

(AN ELECTION-BASED)
V

POLITICAL SCIENCE 1101-100: INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN GOVERNMENT SUMMER 2010 (TERM A)

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Anand Edward Sokhey
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WHEN: M-F, 9:15 – 10:50 a.m.
WHERE: Hellems (HLMS), 267
OFFICE HRS.: M/W 11 a.m – 12 p.m.

COURSE OVERVIEW

In this introductory course, we will examine the basic components of American democracy, including institutions, political parties, and of course, the everyday citizen. However, as we find ourselves gearing up for another election season, we will examine all of these things through the lens of another American institution – the midterm election. Thinking about issues and developments as we move from the primaries into the fall, we will relate what we see to theories of politics and enduring debates over the meaning of representation.

We will begin by looking at the history and foundations of the American system, before moving on to the core of the course, in which we will examine the various connections between citizens and government. Specifically, we will study political participation, public opinion, voting behavior/elections, and the role of the media. Finally, after some reflection on the 2008 presidential election and the upcoming midterms, we will wrap up by learning about other governmental institutions, including Congress, the Bureaucracy, and the Judiciary.¹

COURSE GOALS

My basic objectives for this course are to provide you with:

1. an understanding of the structure of American government
2. an understanding of the role (and importance) of elections in the American political system
3. an understanding of political behavior, at both the individual and mass levels
4. the ability to synthesize material and apply concepts covered in class to contemporary politics
5. knowledge and skills that you will assist you as thoughtful members of a democratic society/the American electorate

REQUIRED TEXTS

Two books are required for this course, and both have been ordered at the CU Bookstore (though feel free to purchase either of them online).

1. *America's New Democracy* (2009, 5th edition) by Morris Fiorina, Paul Peterson, Bertram Johnson, and William G. Mayer. New York: Longman (referred to as "F" hereafter)
2. *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America*, (2009) by Morris Fiorina, with Samuel Abrams and Jeremy Pope. (referred to as "CW" hereafter)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Exam 1:	30%
Exam 2:	30%
Exam 3:	30%
Reaction Paper:	10%

Attendance: Part of this course will be interactive – meaning that I will ask you questions as we move through the material in lecture – and part of it will be discussion based. Thus, although attendance is not a formal part of your grade, it is crucial that you attend class regularly and make a special effort to be well-prepared, having read and thought about material in advance. I will keep track of attendance, and *may* reward people who display strong attendance records – i.e., those who attend more than 80% of classes, excluding exam days – and/or strong class-participation records, by slightly “boosting” the final course grade. Please note that this is at my discretion, and that the quality rather than the quantity of class participation will be considered/valued.

¹ My thanks to Larry Baum and Scott McClurg for sharing years of course-planning wisdom.

Exams: Three in-class, non-comprehensive “midterms” will be administered during the four week term. While the exams are not be comprehensive in a traditional sense (i.e., in terms of asking about detailed information from previous parts of the course), they may ask you to connect the material covered at any given time to broader themes/ideas of the course. All exams will be comprised of multiple choice questions and/or short answer/essay questions on key terms and concepts. Material for each test will come from class lectures, discussions, and the assigned readings.

Reaction Paper: Attending class and studying for exams will help you master the course material. However, an equally important part of higher education is the development of skills that will help you think carefully and critically, and enable you to express yourself clearly, concisely, and cogently. Thus, 10% of your final grade comes from a writing assignment (10%).

The writing assignment will focus on the assigned book *Culture War?* Your assignment – in three pages – is to briefly summarize the book’s arguments (in your own words), and then to discuss it in light of the recent healthcare debate and current “mood” of the country. (More details on the assignment will be provided in the second week of the course; please see the course schedule for the due date.)

Guidelines on the Paper: The paper is to be **no more** than three-pages, 12 point font, double-spaced, and all references to course and other materials should be properly cited (an attached reference sheet will not count as going over the three pages). Please see or contact me *before* you turn in an assignment if you are unsure about how/when to cite something. Each paper will be graded based on substance, organization, and writing style (i.e., I will grade down for multiple spelling and grammatical errors). Substantively, I will be looking for evidence that you have truly engaged the material. Papers will be graded on a 10 point scale (see below for details).

Grading Policy: Papers

A (~9-10): An ‘A’ paper thoroughly covers the assigned reading. It presents a clear summary/synthesis, as well as appropriate evidence from class readings or other sources to support any opinions/comments/questions/arguments. Additionally, it is well-written, organized, and has proper documentation of sources.

B (~8-9): A ‘B’ paper is like a “sloppier” version of an A paper. For example, though it may get the general ideas right, the paper may need a bit of work in terms of organization. Likewise, poor writing in an otherwise solid effort may make for a B paper.

C (~7-8): A ‘C’ paper combines several serious problems, including disorganization and unsupported statements, a poor summary/synthesis, and poor writing.

