

GOV 1100

Introduction to American Government

Spring 2014
Druckenmiller 016
Tuesday, Thursday: 2:30-3:55pm

Instructor: Michael Franz
Email: mfranz@bowdoin.edu
Phone: 207-798-4318 (office)
Office: 203 Hubbard Hall

Office Hours:

Tuesday, 9:30-11:30am
Wednesday, 2-4pm
And by appointment

This course is an introduction to the workings of American government. For many, politics and government are uninteresting, unimportant, and even dreadfully boring. For others, political and partisan struggles are off-putting and uncomfortably confrontational. As such, it is en vogue to lament the state of American politics, often without thought or reflection, as either too base to warrant participation or too dull to bother. This course is not intended to make you politicians nor convince you that one partisan or ideological perspective is best. It is, however, designed to teach and inform you about the American democratic system, and give you the tools to make reasoned and thoughtful assessments about politics and political struggles. Should you come to believe – as a consequence of this course – that American democracy is doomed, or (for that matter) that it is superior to all other alternatives, it will ideally come from having read carefully and reflected deeply about all viewpoints and alternatives. It is my hope that you leave this class with a stronger understanding of American politics, and a keener sense of the complex debates that characterize our democratic development.

Course Requirements

There are 4 major components to your grade:

1. **Two Exams** (32.5 points each) – take-home exams that are NOT cumulative; both exams are open book and open note. Your final exam is the second of these, and the midterm is scheduled for March 4th. The format will be four short essays, and essay topics will be derived from readings and lectures. Exams will be transmitted to you electronically and you will have a specific time (two hours) and page limit (six total pages—double spaced, 12-point font). More information will be provided as we approach the exam.
*The six-page limit will be strictly enforced. I will not read past Page 6.
**You are NOT allowed to work with another student on these exams. ANY evidence of collaboration is grounds for failure of the class.
2. **Participation** (10 points)—this includes attendance AND class participation. Attendance is REQUIRED, and I will take regular note of who is and who is not in class. I understand that people get sick, have doctor's appointments, and so on, but I only grant excused absences in rare circumstances. Be advised, simple attendance is not sufficient. I have established a Blackboard discussion page for our class, and I encourage people to comment on class readings or current events as you see fit. This is an important opportunity to contribute to a dialogue about course

concepts. I expect some participation in this venue by every student at some point in the semester.

3. **Reaction Paper** (15 points)—Due on April 22nd. You will be responsible for writing a **5-page** (double-spaced) paper (5 pages total, and no more!) that compares the argument of one or two Federalist papers with an opposing Anti-Federalist paper. You can choose which papers to focus on. You must address two key issues: 1) what argument do you find more compelling and why; 2) how is the debate relevant to contemporary American politics. You will be evaluated on the clarity of your argument. There are no right or wrong answers, but you must be attentive to the soundness of your argument. I do not read complete first drafts, but I am happy to meet with you personally and discuss your paper as you develop your argument.
4. **Weekly Quizzes** (10 points)—There is a possibility of one quiz each week, starting on the week of January 28th. The quiz will randomly be on either Tuesday or Thursday, and will deal with the readings for that specific day. It will consist of 2-3 very short questions on the readings.

Readings

There are five books for this course, two of which are optional. The books are available through the campus bookstore. For the two optional books, you can alternatively access the readings online through a link on our Blackboard page.

1. *American Government: Power and Purpose*, by Theodore Lowi, Benjamin Ginsberg, and Kenneth Shepsle. W.W. Norton & Company.
2. *How Democratic is the American Constitution*, by Robert Dahl. Yale University Press.
3. *Cheese Factories on the Moon: Why Earmarks are Good for American Democracy*. By Scott Frisch and Sean Kelly. Paradigm Publishers.
4. OPTIONAL: *The Federalist Papers*, Edited by Clinton Rossiter. Signet Classics
5. OPTIONAL: *The Anti-Federalist Papers*, Edited by Ralph Ketcham. Signet Classics

Other Issues

1. I expect all students to abide by the Bowdoin Academic Honor Code, which can be accessed online at <http://www.bowdoin.edu/studentaffairs/forms/>. If you have any concerns or questions about how to cite work appropriately, please consult me or a reference librarian.
2. If you have chosen to take the class as Credit/D/F, I will only grant a Credit grade if the student has completed all of the work for the class.

Part 1—Foundations

January 21—Introductions and Expectations

January 23—Origins of the American Idea

- Lowi et al, Chapters 1 and 2
- Articles of Confederation (Appendix in Rossiter)
- Declaration of Independence and U.S. Constitution (Appendix in Lowi et al)

January 28—The Constitutional Debate

- Rossiter, pp. vii-xxxix (on Blackboard)
- Assigned Federalist and Anti-Federalist papers (see Blackboard)

January 30— Federalism and Separation of Powers

- Lowi et al, Chapter 3

February 4— Federalism and Separation of Powers, cont.

- Assigned Federalist and Anti-Federalist papers (see Blackboard)

February 6— How Democratic is the American Constitution

- Dahl, Chapters 1-4

February 11— How Democratic is the American Constitution, cont.

- Dahl, Chapters 5-8

February 13— Bill of Rights, Civil Liberties, and Civil Rights

- Lowi et al, Chapter 4
- Federalist #84

Part 2—Institutions

February 18— Congress

- Lowi, et al, Chapter 5

February 20— Congress, cont

- Assigned Federalist and Anti-Federalist papers (see Blackboard)

February 25— President

- Lowi, et al, Chapter 6

February 27— President, cont.

- Lowi, et al, Chapter 6

March 4— ***Mid-term exam***

March 6—President, cont

- Assigned Federalist and Anti-Federalist papers (see Blackboard)

March 7-23—Spring Break!

March 25—Frisch and Kelly Book Discussion

March 27— Frisch and Kelly Book Discussion, cont.

April 1—Bureaucracy

- Lowi, et al, Chapter 7

April 3—no class

April 8—Judiciary

- Lowi, et al, Chapter 8

April 10—Judiciary, cont.

- Assigned Federalist and Anti-Federalist papers (see Blackboard)

Part 3—Elections, Parties, and Interest Groups

April 15—Public Opinion and the Media

- Lowi, et al, Chapter 9

April 17—Public Opinion and the Media, cont.

- Lowi, et al, Chapter 9

April 22—Elections and Voting

- Lowi, et al, Chapter 10
- **Paper due**

April 24—Political Parties

- Lowi, et al, Chapter 11
- Kathleen Bawn et al. 2012. “A Theory of Political Parties: Groups, Policy Demands and Nominations in American Politics,” *Perspectives on Politics*.

April 29—Interest Groups

- Lowi, et al, Chapter 12

May 1—Political Science in Practice

- Shanto Iyengar, Gaurav Sood, and Yphtach Lelkes. 2012. “Affect, Not Ideology: A Social Identity Perspective on Polarization,” *Public Opinion Quarterly*.

May 6—Political Science in Practice, cont.

- Nicholas Valentino et al. 2011. “Election Night’s Alright for Fighting: The Role of Emotions in Political Participation,” *The Journal of Politics*.

Final Exam: Wednesday, May 14th, 2pm