Course Information

I. Course Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prefix</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Credit</th>
<th>Lecture</th>
<th>Lab</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PSC</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>American Government</td>
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II. Prerequisites: None

III. Course Description:

Course presents philosophical principles, governmental machinery and political processes of the federal government. Content includes political culture, the Constitution, civil liberties and civil rights, government institutions, political parties and interest groups, public opinion, and public policy decision-making. Successful completion of this course satisfies the Illinois State Constitution Examination requirement. IAI S5 900

IV. Learning Objectives:

This course is designed to help students achieve an understanding of:

A. The American democratic principles and procedures, and the ways in which these are embodied in the U.S. constitution.
B. The process by which citizens develop their political values, and how these get expressed in public opinion, party politics, and interest group activity.
C. The organization of the national government, including the interrelationships between and among the legislative, executive, and judicial branches.
E. The nature of public policy issues, including civil liberties.

In addition to the above objectives, this course will help students develop the following General Education Competencies that have been established by the College:

A. Identify, define, analyze, interpret, and evaluate: ideas, concepts, information, and their consequences.
B. Communicate ideas, concepts, and information through written means.
C. Demonstrate an understanding of cultural diversity as it relates to the individual, the community, and the global society.

V. Academic Integrity:

Students and employees at Oakton Community College are required to demonstrate academic integrity and
follow Oakton’s Code of Academic Conduct. This code prohibits:

- cheating,
- plagiarism (turning in work not written by you, or lacking proper citation),
- falsification and fabrication (lying or distorting the truth),
- helping others to cheat,
- unauthorized changes on official documents,
- pretending to be someone else or having someone else pretend to be you,
- making or accepting bribes, special favors, or threats, and
- any other behavior that violates academic integrity.

There are serious consequences to violations of the academic integrity policy. Oakton’s policies and procedures provide students a fair hearing if a complaint is made against you. If you are found to have violated the policy, the minimum penalty is failure on the assignment and, a disciplinary record will be established and kept on file in the office of the Vice President for Student Affairs for a period of 3 years.

Details of the Code of Academic Conduct can be found in the Student Handbook.

VI. Outline of Topics:

In order to accomplish this, the course will follow this outline of topics:

A. The Democratic Values and the Constitution
   1. The basic values of democracy as expressed in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, as well as in the writings of the Founding Fathers
   2. The background of the Constitution
   3. The grants of power contained in the Constitution
   4. The limitations placed on the federal government by the Constitution: the Bill of Rights
   5. Federalism
   6. The U.S. and Illinois constitutions compared

B. Political Parties and Voting
   1. The nature of American political parties: historical development, traditional functions, current structure, strengths, and weaknesses
   2. Political Socialization: the origins of party, issue, and candidate orientation
   3. The factors that influence voting behavior
   4. The nature of campaigning: styles, strategies, impact, etc., and how these have changed over time
   5. Interest groups and their involvement in the electoral and policy process

C. Congress
   1. The functions of Congress
   2. The distribution of power in Congress: seniority, leadership positions, the committee system, voting
   3. The strengths and weaknesses of Congress

D. The Presidency and the Bureaucracy
   1. The constitutional and accrued powers of the President
   2. Sources of presidential power: formal and informal
   3. The bureaucracy: an arm of the president
   4. The bureaucracy: an independent center of power
   5. The Executive Office of the President
   6. The power of the President in relation to the power of the Congress
E. The Courts
   1. Law in a democracy
   2. The origins and uses of judicial review
   3. The structure and functions of the judiciary
   4. Politics and the courts
   5. Civil Liberties

VII. Methods of Instruction:

Classes will include a variety of instructional methods such as: lectures, in class discussions, group activities, document and film analysis, and the use of new technologies.

VIII. Course Practices Required:

Students will be required to:
A. Read a standard textbook or research materials.
B. Write outside of class the equivalent of 12-14 double-spaced typed pages in the form of a term paper, summaries of journal articles, short research papers, and/or other kinds of writing.
C. Participate in in-class and out-of-class activities.

Course may be taught as face-to-face, media-based, hybrid or online course.

IX. Instructional Materials:

Heinemann, Robert, Peterson, Steven and Rasmussen, Thomas. American Government (Second Edition)

Other readings as assigned

X. Methods of Evaluation:

At least one exam will be given in addition to other required papers and assignments.