D (~6-7): A ‘D’ paper will have fundamental problems involving organization, the summary/synthesis of material, the use of evidence to support opinions/arguments, and writing.

F (below 6): An ‘F’ paper is an extreme ‘D’ paper. Very poor writing (extensive spelling and grammatical mistakes), combined with a very poor summary/synthesis and minimal/no use of evidence to support comments/questions will result in a failing grade.

Grading Policy: Final Grades

Final grades will be based on the following:

A	94% and above	B	84-86%	C	74-76%	D	60-66%
A-	90-93%	B-	80-83%	C-	70-73%	E	59% and below
B+	87-89%	C+	77-79%	D+	67-69%		

Again, please note that I reserve the right – at my discretion – to “bump” a final grade if a student borders between two letter grades. Attendance, improvement, class participation and effort will go into such a decision, though again, such decisions are made solely at my discretion.

A Note on Participation in Class: Please be respectful of others (and their opinions) when participating in class discussions. Rude or inappropriate comments will not be tolerated.

Extra Credit: Extra Credit Opportunities *may* arise during the term – stay tuned for details.

Excuses: I am a reasonable person, and will accept *legitimate* excuses for late work and the missing of in-class exams (note: I basically consider “legitimate” to be limited to family/personal emergencies and serious illnesses, though ask me if you questions about specific circumstances). To be fair to everyone, I require prior notification (if

at all possible) via email for missed deadlines, and documentation upon your return to campus. (Again, acceptance of excuses is at my discretion.)

Disability: I am more than happy to make special arrangements for students with disabilities that have been documented through Disability Services (colorado.edu/disabilityservices). If you have a disability, please contact me within the first week of the term/as soon as possible – with proper documentation – so that I have sufficient time to make any necessary arrangements for you.

Religious Observance: In-line with campus policy, I will make every effort to reasonably accommodate students who have conflicts with scheduled exams because of religious obligations. Please note that requests for special accommodations need to be presented at least one week prior to scheduled exams/assignments. See http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html for full details.

Discrimination and Harassment: The University of Colorado at Boulder policy on Discrimination & Harassment, the CU policy on Sexual Harassment, and the CU policy on Amorous Relationships apply to all members of the university community. More information is available at: <http://www.colorado.edu/odh>.

Academic Honesty: Cheating on assignments (whether on papers, class exercises, exams, etc.) will not be tolerated, and can seriously damage (and even end) your college career. All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the Honor Code of the institution. All incidents of academic misconduct – this includes lying, as well as more conventional cases of cheating and plagiarism – will be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu).

COURSE PLAN AND ASSIGNED READINGS

Please note that the course reading, lecture, and exam schedule is *not* set in stone (save exam 3, on July 2), as I may add/drop/re-arrange the material based upon the pace and performance of the class.

PART I: THE CONSTITUTION AND AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

- **Tues, June 1:** Introduction to the Class. (no assigned reading)
- **Wednesday, June 2:** Introduction to politics and political science; the American Constitution F: Ch. 1,2;
- **Thursday, June 3:** Federalism; F: Ch. 3
- **Friday, June 4:** Civil Liberties, F: Ch. 14

- **Monday, June 7:** Civil Rights, F: Ch. 15; Review for Exam 1
- **Tuesday, June 8:** Exam 1.

PART 2: CITIZENS AND GOVERNMENT

- **Wednesday, June 9:** Return Exam 1
- **Thursday, June 10:** Political Representation & Public Opinion; F: Ch. 4, 5
- **Friday, June 11:** Media F: Ch. 6

- **Monday, June 14:** Political Participation; F: Ch. 7
- **Tuesday, June 15:** National Elections; F: Ch. 8
- **Wednesday, June 16:** Party Politics; F: Ch. 9
- **Thursday, June 17:** Culture War? Issues, Elections, and the US political landscape; CW: preface(s) & Ch. 1-4
- **Friday, June 18:** Culture War? (cont.), Specific Issues; CW: Ch.5-7

PART 3: AMERICAN INSTITUTIONS

- **Monday, June 21:** work on reaction papers/prepare for exam; no class meeting
- **Tuesday, June 22:** Culture War? (cont.), 2008 and beyond; CW: Ch. 8-10 & epilogue
- **Wednesday, June 23:** Exam 2
- **Thursday, June 24:** Return Exam 2
- **Friday, June 25:** Legislative Politics; F: Ch. 10

- **Monday, June 28:** Presidential politics; F: Ch. 11 → **Reaction Paper Due in class**←
- **Tuesday, June 29:** Bureaucratic Politics; F: Ch. 12
- **Wednesday, June 30:** Judicial Politics; F: Ch. 13
- **Thursday, July 1:** catch up day
- **Friday, July 2:** Exam 3