Course Description

This course is designed to survey topics that are vital for an understanding of American national politics and government. Readings and lectures will examine the structural foundations, institutions, citizen-government linkages, and processes that characterize the American political system. Readings typically average about 100-150 pp. per week.

This is a 3 credit hour course with 50 minute lectures on Mondays and Wednesdays and required 50 minute discussion sections that will meet on either Thursdays or Fridays. The discussion sections will be led by the teaching assistants assigned to this course. Attendance at all class meetings—lectures and discussions—is mandatory.

Teaching Assistants (office hours and email addresses to be announced in lecture/posted on web site)

Required Readings (available at campus area bookstores and sold as a bundle)


Grades

Grades will be based on exams, assignments, attendance/participation in discussion sections, and attendance/conduct in lecture. Below is a breakdown of how your grade will be determined for the course:

- Constitution exam (Monday, 18 September) 15.0%
- Mid-term exam (Monday, 16 October) 20.0%
- Final exam (Thursday, 14 December) 20.0%
- Short assignments 10.0%
- Fiorina “Culture War” Analysis 10.0%
- Attendance and conduct in lecture 10.0%
- Attendance and conduct in discussion sections 7.5%
- Participation in discussion sections 7.5%

The Constitution exam, mid-term exam, and final exam will be in-class on the dates specified in the course outline and will be closed book, closed note. The exams will be multiple-choice and true-false, with questions taken from reading material, lectures, films, and discussions.

No exams will be given earlier than the time and date scheduled for this course. Make-up exams are entirely at Professor Conley’s discretion and are rarely granted; the teaching assistants cannot grant make-up exams. Make-ups will only be given under the most extreme circumstances—which will necessarily require verifiable, written documentation of an emergency (illness or accident) or unavoidable legal obligation. Forgetting the exam date, “my alarm didn’t go off,” or “the bus was late” are not acceptable excuses. Any and all make-up exams that are granted will be in essay format, will take place immediately after the final scheduled for the course (7:30 p.m., 14 December), and will be graded by Professor Conley.

The final exam will be given at the date and time scheduled by the University—which is fixed and final.

If for any reason you cannot attend any of the exams scheduled for this course (e.g., you have travel plans), you should not enroll in this course unless you are willing to accept a 0 for that exam.

Neither individual assignments nor final grades in this course will be subject to a “curve.” Letter grades for the final grade in the course will be assigned per the following schedule:

- A 90+
- B+ 88-89
- B 80-87
- C+ 78-79
- C 70-77
- D+ 68-69
- D 60-67
- E < 60 (failing)
Attendance/ Participation in Lecture and Discussion Sections

You must attend the discussion section assigned by the Registrar’s Office; students will not be allowed to switch the discussion section times outside of the University’s add/drop policies.

Attendance for this course is mandatory— which means you are expected to attend lecture and discussion sections on a regular basis. Because attendance and participation constitute 25% of your grade, students who are unwilling to commit to attending lectures and discussion sections consistently should not enroll in this course or accept the consequences.

After the first week of classes, students will be assigned permanent seats for the Monday/Wednesday lectures. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of the lecture period. This course starts on-time at 8:30 a.m. sharp. Students who are late when attendance is taken will not receive credit— we are not in the business of trying to keep track of tardies. Please do not bring Professor Conley excuses about why you are late or could not attend class unless it is a question of serious illness or emergency for which you have documentation.

Students who leave during the lecture will be noted on the attendance sheet and will not receive credit for attendance that day. Leaving during the lecture is rude and disrespectful to the instructor and is distracting to other students. [Also see the section below on Students’ Classroom Conduct for lectures and discussion sections. Proper academic comportment is expected.]

You control your lecture attendance grade. The number of times you attend lecture will be divided by the total number of lecture meetings during the semester (after the first week). The teaching assistants will take attendance at each discussion section meeting. You control your attendance grade in discussion sections as well. The number of times you attend will be divided by the total number of discussion section meetings during the semester.

Participation comprises the other 7.5% of your discussion section grade. You cannot participate if you do not attend class. No student shall receive a grade for participation higher than the attendance grade. Your participation grade depends on your contributions to class discussions (see the following section on general guidelines), performance on quizzes and other assignments given during sections, etc. You are expected to complete all reading assignments before the discussion sections meet and to come prepared to discuss the material.