Students will also be evaluated on a combination of written assignments and in- and out-of-class assignments.

XI. Other Course Information:

A. Support Services: Tutoring is available in the Learning Center.

B. If you have a documented learning, psychological, or physical disability, you may be entitled to reasonable academic accommodations or services. To request accommodations or services, contact the ASSIST office in the Learning Center. All students are expected to fulfill essential course requirements. The College will not waive any essential skills or requirements of a course or degree program.

C. Important Dates: *

09/16/2012: Last day to withdraw and have course dropped from record
09/16/2012: Last day to change to Audit
09/30/2012: Last day for students to submit materials to make up incomplete from the previous semester
10/14/2012: Last day to withdraw from classes with a "W"
* These dates differ for each semester. You'll find the correct dates on the Academic Calendar.
Course Outline

Here is detailed information about the weekly progress of the course. Please contact the instructor if you have questions about the contents of this section.

Introduction to the course and this syllabus

What is American government?
The course title may make sense to you if you have some familiarity with political science. If not, don’t worry. Read on.

Government is a set of institutions by which one group exercise power over or on behalf of another and by which public policies are implemented. There are many ways in which this is accomplished, and we will investigate the way it is carried out in the US. We’ll study the structure and the functions, the philosophies and ideas and the people and laws involved.

America in this context means the United States. On the way to learning about its government, we’ll see what makes it different and also what makes it the same as in other places. The US is the richest, most powerful country in the world, but it has one of the most dysfunctional governments anywhere that is not involved in a civil war. This confers advantages on certain people and certain classes of people, but in strict terms of the implementation of public policies and the exercise of power, the US government as a whole is relatively weak and inefficient.

Politics are all about power: who has it, what they can and do with it, and the causes and effects of these and why things are the way they are. During the course we’ll discuss factors which affect those components of politics in the US.

Put these pieces together and you have an idea of what’s in store. We will investigate the causes and effects of current events, government structures and policies, and cultural trends in the competition for prize of state power.

Objectives of the course

By the end of the course you should be able to declaim unprompted on at least two topics from the syllabus, on political, social and economic problems in the US generally and on the pathologies of government and power in civil society there. You also should have a good understanding of American politics. This means that you would be able to describe contemporary political and cultural circumstances there as well as the causes and effects of those phenomena, and that you would be able to offer an evidence-based argument about solutions to some high profile political problems. This does not mean that you should become experts on US government or American politics or the topics we study. It isn’t possible over one course. The material in this syllabus is here to help you develop a solid understanding of problems and cases by presenting a range of material from which you can choose.

Components of the course

This course is highly interactive. We will use many learning formats, but discussion is the most important. This means that you will participate as much as possible, so you should come prepared, having done reading and research and the assignments. We will engage a new theme in each unit, and the units are structured such that each is a building block in a larger story. So, it is essential that you prepare thoroughly for each unit in order to perform well in the course.

For each unit you should complete the assignments, read as much as time permits and complete some research so you can participate in discussion effectively. You needn’t commit unreasonable amounts of time to these exercises, and assignments are structured so that you shouldn’t have to. If you’re having trouble with the workload it’s your responsibility to raise the problem.

Grading will account for your performance on exams and on written assignments and your participation in
discussion. There will be an exam in the middle of the term and an exam at the end of the course. Completing the exams and written assignments and making comments in discussion each week are the minimum required to pass the course. How well you do each of those things will make the difference between minimum passing marks and something better. Participation in discussion is the most important component of your final grade. You will not be judged by your performance relative to other students, and you shouldn’t measure yourself that way. You will be evaluated on how well you perform against the instructor’s criteria for success. These are: whether you attend most sessions in the classroom or check the course website frequently; whether you submit all the written assignments; whether the written assignments show evidence of research and critical thinking; how frequently you make contributions to discussion; how cogent and well-supported are your contributions to discussion; how willing you are to engage in argument during discussion; how cogent and well-supported are your responses to exam questions. Final grades will be reported as letters, according to College custom, but your performance against the instructor’s criteria used to calculate the final grades will be judged as success or failure. One meets the criterion or doesn’t. There are no shades of meaning discerned between letter grades or points on a scorecard attributed to your performance during the course. If you are concerned about these criteria or about your grade or your progress, it’s your responsibility to ask the instructor. Grade or progress reports won’t be issued unless requested.

