

POL 203Y1Y

U.S. Government and Politics

Fall 2011-Winter 2012

Professor Ryan Hurl

Meeting Code: L5101

Lecture Times: Thursdays, 6-8pm

Location:

Professor: Ryan Hurl

Office:

Phone:

E-mail: rhurl@utsc.utoronto.ca

Office Hours: Wednesday 11-1 or by appointment

Course Description

This course is an introduction to American government and politics which will emphasize the historical and institutional development of the American political system, the political processes of the national government, and the cultural, ideological, and international forces which shape American political life. One key goal of the course is to introduce students to some of the ways in which political scientists use theory and evidence to investigate political life. Our primary substantive focus will be on the domestic policy making process, and how the political institutions established by the American constitution shape the role of interest groups, political parties, and public opinion in the creation and implementation of public policy. This course will give you the ability to understand the ways in which American political institutions operate, how those institutions have changed over time, and the political forces that shape institutional change.

Teaching Assistants:

Tutorial Times and Locations: TBA

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Course Requirements

End of Fall Term Exam 30%

This exam will take place during the exam period in December.

End of Winter Term Exam 30%

This exam will take place during the exam period in April.

The end of term exam and the final exam will be based upon short answer and essay questions.

Research Paper 35%

The details regarding the research paper are discussed below. **Late Penalties:** All late essays will be penalized one-third of a letter grade for every day they are late, up to two full letter grades.

Class Participation 5%

Students are expected to attend lecture and sections, complete all readings and assignments, and be able to discuss the material covered by the class in an intelligent and respectful manner. In addition, students should stay informed of current affairs in American politics by reading the relevant sections of *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, or some other serious newspaper. Your class participation grade will be based on your attendance and the quality of your contributions to classroom discussion.

Accessibility

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or the AccessAbility Services Office as soon as possible. I will work with you and AccessAbility Services to ensure you can achieve your learning goals in this course. Enquiries are confidential. The UTSC AccessAbility Services staff (located in S302) are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals and arrange appropriate accommodations (416) 287-7560 or ability@utsc.utoronto.ca.

Required Texts

Marc Landy and Sidney Milkis, *American Government: Balancing Democracy and Rights*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. (Paperback edition)

Gary Wasserman, *Politics in Action: Cases from the Frontlines of American Government*. New York: Pearson Longman, 2011

Jacob Hacker and Paul Pierson, *Winner-Take-All Politics*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2011.

Hamilton, Madison, Jay, *The Federalist Papers*. [also available online at several websites, including: <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/histdox/fedpapers.html>]

Lectures and Readings

LM= Landy and Milkis

W= Wasserman

September 15th Introduction and Overview: American Political Culture

LM: Chapter One, "American Government: Rights and Democracy, Consensus and Conflict."
Chapter Two "Political Culture."

Federalist Papers, 1 and 2 (1787)

Rogers M. Smith, "Beyond Tocqueville, Myrdal, and Hartz: The Multiple Traditions in America." *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 87, No. 3 (Sep., 1993), pp. 549-566

September 22nd The American Revolution and the Constitution

LM: Chapter Three "Contesting the Constitution: A Lover's Quarrel."

W: Chapter 1: "The Constitution - The Meal Deal: The Dinner Table Bargain of 1790"

Federalist Paper #10

September 29th Federalism and American Political Development: From the Founding to the New Deal

LM: Chapter 4 "Political Development: Crucial Episodes" pp 126-165
Chapter 5 "Federalism" pp 190-205

Federalist Paper #41-44 ("General View of the Powers Proposed to be Vested in the Union") and #45 ("A Further Discussion of the Supposed Dangers from the Powers of the Union to the State Governments.")

Troy E. Smith; "Divided 'Publius': Democracy, Federalism, and the Cultivation of Public Sentiment." *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 69, No. 4 (Fall, 2007), pp. 568-598

October 6th Federalism and American Political Development: From the New Deal until...now!

LM: Chapter 4 "Political Development: Crucial Episodes" pp 166-190
Chapter 5 "Federalism" pp 206-240

W: Chapter 2, "Federalism in Education: A Race to Washington."

