

## Political Science 2051

### Introduction to American Government Fall 2017

Professor: Kevin V. Mulcahy

6:00 pm – 8:50 pm Wednesday 220 Stubbs

Office: 221 Stubbs

Hours: 2:00-6:00 M-F, or by appointment

See Wikipedia 'Kevin V. Mulcahy' for professional background

### Course Objectives

This course is designed to provide an overview of various theories on the American form of government. Three major areas relating to America's political system will be highlighted in this course: The Constitutional System, Governmental Institutions, and Electoral Processes.

My goal is to give a good college civics course: to improve your capacity to act as informed and concerned citizens. Voting alone should be a decision informed by a familiarity with candidates' policy positions and their implications.

This course is a general education course and has been designed with the LSU learning competency statement in mind: "LSU graduates will demonstrate an understanding of the informing factors of global interdependence, including economic forces, political dynamics, and cultural and linguistic difference."

### Required Books and Materials

The following material constitutes the required readings and materials for this course:

- Patterson, *We the People: A Concise Introduction to American Politics*, 12<sup>th</sup> edition, 2017. McGraw Hill.
- Pocket Copy of the US Constitution (which will be provided free of charge).
- Plunkitt, George W, and William L. Riordon. *Plunkitt of Tammany Hall: A Series of Very Plain Talks on Very Practical Politics*. (2014)
- Minimum of 13 Scantrons and a #2 pencil (**Must bring a Scantron and a #2 pencil to EVERY class period! Scantrons are necessary for quizzes.**)

### Class Decorum

- 1.) No laptop. No cellphones except during designated breaks.
- 2.) Do not send me emails. See me. I will not respond to emails.

- 3.) I am often in my office all afternoon and evening M-F. Come and see me.
  - a.) Any questions about grades should be directed to the TA.
  - b.) I am the appellate courts
- 4.) I use the beginning of class to answer questions and discuss issues. Since I am early, I like to hear what you have to say.
- 5.) The class begins at 6pm as noted in the schedule and ends at 8:50pm.
  - a.) A 12 minute break will be given in the middle of every class and two five minute phone breaks come midway in each section.
  - b.) Be a good citizen by arriving on time and staying for the full class period.
  - c.) If you arrive after the discussion period or after me you are late!
  - d.) Quizzes cannot be redone nor is other time allotted.
- 6.) Attendance is required! 12 quizzes will be given at the beginning of each class.
  - a.) Attendance will also be taken at the end of class.
  - b.) You must be in attendance for a grade to receive credit.
  - c.) These are graded out of 100 points the extra 20 is extra credit. Good incentive to come to class.
- 7.) Please observe basic rules of decorum: be on time; do the early reading; take notes.
- 8.) No private conversations, reading newspapers or doing homework during class.
- 9.) For my part, I will try to make the class as informative and stimulating as my abilities allow.

### **Two Absences are Tolerated**

I cannot stress enough that a once a week class is equal to 2-3 classes (T-Th or M-W-F). One absence is not one day; it is one week.

Repeat above to yourself.

### **In Class Quizzes**

In order to emphasize the retention of material discussed in class, in-class quizzes will be given each day that focus on the previous class's lecture. (Hint: Listening to Dr. Mulcahy's lectures and taking notes will help with these quizzes.) There will be a total of 12 quizzes given during the semester. Each worth a maximum of 10 points. You must bring a scantron and a #2 pencil with you to class every day. If you do not have both of these you will get a 0 on the quiz. There will be no make-up quizzes. NO EXCEPTIONS! If you have medical or other issues, see a counselor; they will contact me.

## In-Class Essays

There will be three in-class tests with short answer and essay based off your understanding of the constitution. The following are the general topics for the essays. The essays should be three paragraphs of approximately 7-8 sentences each. There will be no makeups! Each test will be worth 60 points for a total of 180 points.

- 1) Bill of Rights, September 20<sup>th</sup>
- 2) Checks and Balances, October 18<sup>th</sup>
- 3) Electoral Systems, November 15<sup>th</sup>
- 4) *Plunkitt of Tammany Hall*, Consider Plunkitt's approach to politics including among others, graft, patronage, civil service, partisan loyalty, the drink. November 27<sup>th</sup>

## Final Exam

The final is multiple choice AND 2 moderate length essays on anything related to the course material over the semester. The final exam is 120 points.

## Extra Credit

Extra credit is available two ways.  
It is possible to receive 120 point on quizzes which are graded out of 100.  
Optional Essay; take one of Plunkitt's principles and argue to the contrary. 1,000 words; font etc. cover sheet and title page. Is worth 20 points and is due at the final exam. A total of 40 extra credit points are available.

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## Grading

This grading scale established by the university will apply to the class: This is out of a total of 400 points (with 440 total possible points)

A+	388-400	A	376-387	A-	360-375
B+	348-359	B	336-347	B-	320-335
C+	308-319	C	296-307	C-	280-295
D+	268-294	D	256-267	D-	240-255
F	<240				

## Course Outline

Aug. 23 Hand out syllabus; Introduction, Political Thinking and Political Cultures.

Movie: *Contrasting Images of America*

### **Part One: The American Constitutional System**

Aug. 30 Constitutional Democracy; Patterson - Chapter 2

Sep.6 Quiz #1 on Chapter 2

Federalism; Patterson - Chapter 3

Sept. 13 Quiz #2 on Chapter 3

Civil Liberties; Patterson - Chapter 4

Sept.20 Quiz #3 on Chapter 4

Equal Rights; Patterson - Chapter 5 **In-Class Essay 1**

Movie: *Berkeley in the Sixties (1)*

### **Part Two: The Institutions of Government**

Sept .27 Quiz #4 on Chapter 5

Congress – Chapter 11

Oct. 4 Quiz #5 on Chapter 11

Presidency- Chapter 12

Oct. 11 Quiz #6 on Chapter 12

The Federal Bureaucracy – Chapter 13

Oct.18 Quiz #7 on Chapter 13

The Federal Judicial System- Chapter 14 **In-Class Essay 2**

Movie: *Berkeley in the Sixties (2)*

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### **Part Three: Political Behavior and Processes**

Oct. 25 Quiz #8 on Chapter 14

Public Opinion and Interest Groups –Chapter 6 & Chapter 9

Nov. 1 Quiz #9 on Chapter 6 & 9

Political Participation- Chapter 7

Nov. 8 Quiz #10 on Chapter 7

Movie , **In-Class Essay 3**

Nov. 15 Quiz #11 on Chapter 8

Political Parties, Candidates, and Campaigns – Chapter 8

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Nov. 22 Thanksgiving Break

Nov. 27 Quiz #12 on Chapter 9,  
Essay on *Plunkitt of Tammany Hall*

Dec. \_\_ Final Exam as scheduled. It is cumulative. The format is multiple  
Choice, short answer, essay.

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