**How to use this syllabus**

There is more reading here than the average student could complete, but that isn’t the point. The readings that appear here are choices. You decide how much you want to learn and read accordingly. Remember, the more you learn and the more this is evinced on assignments, in discussion and on exams the better your grade. It’s up to you.

Still, there’s no substitute for reading. If you want more than a passing understanding of anything in the course, you must engage intimately with the topics we study. Read as much as you have time for, use the internet liberally to keep up with current events, and above all else discuss what you see. The more you read, the more you will develop opinions, and the more you discuss them the better they will get. The better your opinions and the more often you use them, the more sophisticated will be your critical faculties, which are the key to learning.

**Background reading**

You could get by, just, completing only the requirements in the course. But you won’t develop a very good understanding of anything unless you put in more effort. A place to start is to develop some background in the areas and the subjects we will study so that you have deeper context in which to analyze what we discuss.

**Political thought**

- Belloc, Hilaire. *The Servile State*
- Burke, Edmund. *Reflections on the Revolution in France*
- Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*
- Hume, David. *A Treatise on Human Nature*
- Locke, John. *Second Treatise on Government*
- Machiavelli, Nicolo. *The Prince*
- Marx, Karl. *Grundrisse*
- Mill, John Stuart. *On Liberty*
- More, Thomas. *Utopia*
- Paine, Thomas. *Common Sense*
- Plato. *The Republic*
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *The Social Contract*

**Political science and government**

- Arendt, Hannah. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*
- Berlin, Isaiah. *Four Essays on Liberty*
- Buchanan, James. *The Calculus of Consent*
- Dahl, Robert. *Polyarchy*
- Galbraith, John Kenneth. *The Affluent Society*
- Migdal, Joel. *Strong Societies and Weak States*
- Mill, John Stuart. *Considerations on Representative Government*
- Moore, Barrington. *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*
- North, Douglass. *Structure and Change in Economic History*
- Putnam, Robert. *Making Democracy Work*
- Schumpeter, Joseph. *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*
- Weber, Max. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*

**American government**
- Bailyn, Bernard. *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*
- Beard, Charles. *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution*
- Calhoun, John C. *A Disquisition on Government*
- *Constitution of the United States of America*
- Dahl, Robert. *A Preface to Democratic Theory*
- Lippmann, Walter. *The Public Philosophy*
- Madison, James. *The Federalist Papers*
- North, Douglass. *Economic Growth of the United States 1790-1860*
- O’Rourke, P.J. *Parliament of Whores*
- Olson, Mancur. *The Logic of Collective Action*
- Schattsneider, Elmer. *The Semi-Sovereign People: A Realist’s View of Democracy in America*
- Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden and Civil Disobedience*
- Tocqueville, Alexis de. *Democracy in America*

**American politics**
- Arnold, R. Douglas. *The Logic of Congressional Action*
- Hofstadter, Richard. *The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made It*
- Huntington, Samuel. *American Politics: The Promise of Disharmony*
- Jacoby, Susan. *The Age of American Unreason*
- Lowi, Theodore. *The End of Liberalism*
- Mills, C. Wright. *The Power Elite*
- Moore, Michael. *Stupid White Men*
- Myrdal, Gunnar. *An American Dilemma*
- O’Neill, Thomas. *All Politics is Local*
- Palast, Greg. *The Best Democracy Money Can Buy*
- Stockman, David. *The Triumph of Politics*
- Vidal, Gore. *Inventing a Nation*

**Course Schedule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>25-Aug-12</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>01-Sep-12</td>
<td>The Political Compass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>08-Sep-12</td>
<td>Values in the Constitution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>15-Sep-12</td>
<td>Structure of the Constitution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>22-Sep-12</td>
<td>Nature of political parties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>29-Sep-12</td>
<td>Voting influences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>06-Oct-12</td>
<td>Congress</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1 Introduction

Introduction
In this unit we will discuss how this course will run and basic topics which are critical to an understanding of the course material to follow. We will also acquaint ourselves with broad facts the US and its geography, culture, business environment, economy, society and polity.