Testimony of Professor Randy Barnett (Georgetown) on the constitutionality on the PPAC act (Obamacare): http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y_fp3Sfb4x0

October 13th Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

LM: Chapter 9 "The Judiciary: The Guardian of America's Liberal Tradition." pp 438-464

W: Chapter 3: Civil Rights - Affirmative Action at the University of Michigan
Chapter 4: Civil Liberties- Freedom of Speech and Campus Speech Codes

October 21st Congress: Lawmaking and Representation

LM Chapter 7 "Congress: The First Branch of Government." pp 306-340

Federalist Papers #48

October 28th Congress: Politics and Procedure

LM Chapter 7 "Congress: The First Branch of Government." pp 341-371

Chapter 12: Congress - Congress and Global Warming: The Tragedy of the Climate Bill

November 4th The Presidency

LM: Chapter 8 "The Presidency: First Citizen of American Democracy." pp 372-397

Federalist Papers, 70 and 72

Clement Fatovic "Constitutionalism and Presidential Prerogative: Jeffersonian and Hamiltonian Perspectives." *American Journal of Political Science* > Vol. 48, No. 3 (Jul., 2004), pp. 429-444

November 11th The Modern Presidency

LM: Chapter 8 "The Presidency: First Citizen of American Democracy." pp 398-437

Keith Whittington and Daniel Carpenter, "Executive Power in American Institutional Development ." *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Sep., 2003), pp. 495-513

W Chapter 13: The Presidency - 9/11: Presidential Power in a Crisis

November 18th Bureaucracy

LM Chapter 10 "Bureaucracy" pp 500-527

Woodrow Wilson, "The Study of Administration" (1887)

Michael Nelson , "A Short, Ironic History of American National Bureaucracy." *The Journal of Politics*. Vol. 44, No. 3 (Aug., 1982), pp. 747-778

November 25th Bureaucracy, Part Two

LM: Chapter 10 "Bureaucracy" pp 528-563

W Chapter 14: "The Bureaucracy - The Columbia and Challenger Disasters: Agency Groupthink."

December 2nd The Federal Courts: Activism v. Restraint

LM: Chapter 9 "The Judiciary: The Guardian of America's Liberal Tradition" pp 464-499

JR: 12.1 Federalist Papers, 81 (1788)

Martin Shapiro, "Juridicalization of Politics in the United States." *International Political Science Review* Vol.15, No. 2, (Apr., 1994), pp. 101-112

WINTER TERM readings TBA

Research Paper Assignment

PLEASE, I BEG YOU, READ THIS ENTIRE SECTION CAREFULLY

Your assignment is to write a 10-15 page paper on a topic of your choice-- the only restriction in terms of subject matter is that your topic must be related to American political institutions. HOWEVER, WHILE YOU CHOOSE THE GENERAL TOPIC, WE HAVE VERY SPECIFIC EXPECTATIONS ABOUT THE STRUCTURE OF THE PAPER.

The goal of the assignment: develop and demonstrate your ability to identify, explain, and evaluate a scholarly dispute regarding some aspect American politics.

You are responsible for making sure you understand the assignment. If you write a paper that seems unrelated to the assignment, then you will receive a failing grade.

PART ONE: THE PROPOSAL

Please note: Your proposal will be graded, but the grade itself will *not* be part of your final grade. What is the point, you ask? We want to inform you about the quality of your work, without penalizing you for any mistakes you might make in the early stages of the research process.

Due date: Hand in your proposal in your tutorial during the week of October 20th. Your proposal should be no longer than 1-2 pages. It must contain the following components:

1) The Research Question

The first step of this assignment is to identify a research question that interests you. There are several criteria that you should consider when selecting a question.

- a) The question should be clearly related to the subject matter of the course. This seems obvious (no one is planning to write an essay on Uruguay, I assume). Usually, students end up getting off-topic when they write a paper on some aspect of American foreign relations without addressing how the USA's political institutions/domestic politics influences foreign affairs.
- b) A good research question should lead you to seek an explanation for political phenomena.

Political scientists attempt to explain, not simply to describe politics—though you cannot explain anything without describing it accurately in the first place.

Some questions can be answered through description alone e.g. how did Congressional procedures change after the GOP victories in the 1994 election?

This question is better:

Why was the GOP able to achieve control of Congress in the 1994 elections?

This question is better, because it will lead you to consider not simply what has happened (changes in personnel, laws, policy, or procedures) but to consider *why* certain things happen in American politics. What are the underlying factors that allow political parties to achieve victory in elections? Does victory depend upon things within control of parties (electoral tactics, candidate selection, etc.) or does electoral victory depend upon things that are difficult if not impossible to control (e.g. demographics, the state of the economy, international crises, etc.)

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS TO FIND A QUESTION/ISSUE THAT INTERESTS YOU.