A Note to Student Athletes

Student athletes who will miss more than 1 or 2 classes during the semester for sports-related training, contests, etc., should not enroll in this course given the weight of attendance and participation in lecture and discussion sections. Signing up for a discussion section on Fridays, for example, if you expect to be absent for meets, matches, etc., is unacceptable.

Short Assignments, Due Dates and Late Assignments

Short paper assignments are always due at the beginning of discussion sections. The objective of the various short papers is to facilitate group discussion and demonstrate students’ understanding of the weekly readings. Papers will not be accepted early, or “in absentia”— in other words, students must turn the papers in to their teaching assistants in person at the time they are due. Assignments will NOT be accepted early unless Professor Conley approves such an arrangement and for cause.
Neither Professor Conley nor teaching assistants will accept papers sent via email. Late papers will not be accepted.

Proper usage of English grammar is expected for all written assignments. Papers submitted with grammatical and spelling errors will receive lower grades. Re-writes of written assignments will not be accepted. Handwritten assignments will not be accepted.

Students will receive a grade between 0 and 100 for each assignment.

Teaching assistants cannot give extensions or exceptions for assignments. In all cases, extensions are entirely at the discretion of Professor Conley. Consideration for extensions or exceptions will not be given except under the most serious conditions, which will require written documentation and explanation at least two weeks prior to the due date of the assignment (in cases of last-minute emergencies, documentation must be provided that substantiates the severe nature of the illness, accident, or unavoidable legal obligation that prohibits the student both from completing the assignment and giving Professor Conley reasonable notice prior to the assignment due date). Sports-related events are never acceptable reasons for late papers.

Students’ Classroom Conduct: Cellular Phones/Beepers/Palm Pilots/Blackberries/I-Pods/ and Reading Newspapers/Magazines/Other Material

Students are expected to show respect for the instructor, teaching assistants, and each other. The use of cellular phones, beepers, or “palm pilots,” or other electronic devices is prohibited during lectures, discussion sections and exams, and they must be turned off to avoid distractions. Students who fail to comply with this rule during lectures or discussion sections will be summarily dismissed for the remainder of the class period and will receive a failing grade for the day that will be the equivalent of 3 absences from lecture or discussion section.

Failure to comply with any part of this rule during quizzes or exams will result in a failing grade on the quiz or exam. Further, students receiving any messages from these instruments during quizzes or exams will referred to the proper University authorities for cheating. Take this rule very seriously.

Listening to music, reading newspapers or magazines, or doing other coursework during lectures or discussion sections is also unacceptable in a university course. Students who engage in this activity or disrupt class in other ways (e.g., chatting during lecture) will receive a failing grade for the day (equivalent to 3 absences from lecture or discussion section) and will be summarily dismissed for the remainder of the class period.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

Plagiarism (using someone else’s ideas without giving him proper credit) is a serious offense. Students are bound by the University of Florida’s Student Code of Conduct. Cheating on examinations and plagiarism are violations of the academic honesty standards of the University of Florida, will have a serious effect upon your grade in this course, and will be referred to the appropriate University authorities for disciplinary action.

The written assignments for this class are to be your own work. Discussing your ideas or general approach with Professor Conley, the teaching assistants, other students or faculty, revising your work in response to a colleague’s criticism, or using words or ideas from a text or another source with proper attribution or referencing is acceptable, and is, in fact, an important aspect of
intellectual discourse. Plagiarism and other forms of dishonesty, including the failure to cite proper references, are unacceptable at all times.

**General Criteria for Grading**

**Students who get top grades (A, B+) generally:**

-- Turn in high-quality written work which reflects careful research, good planning, well-conceived arguments, originality, clarity of thought, and integration of course material, where appropriate. They stay within stated page limits. Their bibliographies are solid and their footnotes carefully used. Their final product in typed and readable. Written work submitted is in nearly flawless English grammar and spelling.

-- Complete all assigned readings on time, and reflect this in their exams, written work, and class participation. They review carefully and productively.

-- Attend all classes.

-- Participate actively and enthusiastically in class discussions. They ask questions on a regular basis, and their ideas are original and stimulating. They challenge the conventional wisdom. They summarize each author’s principal argument and their reaction to it when discussing the course material.

**Students who get middle grades (B, C+) generally:**

-- Turn in acceptable written work with no serious deficiencies in writing. They meet deadlines generally. Their work is readable and typed.