Assignments
Although there are no written assignments due for this unit, you should consider the following as a means to preparation for further critical thinking over the course.

- Is greed good? Why or why not?
- If you could have only one, which would you choose: liberty or security? Why?
- Are justice and fairness the same thing? Why or why not?

Readings
2 The Political Compass

Introduction

It often happens that we say one thing and do another. Politicians do this all the time. They make election promises, give assurances and draw so-called lines in the sand. Then we watch as events overtake them and nullify their words, causing them to explain, prevaricate and dissimulate when called to account. Are all of us simply duplicitous or unprincipled, willing to say whatever is necessary to get what we want? Perhaps we really don’t know what we want or are obeying unconscious needs. Perhaps there is more to life and politics than words. In this unit we will explore the origins of political identity and discuss things which also affect the way government works.

Assignments

Complete the following and bring them with you to the meeting for this unit or submit them to the discussion board for the on-line version of the course. You should prepare answers of not more than one page – about five hundred words – to each question. Other assignments should be completed as required. It’s your responsibility to do the research necessary to answer the questions or complete the assignments.

- Are your politics the same as your parents? Why or why not?
- Is it true that group identity determines your views? For example, if you’re a woman, if you’re black or Muslim, will you always have certain views? Why not? Why not?
- Could you ever really act against your own interest, or in doing ‘irrational’ things are you merely disguising or ignorant of your own choices? Why or why not?
- Complete and submit the “Basic facts worksheet” found in the Appendix to this syllabus
- Visit [www.politicalcompass.org](http://www.politicalcompass.org) and take the survey. Note your results and be prepared to discuss them.

Readings

- Cleaver, Eldridge. *Soul on Ice*
- Goldwater, Barry. *Conscience of a Conservative*
- Heller, Joseph. *Catch 22*
- Hitchens, Christopher. *God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*
- Kerouac, Jack. *On the Road*
- Lee, Harper. *To Kill a Mockingbird*
- Salinger, J.D. *Catcher in the Rye*
3 Values in the Constitution

Introduction
The US Constitution is a collection of ideas written on animal skin and signed by five dozen wealthy, Protestant Christian, old and middle-aged white men in Philadelphia in 1787. Today, though, it’s venerated like a religious relic even though there is relatively little agreement about what it actually means. The reason this is so is the men who came up with the ideas written in the Constitution tried – and mostly succeeded – to reconcile three pressures: the desire to protect their personal property and power; the need to form a government that would prevent the habituation of majority rule; and the necessity of making member states dependent on the central government but not united against it. Just because they did, though, doesn’t mean they were right or even what they did was best for the country, and that idea makes those Constitutional pressures sources of ceaseless, strident and sometimes violent debate. In this unit we will examine the structure of the Constitution and discuss its legacy.

Assignments
Complete the following and bring them with you to the meeting for this unit or submit them to the discussion board for the on-line version of the course. You should prepare answers of not more than one page – about five hundred words – to each question. Other assignments should be completed as required. It’s your responsibility to do the research necessary to answer the questions or complete the assignments.

- Should laws be moral? Why or why not? Answer with reference to the Three-Fifths Compromise
- Do you think majority rule helps or hinders democracy? Why? Discuss the electoral college in your answer
- Does the separation of powers make sense? Why or why not? Compare power in the US Congress to power in the UK Parliament in your answer.

Readings
- Constitution of the United States
- Hutton, Will. Us and Them
- Smith, Adam. The Theory of Moral Sentiments
- Vidal, Gore. Inventing a Nation

4 Structure of the Constitution

Introduction
The US Constitution is a remarkably short document, considering the size of what rests upon it. Its length is a
testament to its greatest strength, which is also its curse: only a few basics of government are written down, and the rest is left to chance. Most of what we think of as government today in the US wasn’t prescribed in the Constitution. It evolved by trial and error, debate, lawsuits, negotiation and war. This came from political tradition in the UK, which has no written constitution, and out of the desire for limited government in the new US. The Constitution permits a weak or strong federal government, depending on your point of view, but it sets clear limits on government’s authority. The history of the US may be described as a struggle about the size and reach of government only because there is a point of reference. In this unit we will discuss the structure of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

Assignments
Complete the following and bring them with you to the meeting for this unit or submit them to the discussion board for the on-line version of the course. You should prepare answers of not more than one page – about five hundred words – to each question. Other assignments should be completed as required. It’s your responsibility to do the research necessary to answer the questions or complete the assignments.

