

Political Science 110
American Government from an Historical Perspective
Spring 2012

Professor Ann Cohen

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Office Hours:

Class: Tuesday and Friday 9:45 – 11 AM
Room 510, West Building

Text: Kernell, Jacobson, and Kousser. The Logic of American Politics, 5th Edition. Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2009. [ISBN: 978-1608712755. List price is \$95.95; however, new copies are available from on-line sources such as Amazon for \$20 less. [Use of the 4th edition is also acceptable.]

Other readings, as noted in the syllabus, will be available through e-reserve (Hunter Library electronic resources). These can also be accessed through BlackBoard.

This course will sound many familiar themes from your knowledge of American history – the importance of the issues of liberty, citizenship, and slavery in the growth of a country from disparate colonies to a world power. This course is different from your many encounters with American history, however, because it emphasizes the development of the institutions and practices of American government as they have changed from the 18th Century to the present. It also raises the critical issue of representation and the implications of an increasingly polarized political debate. By the end of the course, you should expect to have:

- knowledge of the basic institutions of American government
- knowledge of how and why American political institutions have changed over time
- understanding of the ways these political institutions operate to address problems and conflicts
- understanding of representative government and the role(s) of citizens
- the ability to formulate a clear thesis statement and to gather and analyze information to examine that thesis
- the ability to explain concepts by using logical argument
- and the ability to write clearly and effectively.

The purpose of tests and assignments in this course is to support your growth in knowledge and understanding of the structure and function of American government. **It is very important that you do the readings as well as come to class.** Some of the readings will challenge you, but they will all make a contribution to your understanding of American political institutions and traditions *over time*. You will need to use the readings to address the issues you will be asked to address in the written assignments as well as the examinations.

Organizing Themes for the Semester

There are two primary themes around which the discussions for the semester are organized. The first theme is **the historical development of American governmental institutions** and the enduring effect of these institutions more than 200 years after they were first created. The second theme is **representation** in American government. Since we are a *representative democracy*, the issues of whose interests and opinions are reflected in American governmental policies is a very important one. In fact, the formation of groups such as the Tea Party and the battles over policies such as gun control, reproductive rights, and taxes have – at their heart – fundamental questions of representation.

Assignments and Grading

This is a **writing intensive course**. You can expect that all assignments and examinations will be essay. There will be no short answer or multiple choice examinations. Because an important part of improving one’s ability to write is learning to **review and revise your own work**, you will have the opportunity to hand in drafts of written assignments (other than the two essay examinations) for comments so that you can revise your work before your final submission. Because it takes time for the instructors to react to your drafts as well as time for you to use these comments to revise your work, **all drafts must be handed in no later than four days before the final assignment is due**. In some cases, we will use peer review, so you will need to be in class for this exercise, bringing your work with you.

Your grade will reflect your performance on the following:

Midterm Examination - - - - -	100 points
Analysis of Questions (5 @ 10 points) - - - - -	50 points
Paper - - - - -	100 points
Final Examination - - - - -	150 points
TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS	400 points

NOTE: It is Hunter College policy that Credit/No Credit may be requested by the student up until the final examination (or date of the final assignment); however “Students requesting grading according to this system must satisfy whatever attendance requirement has been set by the instructor, complete all the assignments and take the final examination.” [Undergraduate Catalog, 2007-2010, p. 69] For this class, you must have completed all paper assignments, taken the midterm examination, and **made a good faith effort** on the final examination. There will be no exceptions to the enforcement of this policy.

Academic Integrity

Hunter College’s policy on Academic Integrity is as follows:

“Hunter College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. The College is committed to enforcing the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedures.”

This policy will be enforced, including recommendation of sanctions to the Dean of Students' office. Please familiarize yourself with the Hunter College policy, which can be viewed on-line at www.hunter.cuny.edu/studentservices/.../policies-academic-integrity.