2) Comparing (at least) two explanations

The next step is to find scholarly works that address your question. While this course is in political science, I am not unduly prejudiced against other disciplines that also deal with political issues e.g sociology, history, economics. There are two things to keep in mind: make sure that the works you select appear in *peer-reviewed journals and/or scholarly presses*. While these sources are far from perfect, the information they present is less likely to be completely fabricated, or wildly misleading, or completely distorted by ideology (I'm talking about the basic facts here; interpretations are something else...)

Your goal is to identify at least two differing theories that attempt to answer your research question, and then to compare and evaluate these theories.

We could spend all day debating what a “theory” is in political science, but basically, *a theory is an attempt to explain why some things happen as opposed to others*. Sometimes we use the term theory to mean “something which you think is true but which you have not really proven.” Theory, in the social sciences, refers to both relatively well-grounded theories that have a lot of evidence in support of them (an example from medical science: cigarette smoking increases the risk of cancer) and theories that are more suspect (e.g. cigarette smoking causes me to be smarter, happier, and cool.) You can take a course on the philosophy of social science for a more sophisticated answer, but the basic meaning of "theory" is an "explanation," or, as long as we understand that in the social sciences many causal theories are incomplete, uncertain, revisable, etc.

To select a topic and obtain some useful materials, you might want to look through the chapters in the textbook that are of most interest to you. There are lists of relevant works of political science at the end of each chapter.

If you want to find articles, the JSTOR database (which can be reached through the U of T library website) is very useful.

PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE pay attention to the following advice: students often find it VERY difficult to develop an appropriate question. The typical problem is that students formulate their question without doing any initial research.

To summarize, your proposal should contain the following:

1. The general topic (e.g. "American exceptionalism.")
2. The specific question you will address (e.g. What accounts for the limited development of the American welfare state, in comparison with Canada/Europe etc. ?)
3. Your sources. The sources should be peer-reviewed books, book chapters, or journal articles. Please use proper bibliographic citations. If you have any questions about sources, please talk to me or your teaching assistants.

You can talk about your paper with your TA or with me during office hours, or you can discuss it over email.

2. The Outline of the Paper

The outline will be due in tutorial during the week of January 19th. It should be no longer than two pages in length.

Step 1: Introduce the topic and research question. Explain why the topic is important, interesting or controversial, and explain how the research question addresses the topic.

Step 2: Briefly explain the basic theories that you are comparing. In other words, explain the major "variables" that the authors use to explain the political phenomena they are investigating.

Step 3: Briefly explain the evidence that the authors use to support their theories. What kinds of evidence do they use? How has it been collected? How does the evidence help to prove or at least support their theories?

Step 4: Briefly evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the respective arguments. Have the authors failed to address any of the relevant variables? Are there any possible objections to the ways in which they have collected or interpreted data? Are there additional theories that might better account for the political phenomena they are trying to explain?

3. The Final Draft

The final draft is due at the beginning of lecture on March 22nd. The body of the paper should be approximately 10-15 pages in length. You should also include a bibliography. In the final version of the paper, you should include copies of your proposal and outline.

You should keep copies of all your rough drafts and research notes.

I will provide a detailed description of the grading scheme as the course progresses. However, in brief, you will be evaluated based upon the following criteria:

- i) The research question: Pass/Fail (that is, if you have not followed the assignment, then you will not get a grade for submitting a paper)
- ii) Resources (10%)
- iii) Introduction and Conclusion (10%)
- iii) Explanation (30%)
- iv) Evaluation (20%)
- v) Writing, Organization, Argumentation (30%)

TURNITIN!

I am required by the university to include the following statement regarding turnitin.com:

“Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University’s use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site.”

You have the right to choose NOT to allow your paper to be submitted to turnitin.com. If you choose to exercise this right, you **must** provide an annotated bibliography, and you may be required to undergo an oral examination based upon your paper. Should you elect not to send your paper to turnitin.com, please inform your teaching assistant during the first tutorial.

If you are caught plagiarizing, you will receive an "F" for the paper, an "F" for the course, and numerous other punishments too hideous to recount. **You are responsible for making sure you understand what constitutes plagiarism.** In particular, this means that you must properly footnote your sources, in addition to avoiding the more obvious types of plagiarism. If you have any doubts about whether something constitutes plagiarism, don’t do it. Your teaching assistants and I can answer your questions regarding proper footnoting/citation practices. Please consult us if you have any concerns.

For further information on plagiarism, please see <http://www.utoronto.ca/writing/plagsep/html>. "