-- Attend class, complete the assigned readings and participate in class discussions, asking occasional questions.

**Students who get low and failing grades (C, D, E) generally:**

-- Do not turn in their assigned work on time. Their work is of poor quality and shows inadequate research, documentation, thought, and originality. It is poorly presented (untidy and/or handwritten rather than typed).

-- Complete only part of the required readings.

-- Do not attend class and avoid participation. When called upon, they are obviously not familiar with the material. They ask no questions and accept new ideas and opinions without challenging them.

**Office Hours**

Professor Conley and the teaching assistants keep regular office hours to ensure that we are available to assist you. I encourage you to consult with us on course readings, assignments, problems you may be having with the course, or if you simply wish to come by to discuss your interests in American politics. If scheduled office hours are not convenient for you, Professor Conley and the teaching assistants will make every effort to schedule alternate meeting times. You may also reach Professor Conley on his office phone (352) 392-0262 x.297.

**Students with Handicaps or Special Needs**

If there is any reason why you need extra time on the examinations and/or require special physical accommodation in lecture and/or discussion sections, please contact Professor Conley in confidence as soon as possible at the beginning of the course. Every effort will be made to accommodate your needs within the guidelines set forth by the University. Students with
handicaps or special needs will need to coordinate with Student Services at 202 Peabody Hall, and we stand ready to assist any way we can.

**Lecture, Readings, and Assignments Schedule**

**Week 1: Introduction to the Course/Democracy/Political Culture**

Wednesday, August 23

Discussion sections will meet on Thursday and Friday of this week. Students should complete the following readings:

Greenberg and Page, Chapter 1.
Woll, Chapter 1, John Locke: “Second Treatise, of Civil Government.”

**Week 2 – Political Culture/Constitution**

Monday, August 28

Wednesday, August 30

Greenberg and Page, Chapter 4.
Rourke, Chapter 5, “American People/Political Culture”
Rourke, Chapter 18, “Affirmative Action Admissions”
Fiorina, Chapters 1-4.

Film: Fiorina’s “Culture Wars”

Discussion questions: What are the hallmarks of American political culture? Is America really “exceptional” with its focus on individualism? To what degree is the focus on individualism positive or negative, and what are the implications for governance? What kind of balance do we need between individualism, the integration of “out-groups,” and a sense of community? How does immigration today fit within discussions of American political culture?

Short assignments due in discussion section.

**Week 3 - The Constitution**

Monday, September 4 [NO CLASS – Labor Day]
Wednesday, September 6

Greenberg and Page, Chapter 2.
Greenberg and Page, Appendix 4 (the Constitution).
Greenberg and Page, Appendix 13, Federalist #10 & #51.
Woll, Chapter 2: John Roche, “The Founding Fathers: A Reform Caucus in Action”
Woll, Chapter 3: Charles Beard, “Framing the Constitution”

Discussion questions: What were the real motivations of the Founders: liberty, equality, the protection of property, or some combination thereof? Do Madison’s “checks and balances” really work in terms of opportunities for relatively equal participation by competing groups? To what degree does might the “elitist” framework propounded by Beard challenge assumptions about the American democracy?
Short assignments due in discussion section.

**Week 4 – Constitution/Federalism**

Monday, September 11  
Wednesday, September 13

Chapter 3, Greenberg and Page.  
Woll, Chapter 5: Tribe & Dorf, “How Not to Read the Constitution”  
Woll, Chapter 7: “The Anti Federalist Papers No. 17”  
Woll, Chapter 10: Madison, “Federalist 39”  
Woll, Chapter 12: Broder, “A Republic Subverted”  
Rourke, Chapter 2: “Federalism”

Discussion questions: How does federalism shape governance in America? Is the division of powers between levels of government efficient or inefficient? Should the national government or the states be more predominant, or is this a false dichotomy given the complexity of government and the intermingling of functions today? Do we need to “sort out” which level of government should do what (e.g., welfare reform versus criminal laws)? How, according to Broder, do state referenda threaten the balance of the Madisonian system?

Short assignments due in discussion section.

