quizzes and in-class exercises. The quizzes will consist of approximately 5-10 short answer or multiple choice questions over material presented in lecture and assigned readings. **There will no make-up quizzes or exercises.** However, I will drop your lowest grade. These quizzes and exercises will be relatively simple if you have attended class and taken notes on the lectures and done the assigned reading. Quizzes may be given either at the beginning OR at the end of class and you must be present at the time of the quiz to receive a grade. You cannot take it at the end of class if you were present but late on a quiz day.

*Extra-credit participation in class discussion board*

There will be a discussion board of political topics associated with this class on the course website on Blackboard. There will be opportunities for you to earn extra credit points to count towards quiz grades and midterm grades during the semester. You may earn up to one point per posting on the boards with a maximum of 10 extra credit points allowable during the semester.

## Course Materials

There is one required text for this course and it is available online at Atomic Dog Publishers:

Peveerill Squire, James m. Lindsay, Cary R. Covington, Eric R.A.N. Smith  
*Dynamics of Democracy Alternate Edition* Atomic Dog Publishing ISBN: 07593953

The Course registration ID is Section 03: 3113055607120. Please use this when purchasing your textbook. You can find detailed instructions about how to order your book at: Section 03:

<http://www.atomicdog.com/printout/3113055607120>

You are responsible for completing the assigned readings. Assigned readings are outlined in the syllabus. However, dates given are approximate. The reading schedule will be updated at the beginning of each lecture so that you can plan your study time accordingly.

## Attendance

Although I do not take attendance, I strongly recommend you come to class. **The quizzes and exams will cover material from lecture as well as the readings. You are unlikely to score highly on the exams if you have not attended class.** The primary purpose of the textbook is to provide you with many of the nuts and bolts of American government. The lectures will provide you with additional theoretical background to make a critical assessment of the functioning of our democratic system. Therefore, it will be absolutely necessary for you to attend class.

Please come at the beginning of class and stay until the end. Entering and leaving during class is disruptive. Regular disruptions of class may be grounds for reducing your final grade. Note that quizzes will be given either at the beginning or at the end of class. If you are not present in class when the quiz is given, you will not receive a grade for the quiz.

## Courtesy in Classroom Discussions

Occasionally debates over current issues crop up. Class discussions of political issues can often stimulate strong feelings and heated debate. I ask all of you to respect the opinions of your fellow students, even if you do not agree with them. In simple terms, that means not interrupting other students while they are speaking and not verbally attacking them for their beliefs. While I believe that it is essential to connect theory to current events, I or your TA will cut short debates of current events that do not enhance the understanding of course concepts.

## Cheating

Don't do it. The penalties for cheating in my class are severe and simply not worth the risk. Academic dishonesty on even the smallest quiz or assignment can result in you failing this course and facing University disciplinary action. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the use of unauthorized information during a quiz or exam, plagiarism, submitting the same paper for multiple courses, or depriving another student of the ability to perform his or her work. If you have questions about University policy on academic dishonesty, please see the Academic Honor System at <http://www.fsu.edu/Books/Student-Handbook/2003codes/honor.html>

## Students with Disabilities

Any student who, because of a disabling condition, may require some special arrangements in order to meet the course requirements should contact the instructor **as soon as possible** to make the necessary accommodations. Students should (1) register with the Student Disability Resource Center and (2) bring a letter to the instructor from the SDRC indicating the required accommodations. This should be done during the first week of class. This syllabus and other course materials are available in alternate form upon request.

## Tentative Schedule of Topics

A tentative schedule of reading assignments is listed below. **Note, however, I will update and adjust this schedule as needed throughout the semester.** Updates will be posted at the beginning of each class. Please make note of any changes. You are responsible for reading the assigned materials *before* class and could be quizzed over this material.

<b>Week</b>	<b>Readings</b>
<b>1/7</b>	<b>Introduction, Overview of class</b>
<b>1/14</b>	Chapter 1: Studying the Dynamics of Democracy: Conflict, Rules, and Change Chapter 2: The Constitution
<b>1/21</b>	<b>Monday – no class, MLK Day</b> <b>Wednesday</b> - Chapter 2: The Constitution
<b>1/28</b>	Chapter 3: The Social Context of American Politics Chapter 4: Civil Liberties
<b>2/4</b>	Chapter 5: Civil Rights
<b>2/11</b>	<b>Monday – Exam 1</b> <b>Wednesday</b> - Chapter 6: Public Opinion
<b>2/18</b>	Chapter 6: Public Opinion Chapter 7: Voting and Participation <b>Friday --February 22 – last day to drop class without receiving a grade</b>
<b>2/25</b>	Chapter 7: Voting and Participation
<b>3/3</b>	Chapter 8: The News Media
<b>3/10</b>	<b>Spring Break</b>
<b>3/17</b>	Chapter 9: Political Parties Chapter 10: Interest Groups
<b>3/24</b>	<b>Monday – Exam 2</b> <b>Wednesday</b> Chapter 11: Congress
<b>3/31</b>	Chapter 11: Congress
<b>4/7</b>	Chapter 12: The Presidency
<b>4/14</b>	Chapter 13: The Federal Bureaucracy Chapter 14: The Courts
<b>4/21</b>	<b>FINAL EXAM WEDNESDAY 4/23 – 12:30 – 2:30</b>