- Why do you think Article I of the Constitution deals with the legislature? Discuss the difference between a democracy, a republic and a dictatorship in your answer.
- If the US is “a nation of laws,” why does Article III of the Constitution say so little about the judiciary?
- Is the First Amendment or the Second Amendment to the Constitution more open to interpretation, and thus more likely to engender conflict? Why?
- Which is more powerful, the federal government or the states? Compare the US and Illinois constitutions in your answer.

Readings
- Beard, Charles. An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution
- Constitution of the State of Illinois, including amendments
- Constitution of the United States, including amendments
- Cooter, Robert D. The Strategic Constitution
- Dahl, Robert. How Democratic is the American Constitution?
- Madison, James. The Federalist Papers
- Mueller, Dennis. Constitutional Democracy

5 Nature of political parties

Introduction
Democracy doesn’t need political parties, but it has them. Representative government can’t do without them. They are the vehicle for organizing participation in a system too large for ‘the people’ to exercise power themselves.
Other, non-governmental vehicles are available: class, religion and ethnicity, for example. The power of these identities enters into the political process via parties, but mostly parties cut across these other identities. The result is that, although every party is identified with certain socio-economic groups their members are really bound by their ideas about government. In this unit we will explore the nature and origins of political parties in the US.

Assignments
Complete the following and bring them with you to the meeting for this unit or submit them to the discussion board for the on-line version of the course. You should prepare answers of not more than one page – about five hundred words – to each question. Other assignments should be completed as required. It’s your responsibility to do the research necessary to answer the questions or complete the assignments.

- How has the appeal of the major US political parties changed since 1789? In your answer, refer to the Whig Party of the 1830’s, the Republican Party of the 1860’s and the Republican Party of the 2000’s.
- Which do you think was more important for the evolution of political parties in the US, the election of US Senators by popular vote or the suffrage of women? Why? Discuss the consequences of the Seventeenth Amendment and the Nineteenth Amendment in your answer.
- Is the power of a political party determined solely by money and votes? In your answer, refer to the Communist Manifesto by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels and say whether you think their logic applies to the US.

Readings
- Cohen, Jeffrey. American Political Parties: Decline or Resurgence?
- Eldersveld, Samuel. Political Parties: A behavioral analysis
- Michels, Robert. Political Parties: A sociological study of the oligarchical tendencies of modern democracy
- Nash, Kate. Comparative Political Sociology: globalization, politics and power
- O’Neill, Thomas. All Politics is Local
- O’Rourke, P.J. Republican Party Reptile

6 Voting influences

Introduction
Why do we vote the way we do? There are as many answers to this question as there are people. That’s because preferences and motivations and prejudices are different, or combine differently in each voter. Most people, though, vote on only one issue, even where they have strong opinions on many issues. This makes it easy to manipulate voters and to predict the way they will vote, which is not always the same thing as predicting the outcome of an election. Don’t conflate voting and elections. They’re very different. Voting is the process by which people register their choices, whereas an election is an event. It’s possible for something which is not voting to determine the outcome of an election. In this unit we will discuss voting in US presidential elections and things that affect it.
Assignments
Complete the following and bring them with you to the meeting for this unit or submit them to the discussion board for the on-line version of the course. You should prepare answers of not more than one page — about five hundred words — to each question. Other assignments should be completed as required. It’s your responsibility to do the research necessary to answer the questions or complete the assignments.

- **What things besides money and influence voting?** Discuss the election of Andrew Jackson in 1828 and the election of George W Bush in 2004.
- **Do you think television is a good or bad campaign tool?** Explain with reference to the 2008 election.
- **Would it be a good thing or a bad thing to elect a President who could not be influenced by interest groups?** Why or why not? Refer to the election of George Washington in 1789 and to the candidacy of Ross Perot in 1992.