**Week 5 - Civil Liberties**

**Monday, September 18 – CONSTITUTION EXAM**  
Wednesday, September 20

Chapter 15, Greenberg and Page.  
Woll, Chapters 18-22, 26-28 (Court cases)  
Rourke, Chapter 1  
Rourke, Chapter 17, “Death Penalty”  
Rourke, Chapter 24, “Anti Terrorist Legislation”

Discussion questions: Why are Americans so fixated on individual “rights”? Does the Constitution do enough to protect us from government interference in our lives? Does the First Amendment go too far in protecting free speech? Is there a “right to privacy” implied in the Constitution that provides for abortion rights? Is the separation between church and state adequate, inadequate, or too burdensome? How should we interpret the Second Amendment right to keep and bear arms (i.e., all weapons, certain weapons, etc.)? What about anti-terrorist legislation—is it constitutional? Is the death penalty “cruel and unusual punishment” or an appropriate consequence to crimes of murder?

**Week 6 - Civil Liberties, Civil Rights and Affirmative Action**

Monday, September 25  
Wednesday, September 27

Chapter 16, Greenberg and Page.
Rourke, Chapter 3, “Civil Rights”  
Woll, Chapters 23-25 & 29 (Court cases)

Discussion questions: Is everyone a member of some group that needs or deserves special protection? How do we set the boundaries? How has the national discourse concerning civil rights evolved since the landmark Brown v. Board decision? Does affirmative action aid groups who have suffered from past discrimination or stigmatize them? Why are whites so opposed to affirmative action? Does de facto desegregation trump efforts at legal equality? Should affirmative action be extended to more groups (e.g., the handicapped, gays and lesbians, women, etc.) or curtailed?

Short assignments due in discussion section.

**Week 7 – Interest Groups**

Monday, October 2  
Wednesday, October 4

Chapter 7, Greenberg and Page.  
Woll, Chapter 44: Berry, “Madison’s Dilemma”  
Woll, Chapter 45: Truman, “The Governmental Process”  
Woll, Chapter 47: Lowi, “The End of Liberalism: The Indictment”  
Woll, Chapter 48: Rozell & Wilcox, “Interest Groups and the American Political System”  
Woll, Chapter 49: Sabato, “The Misplaced Obsession with PACs”  
Woll, Chapters 41-42, Buckley vs. Valeo and McConnell cases

Discussion questions (to think about): Does the current interest group structure function as Madison had hoped by creating so much competition that no single group dominates? Or is there an upper-class bent to interest group power in America? Has the proliferation of interest groups resulted in too much concentrated power, undercut government responsibility, and wrested real power away from the electorate? Is the connection between money and interest group politics a threat to democracy?

No discussion sections this week: Homecoming.

**Week 8 – Political Parties**

Monday, October 9  
Wednesday, October 11

Chapter 9, Greenberg and Page.  
Rourke, Chapter 9, “Political Parties”  
Woll, Chapter 33, “Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System”  
Woll, Chapter 34: Wattenberg, “Perspectives on American Political Parties”

Discussion questions: Why are political parties important to the health of the American democracy? Do candidate centered campaigns erode the strength of political parties? How “responsible” are parties in the electorate or in national institutions (e.g., Congress)?

Short assignments due in discussion section.
Week 9 - Elections, Campaigns, and Voting

Monday, October 16 - MID TERM EXAMINATION
Wednesday, October 18 - Film: Campaign Commercials

Discussion questions: Discuss the campaign commercials film. Which ads do you think work best? Do negative ads have a powerful effect? What is the role of humor? Are ads typically policy-focused? Do what degree do political ads tend to reinforce candidate-centered politics?

Week 10 - Elections, Campaigns, and Voting

Monday, October 23
Wednesday, October 25

Greenberg and Page, Chapter 10.
Woll, Chapter 36: Key, “A Theory of Critical Elections”
Woll, Chapter 37: Ginsberg/Shafter, “Politics by Other Means”
Woll, Chapter 38, Berelson et al., “Democratic Practice and Democratic Theory”
Woll, Chapter 39, Key, “The Responsible Electorate”
Fiorina, Chapters 7-8.

Short assignments due in discussion section.

Discussion questions: What functions do campaigns and elections fill in the American democracy? Do we need to reform campaigns, and if so, how do we undertake such an effort that is compatible with First Amendment guarantees (also consider the *Buckley v. Valeo* decision discussed in lecture)? How have alternative forms of political activity (protests, etc.) impacted issues in American politics? What steps can be taken to boost participation and voting?

Week 11 - Public Opinion

Monday, October 30
Wednesday, November 1

Chapter 5, Greenberg and Page.
Rourke, Chapter 6 “Public Opinion/Participation”
Fiorina, Chapters 5-6.