Writing Assignments

This course is a *writing intensive* class, so you should expect to write essay examinations and assignments. The assigned readings and the class discussions are all related to the examinations and papers, so you should be prepared to pay close attention to both. You will find that the examinations and assignments will challenge you to analyze what you read and to apply your understanding to issues and problems. Except for the essay examinations (a midterm and a comprehensive final), you will be **strongly encouraged** to submit drafts of writing assignments for comment. The comments will not correct your grammatical mistakes or gaps in your analyses; however, they will indicate areas of weakness and ways that you can strengthen your essay. For help with the technicalities of writing (grammar, word choice, sentence and paragraph construction, and standard English usage), please go **early and often** to the Hunter College Reading and Writing Center, which is on the 4th Floor in Thomas Hunter Hall. The Center also has many resources available to you on-line.

All paper assignments must be submitted to turnitin.com before being handed in (in hard copy) on the day the assignment is due. Directions for submitting papers through turnitin.com can be found on BlackBoard.

Accessibility

Students who have a documented need for accommodations in this course should consult the office of AccessAbility in Room 1214B East Building to arrange for the appropriate accommodation. The AccessAbility office will notify the instructor.

General Policies

BlackBoard is used as the place where all course materials, announcements, and instructions can be found, with the exception of the readings placed on e-reserve. For this reason, be sure that you either check your Hunter e-mail regularly or that you forward your Hunter e-mail to your preferred e-mail account.

Hunter College policies on academic integrity are strictly enforced. All documented cases of academic dishonesty, such as plagiarism or cheating, will be referred to the Dean of Students.. As required by the policy, students suspected of academic dishonesty will be notified (usually by e-mail) and asked to see the instructor for a conference. If the student does not respond, the charge will be forwarded along with the documentation and a recommended sanction.

*Late papers will **not be accepted**.*

Make-up examination privileges are granted at the discretion of the instructor. Requests for a make-up examination because of a death in the family should be accompanied by an obituary or other documentation. Requests because of illness should be accompanied by a doctor's note specifying the date and incapacity of the student to attend class.

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Incompletes are rarely granted and then only cases of unexpected and extraordinary circumstances that make it impossible for the student to complete the work by the end of the semester.

Week	Topic	Readings
1/27	The meaning of government: power and authority American government: radical beginnings and conservative progress	KJK, chapter 1
1/31 – 2/3	American government: radical beginnings and conservative progress (continued) Battles over government power	KJK, chapter 2 Declaration of Independence (KJK) Articles of Confederation (KJK) U.S. Constitution (KJK) Federalist #10 and #51 (KJK)
2/7 – 2/10	Federalism: innovation and consequences There is no class on Friday, February 10th.	KJK, chapter 3
2/14 – 2/17	Creating the legislature: Congress as the most powerful branch?	KJK, chapter 6
2/21 – 2/24	Congressional evolution: change and stasis Note: There is no class on Tuesday, 2/21 because classes follow a Monday schedule.	KJK, chapter 6 and chapter 12 Polsby, <u>How Congress Evolves</u> , Ch. 5
2/28 – 3/2	Creating the presidency: From clerk to world leader	KJK chapter 7
3/6 – 3/9	Presidential leadership and institutional changes Midterm Examination 3/6	Examination will cover all material through 3/ 2
3/13 – 3/16	Events, personalities and institutional transformation	Andrew Polsky, “The Presidency at War”; Michael Nelson, “The Presidency of Abraham Lincoln”
3/20 – 3/23	Creating the courts: settling disputes and interpreting law	KJK, chapter 9
3/27 – 3/30	Making policy through judicial action	KJK chapters 4 and 5
4/3 – 4/6	Civil rights, voting rights and political leverage Note: Spring break is April 6 to April 15th	KJK, chapter 4 and Alexander Keyssar, selection from <u>The Right to Vote</u>
4/10 – 4/13	Spring break – no classes	
4/17 – 4/20	Holding government accountable: voting and influence in American elections	KJK, chapters 10 and 11
4/24 – 4/27	Interest groups, political parties and political influence	KJK chapter 12

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5/1 – 5/4	Interest groups and the dangers of factions	KJK, chapter 13
5/8 – 5/11	The continuing process of inventing American government	
5/15	Last day of class – open discussion and review	