Readings

- Anonymous. *Primary Colors*
- Condon, Richard. *The Manchurian Candidate*
- Kurtz, Howard. *The Choice*
- Palast, Greg. *The Best Democracy Money Can Buy*
- Thompson, Hunter S. *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail ‘72*

7 Congress

Introduction
The Congress of the United States is the legislative branch of the US federal government. Its design is deliberately inefficient, so even when each house is tightly controlled under the same party, institutional inertia in Congress balances the executive, which is designed for action. Then, its five hundred thirty-five voting members and thousands of staffers are each a portal into the legislative process, and this makes Congress inherently susceptible to interest group influence. In this unit we will examine the functions of Congress, the powers given to Congress by the Constitution, power in Congress and how a bill becomes law.

Assignments
Complete the following and bring them with you to the meeting for this unit or submit them to the discussion board for the on-line version of the course. You should prepare answers of not more than one page — about five hundred words — to each question. Other assignments should be completed as required. It’s your responsibility to do the
research necessary to answer the questions or complete the assignments.

- Where do you think is the greatest point of leverage in the legislative process? Why? In your answer, describe how a bill becomes law in the US.
- Which is more powerful, Congress or the President? Why? Refer to the War Powers Act and the principle of executive privilege in your answer.
- Is Congress inherently conservative? Why or why not? Discuss seniority and the committee system in your answer.
- How important are personalities in the legislative process? Compare the Majority Leadership of the Senate under Lyndon Johnson and Harry Reid in your answer.

Readings
- Barone, Michael. *The Almanac of American Politics*
- Caro, Robert. *The Years of Lyndon Johnson, Vol. 3: Master of the Senate*
- Fisher, Louis. *The Politics of Shared Power: Congress and the Executive*
- Mayhew, David R. *Congress*
- Mikva, Abner. *Legislative Process*
- O'Neill, Thomas. *All Politics is Local*
- O'Rourke, P.J. *Parliament of Whores*
- Parker, Glenn. *Congress and the Rent-Seeking Society*

8 Mid-term exam

The mid-term exam consists of a short-essay paper. Typically the paper requires you to answer two questions in about three hours. It is designed to test your critical thinking skills and your facility in argument as well as the knowledge of the subject which you have accumulated over the course.

See your instructor for further details.

9 None

You might take the opportunity to do some reading. The suggestions below are all fiction, but they are relevant to our subject. Read them to find out why.

Assignments
There are no assignments due for this unit.

Readings
- Adams, Henry. *Democracy*
10 Congress

Introduction
One of the most inefficient ways to organize decision making is to fragment it. Put the levers of power in too many hands, and it’s almost impossible to get anything done. When a decision is finally taken, it usually causes unimagined side effects because of the way it was done. The former UK Prime Minister Winston Churchill is supposed to have said, “Democracy is the worst form of government in history, except for everything else that has been tried.” A parliament generally is a dismal, discouraging, frustrating, duplicitous and selfish body of men and women. The US Congress is no exception. It has its strengths, though. In this unit we will discuss Congress’s weaknesses.

Assignments
Complete the following and bring them with you to the meeting for this unit or submit them to the discussion board for the on-line version of the course. You should prepare answers of not more than one page – about five hundred words – to each question. Other assignments should be completed as required. It’s your responsibility to do the research necessary to answer the questions or complete the assignments.

- Should lobbying be illegal? Why or why not? Refer to former Congressman Billy Tauzin in your answer.
- Do you think Congressional oversight is a legitimate check on the executive? Why or why not? Refer to the Central Intelligence Agency and the Environmental Protection Agency in your answer.
- Do you think budgetary earmarks are wasteful pork barrel spending or a way to create jobs? Why? Refer to The Bridge to Nowhere and The Big Dig in your answer.
- Should members of Congress have term limits? Why or why not? Discuss both the Senate and the House of Representatives in your answer.

Readings
- Gershtenson, Joseph, Jeffrey Ladewig, and Dennis L. Plane. "Parties, Institutional Control, and Trust in Government." Social Science Quarterly (Blackwell Publishing Limited) 87, no. 4 (December 2006): 882-
11 The Presidency

Introduction
The US President has been called “the CEO of America,” but nothing could be further from the truth. The powers of the average large-company chief executive far exceed those of the chief executive of the American government. The President has great scope for action in a very limited number of areas and very limited scope for action in a great number of areas, owing to the checks and balances written into the US Constitution and the persistence of Congress in usurping the authority of the Presidency. Yet the US President commands greater financial and military power than any other leader in the world, but this is because the US economy and armed forces are so big and not because the Presidency itself is so powerful. In this unit we will explore the Constitutional structure of the Presidency and the politics of some of its inhabitants.

