

POLI 2051-1 American Government

Professor Christopher Kenny

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to acquaint you with the fundamentals of American government and politics; to improve your skills in evaluating and analyzing issues in American politics. The class will be organized into four main sections. The first describes the foundations of our American system including the Constitution and federalism. The second section examines the role public opinion, political parties, interest groups, and voting, campaigns, elections play in the political process. The third section covers the media, the US Congress, Presidency, and Executive branch. The final section looks at the courts and questions concerning the democratic nature of our government (civil liberties and rights) as well as a brief intro into public policy.

Integrated learning allows students to make simple connections among ideas and experiences and across disciplines and perspectives. The LSU Integrative Learning Core (ILC) curriculum is designed to develop student abilities to transfer their learning to new situations, and demonstrate a sense of self as a learner. A fundamental goal of the ILC is to foster students' practical and intellectual capacities associated with integrative learning in preparation for high competence and functionality in their post-baccalaureate careers. This course fulfills the BOR Area of *Social/Behavioral Sciences* and provides students experience with the ILC proficiency of *Inquiry and Analysis*.

Each week on moodle you will see one or two videos, transcripts of those videos, reading assignments from your text (see below), a powerpoint presentation of the readings, and a weekly guide that includes tips about what to pay attention to in the videos and readings as well as occasional additions and commentary by me. Make sure you READ THE GUIDE. You will do a whole lot better in the course if you do.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Exams: Four exams will be given in this class. Each is worth 100 points. Questions will come from the videos, the readings, and occasional material posted by me. Questions coming from the reading materials will primarily focus on the key concepts identified in the text in boldface type and at the end of the chapter. Make sure you read the weekly guide to see the kinds of things I want you to focus on. The format of the exams will be moodle-based multiple choice tests. The dates for exams are listed on moodle. These exams will account for 90% of your grade.

Short papers: You will be required to write 4 short papers during the semester. These will be 450 to 500 words in length. You won't be penalized for going over the word count limit, but please try to stay around this figure. A list of the topics and the due dates will be posted on moodle. Papers should be saved as WORD or PDF files and uploaded to moodle. A 5% penalty per day late will be applied to all late papers (up to a maximum of 25%). These papers will account for 10% of your grade.

Bonus: You can earn bonus by doing the practice quizzes in CONNECT. There will be a 10-question quiz associated with each chapter that you can do through the CONNECT ebook you buy for the course. To have the quiz count towards the bonus you must get at least 6 out of 10 correct, which should not be difficult since there is no time limit and they are open book. They also must be completed by the time of the exam to

which they are associated. You can't do the quiz for chapter 1 at the end of the semester. That doesn't help. Together they amount to a 3% bump on your final grade, which will push most of you into the next highest grade category. They are easy, they will help prepare you for the exam, and you get bonus. DO THEM. Don't leave free points on the table.

TEXTBOOKS

Required texts for this class:

We the People 13th Edition by Thomas E. Patterson (at the bookstore as an ebook using CONNECT).