Discussion questions: How are polling data often misinterpreted? Is there a “gender gap” between men and women across issue areas? Which issues stand out the most? How can presidents use public opinion to their advantage, or is public opinion so volatile that efforts to control it are futile? Why should policymakers care about what the public thinks (or should they)? What does the Rourke debate tell us about how public opinion intersects with the issue of private agencies protecting the border? What does Fiorina’s argument say about just how divided Americans are over “fundamental” issues?

Short assignments due in discussion section.

Week 12 - Media

Monday, November 6
Wednesday, November 8

[no discussion groups/this week – Veterans Day]

Chapter 6, Greenberg and Page.
Rourke, Chapter 7, “Media”

Discussion questions (for consideration): What role do the media play in the American democracy? Is their “watchdog” function effective? Do the media contribute to political apathy in the electorate by focusing on sensational stories? What does the public really want from the news media relative to political reporting? Should members of the media be exempt from having to reveal their confidential sources to the Courts?

**Week 13 - Congress**

Monday, November 13
Wednesday, November 15

Chapter 11, Greenberg and Page.
Woll, Chapter 67: Dodd, “Congress and the Quest for Power”
Woll, Chapter 69: Fenno, “If, as Ralph Nader Says, Congress is the ‘Broken Branch’…”
Woll, Chapter 70, Polsby, “Congress-Bashing for Beginners”
Woll, Chapter 71, Mayhew, “Congress: The Electoral Connection”
Woll, Chapter 77, Fenno, “Home Style and Washington Career”
Rourke, Chapter 11, “Congress” (term limits)

Discussion questions. What are the primary motivations of members of Congress? What role do party leaders play in Congress? How do differences in the House and Senate affect process and outcomes? In what ways is the Senate a “unique” legislative institution? Would term limits make members of Congress more accountable to their constituents? Why are Americans typically so negative toward Congress?

Short assignments due in discussion section.

**Week 14 - Presidency**

Monday, November 20
Wednesday, November 22

Chapter 12, Greenberg and Page.
Rourke, Chapter 10, “The Electoral College” debate.
Woll, Chapter 51, Rossiter, “The Presidency: Focus of Leadership”
Woll, Chapter 52: Neustadt, “Presidential Power”
Woll, Chapter 53: Cronin & Genovese, “Presidential Paradoxes”
Woll, Chapter 54, Barber, “The Presidential Character”

No discussion sections/short papers this week (Thanksgiving).

Questions to think about: What must a president do to be successful? Are the plethora of roles that the electorate expects a single individual to fulfill as president incompatible with the realities
of governing? Does “going public”— the rise of the plebiscitary presidency— violate the intentions of the Founders, and if so, is this development something to worry about or simply the adaptation of presidents to new demands of the job? Think of examples in which presidents have used public relations effectively and ineffectively in recent times (hint: Reagan and Bush might be a useful comparison). Especially after the 2000 election, does it make sense to abolish the Electoral College and replace it with direct election of the president?

**Week 15 - Presidency/Supreme Court**

Monday, November 27
Wednesday, November 29

Chapter 14, Greenberg and Page.  
Woll, Chapter 75: Roche, “Judicial Self-restraint”  
Woll, Chapter 77: Brennan, “How the Supreme Court Arrives at Decisions”  
Woll, Chapter 78: O’Connor, “Constitutional Liberty and the Right to Abortion”  
Woll, Chapter 79: Rehnquist, “Liberty, Privacy, and the Right to Abortion”  
Woll, Chapter 80: Scalia, “Liberty and Abortion: A Strict Constructionist’s View”

Discussion section questions. What factors might influence the decisions of Supreme Court justices? Must justices take into account both public opinion and the probability that their decisions will be implemented as they consider cases?

Short assignments due in discussion section.

**Week 16: United States Foreign Policy and the War on Terrorism**

Monday, December 4  
Wednesday, December 6

Greenberg and Page, Chapter 18  
Rourke, Chapter 19: “Foreign Policy” (The Bush Doctrine)  
Woll, Chapter 59: Mauro: “A Mixed Precedent for Military Tribunals”  
Woll, Chapter 61: Hamdi v. Rumsfeld

No discussion sections this week— reading days Thursday/Friday.

**Final Exam (exam group 14E): NRN 137, Thursday, 14 December, 5:30-7:30 p.m.**