Assignments
Complete the following and bring them with you to the meeting for this unit or submit them to the discussion board for the on-line version of the course. You should prepare answers of not more than one page – about five hundred words – to each question. Other assignments should be completed as required. It’s your responsibility to do the research necessary to answer the questions or complete the assignments.

- Should the President be able to conduct foreign policy without interference from Congress? Refer to the Barack Obama administration’s relationship with China in your answer.
- Do you think the “bully pulpit” is a source of Presidential Power or mostly a propaganda tool? Discuss the “Fireside Chats” of Franklin Delano Roosevelt in your answer.
- Is the veto power of the President used too often or not often enough? Why? Refer to the two Bill Clinton administrations in your answer.

Readings

Healy, Gene. The Cult of the Presidency: America's Dangerous Devotion to Executive Power

Nelson, Dana. Bad for Democracy: How the Presidency Undermines the Power of the People


Savage, Charlie. Takeover: The Return of the Imperial Presidency and the Subversion of American Democracy


12 The bureaucracy

Introduction

The executive bureaucracy of the US employed around four million people and consumed around four trillion US dollars in 2011, including about two million armed services personnel and around seven hundred billion dollars (including overseas contingency operations) in the Department of Defense. When we study government, we usually separate the military part of the executive branch from its civilian counterpart, but both parts fall under the authority of the chief of the executive branch, who is the President. In this unit we will discuss the structure and power of the executive generally, as well as the functions and politics of some of its agencies.

Assignments

Complete the following and bring them with you to the meeting for this unit or submit them to the discussion board for the on-line version of the course. You should prepare answers of not more than one page – about five hundred words – to each question. Other assignments should be completed as required. It’s your responsibility to do the research necessary to answer the questions or complete the assignments.

- In which circumstances is the bureaucracy the most powerful relative to Congress and the President? Refer to attempts to cut the Department of Defense budget under Secretary of Defense Robert Gates in your answer.
- Do you think the bureaucracy is most efficient (not necessarily most powerful) when it is “the arm of the President”? Why? Discuss the Department of Veterans Affairs under Presidents George W Bush and Barack Obama when answering.
- Do you think the federal bureaucracy is too big? Why or why not? Discuss attempts to reduce the size of government during the two Ronald Reagan administrations.

Readings

- King, Desmond. "THE RACIAL BUREAUCRACY: AFRICAN AMERICANS AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IN THE ERA OF SEGREGATED RACE RELATIONS." Governance 12, no. 4 (October

- Riley, Dennis. *Controlling the Federal Bureaucracy*

13 The Supreme Court

Introduction
The US district courts can try the facts in a federal civil or criminal case just like a state or municipal court can for subordinate laws, but the real purpose of the federal judiciary is to determine the constitutionality of a law on appeals from a lower court. The federal courts are supposed to decide, based on the evidence before them, whether the letter or the spirit of a law violates some principle – actual or assumed – of the Constitution. They are the only branch of federal government that can invalidate a law, but they don’t have absolute power over the laws. Congress and the President can negate a Supreme Court decision by creating a new law which addresses (or not) the Court’s concerns. In this unit we will examine the structure and workings of the federal judiciary.

Assignments
Complete the following and bring them with you to the meeting for this unit or submit them to the discussion board for the on-line version of the course. You should prepare answers of not more than one page – about five hundred words – to each question. Other assignments should be completed as required. It’s your responsibility to do the research necessary to answer the questions or complete the assignments.

- **Note:** You don’t have to be a lawyer to answer these questions. I don’t care about the legal details of the cases cited below. What I want to know is what you think about the politics of what happened to the courts when those cases came up. Look up the cases and then answer the questions, telling me what you think.
- Is the power of judicial review abused in the federal courts? Discuss the case Young v. Weston 898 F. Supp. 744 (W.D. Wash. 1995)
- Discuss the idea “laws serve the people who created them.” In your answer, say whether you think the US lives under the “rule of law” and say why or why not.

Readings
14 Civil liberties

Introduction
Discussions of civil liberties often reduce to matters of “not in my backyard.” Free speech is fine, provided you don’t offend my religious principles, for example. In this unit we will discuss some well-known issues of freedom and civil liberties.

Assignments
Complete the following and bring them with you to the meeting for this unit or submit them to the discussion board for the on-line version of the course. You should prepare answers of not more than one page – about five hundred words – to each question. Other assignments should be completed as required. It’s your responsibility to do the research necessary to answer the questions or complete the assignments.

- Discuss the idea, “rights are never given. They must be taken.” Refer to the Civil War of the 1860’s and the civil rights struggle in the 1960’s in your answer.
- Is it ever okay for government to discriminate? Why or why not? Compare the debates about racial profiling at airports and gay marriage in your answer.
- Should churches be tax exempt? Why or why not? Refer to the “establishment clause” in your answer.
- Which are more dangerous, guns or alcohol? Why? Discuss the second amendment in your answer.
- Should free speech include racist abuse? Why or why not? Refer to the first amendment and the “equal protection” clause of the fourteenth amendment in your answer.

Readings

Hoffman, Abbie. *Steal This Book*


Rauch, Jonathan. *Gay Marriage: Why it is Good for Gays, Good for Straights and Good for America*

Ravitch, Frank. *School Prayer and Discrimination: The Civil Rights of Religious Minorities and Dissenters*


Tribe, Laurence. *Abortion: The Clash of Absolutes*

Vidal, Gore. *Pink Triangle & Yellow Star*


Wilson, Harry. *Guns, Gun Control and Elections: The Politics and Policy of Firearms*

**15 Review**

**Introduction**

We will review for the final exam in this unit. If you are taking the course in the classroom, you should write up questions about the preceding course material and bring them with you to the meeting. If you are doing the online version of the course, you should post your questions to the discussion board on the course website.

**Assignments**

There are no assignments due for this unit.

**Readings**

- Adams, John. *A Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States*
- LU, MAX. "AD HOC REGIONALISM IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT." *Geographical Review* 101, no. 3 (July 2011): 334-352.
- Remy, Richard. *United States Government: Democracy in Action*
- Straus, Oscar. *The Origin of the Republican Form of Government in the United States*
16 Final Exam

The final exam consists of a short-essay paper. Typically the paper requires you to answer two questions in about three hours. It is designed to test your critical thinking skills and your facility in argument as well as the knowledge of the subject which you have accumulated over the course.

See your instructor for further details.

Thank you for sitting the course this term.
Appendix

Basic facts worksheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basics</th>
<th>Society</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>o Name</td>
<td>o Life expectancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Capital city</td>
<td>o Press Freedom Index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Population</td>
<td>o Gini Coefficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Gross National Income (GNI)</td>
<td>o Child mortality rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Official languages</td>
<td>o Literacy rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Official religions</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographics</th>
<th>Economics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>o Gender</td>
<td>o Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Race</td>
<td>o at purchasing power parity (PPP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Age</td>
<td>o Prime rate of interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Religion</td>
<td>o Purchasing Managers Index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Income</td>
<td>o Inflation rate from CPI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Education</td>
<td>o Unemployment rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Urbanization</td>
<td>o Balance of payments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Percentage of GDP consumed by government</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Politics</th>
<th>Geography</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>o President and Vice President</td>
<td>o Total area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Speaker of the House of Representatives</td>
<td>o Land/water area %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Majority and Minority Leader of the House</td>
<td>o Time zones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Majority and Minority Leader of the Senate</td>
<td>o Latitude/Longitude span</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Chief Justice of the Supreme Court</td>
<td>o Climatic zones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o % Democrat/Republican in Congress</td>
<td>o Altitude zones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o % Democrat/Republican governors</td>
<td>o Principal landforms (biggest river/desert/mountain/rainforest/etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o $ size of Social Security, Medicare and Defense appropriations in latest budget</td>
<td>o Contiguous neighbors or borders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Official poverty line</td>
<td>o Three largest cities by MSA population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Top personal income tax rate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Supply all of the above information. It is essential to a thorough understanding of our subject and for effective participation in argument and discussion.

If you find unfamiliar terms or concepts above, look them up. Google and Wikipedia are good for this. Finding this information is not hard, but the facts themselves mean nothing. It’s what you do with them that counts. Focus on understanding the relationships between the bits of data above.