

American Government (POLLS 100, 3 credits)

Spring 2009

Section 1: MWF 10:00 – 10:50 a.m. (Nursing, FCS, and A&S, Room 114)

Section 2: MWF 12:00 – 12:50 p.m. (A&S Rotunda, Room A)

Brookings, SD

South Dakota State University

Instructor: Gary Aguiar, Ph.D.

E-mail: Please use D2L's Internal email

URL: <http://d2l.sdbor.edu> (or <http://garyaguiar.com>)

Voice: 605-688-4914

Office: Scobey Hall 301

Office Hours: BY APPOINTMENT AND Mondays and Wednesday, 1:00 to 2:45 p.m.; Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:30 to 1:30 p.m.

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES:

From the *SDSU Undergraduate Bulletin, 2008-2009*: "A study of the basic principles of the American system of government with emphasis on problems relating to governmental structure and policies."

This course has the revolutionary purpose of re-building a successful democracy in the United States. We accomplish this goal by developing individual students' abilities and skills to understand and engage with other citizens. We pursue three objectives: (1) To equip students with the basic facts about U.S. politics; (2) To develop students' capacity to critique the state of democracy in the U.S.; and (3) To assist students in understanding the nature of democratic citizenship.

We wrestle with these essential questions: (1) What is a democracy? (2) Is self-government possible in contemporary mass society? (3) Can rural Americans play a role in national politics? The **systems approach**—one that links important political actors in U.S. politics—organizes our inquiries into a central framework.

To me, few topics could be more exciting than learning about U.S. politics. However, I understand that some students may find the subject less than exciting. Nonetheless, it is my sincere hope that every student will look back at this course as an enjoyable, worthwhile learning experience. More importantly, I would like each student to appreciate that the requirements of successful democracy include full civic engagement by each citizen.

System General Education Requirement

As required by the South Dakota Board of Regents' (BOR), this course meets Goal #3 (Social Sciences), System General Education Requirements, Number 2-7, Baccalaureate General Education Curriculum, BOR Policy Manual:

"Students will understand the organization, potential, and diversity of the human community through study of the social sciences."

As required by the BOR, this course meets the Student Learning Outcomes detailed below. To successfully completing this course, students must be able to

- 1) Identify and explain U.S. political values and beliefs as compared to other cultures.
- 2) Identify and explain basic concepts, terminology, and theories of political science from various institutional contexts, including
 - a) Practice active use of precise discipline-specific language.

- b) Describe the systems approach to understanding the U.S. political system (and define power and politics).
 - c) Explain the functions and roles of governmental and non-governmental actors.
 - d) Outline the nature of candidate-centered politics.
 - e) Explain the public's role in U.S. politics.
- 3) Demonstrate a basic understanding of the origin and evolution of democracy and the Constitution, including
- a) Explain the following concepts: democracy, republic, liberty, and popular sovereignty.
 - b) Describe and outline the Constitutional framework, including its origins, internal debates and compromises, ratification, federalism, and nationalism.
 - c) Explain Madison's argument in Federalist Papers #10 and #51.
- 4) Develop and use critical thinking skills, including
- a) Discover and evaluate new knowledge from a variety of reputable sources.
 - b) Assimilate facts and theories into an understanding of the U.S. political system.
 - c) Shift from concrete formal thinking to complex abstract understanding.
 - d) Assess counter arguments and facts that challenge one's assumptions, biases, conclusions, and values.

Assessment Techniques: These student learning outcomes are evaluated via exam questions as well as individual and group student learning outcomes written assignments.

PREREQUISITES AND EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENTS:

SDSU's University Bulletin indicates there are no prerequisites for this course. Thus, this course is a first-time course in political science and is appropriate for students who have no prior college experience. As liberal arts students, each of you is expected to develop the skills and habits of lifelong learners. College is an opportunity to engage in learning as required by U.S. citizens who are competing in a global-technological economy. In particular, knowledge workers possess an inquisitive, probing mind, which they regular exercise by becoming informed about current events. I strongly urge each of you to acquire the habit of reading both a major city daily newspaper and a newsweekly that reviews world events on a regular basis.

To help you with your planning, I create an organized, coherent schedule of assignments. As much as possible, material and assignments are ready the first day of class. So, ambitious students are encouraged to get a head start on their work NOW! Please avoid waiting for deadlines that approach rapidly.

Throughout the semester, students should be working on their group assignment. The deadline for getting this assignment is the last day of the semester (May 1). However, students should identify group members and begin work on this project by January 30. I strongly encourage groups to communicate with me about their project throughout the semester. In particular, each group should designate a liaison or leader who is charged with communicating with me. This person should discuss progress with me on a regular basis. Regardless of which project you select, it will require more than a couple weeks to gather the sources and assemble the paper.

Outside of class time, students are expected to engage in the study of U.S. politics at least ten hours each week. In addition to reading the text, numerous online activities provide students with opportunities to understand the topics we will study.

EXPECTATIONS OF INSTRUCTOR:

Students can expect me to be available to assist students with both the procedural and content (material) during office hours and via e-mail. I ask students to use the Desire2Learn internal email system (more on this below). In general, I attempt to check my d2l email on Tuesdays and Thursdays. So, it might be as long as 72 hours from when you send a message before you hear back from. While email remains the best means of contacting me, students

may attempt to reach me by phone. For extended conversations, it is best to schedule an appointment with me.

If you have a problem with an exam, please send me an email immediately detailing the problem and attach an MS-Word file that contains your answer. I will do my best to correct or rectify the situation so that it is fair to all students. On exams and other assignments, I am willing to review your score. However, students who ask me to review a score take a risk that I may revise the score up or down depending on my second analysis.

In general, students can expect that I will return grades on exams and assignments within two weeks of the due date (not two weeks after they are submitted). I reply to each student with an explanation of the grade and then follow up with a general email to all students notifying the class that I have completed the grading of that particular exam or assignment.

I will listen to all legitimate excuses for work not submitted on time. However, students must contact me as soon as they know about a problem. Except in cases of dire medical emergencies, students should email me prior to the due date.

GRADING PROCEDURES:

Final grades will be based on the following components:

Item	Points
Group Assignment	30
Individual Assignments (2 Quests @ 5 points each)	10
Exams (3 @ 20 points each)	60
<hr/> Total Possible	<hr/> 100

Letter Grades are assigned on the following scale:

Points Earned	Quality of Work	Letter Grade Earned
91.0 or higher	“Exceptional”	A
81.0 - 90.9	“Superior”	B
71.0 - 80.9	“Average”	C
61.0 - 70.9	“Passing”	D
60.9 or less	“Failure”	F

PLEASE SEE THESE ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS ON DESIRE 2 LEARN

- **ACADEMIC POLICIES**
- **GROUP ASSIGNMENT**
- **INDIVIDUAL ASSIGNMENTS**
- **EXAM INSTRUCTIONS**
- **PAPER GUIDELINES**

TEXTS:

The following textbooks have been ordered and should be available in sufficient quantity at the SDSU bookstore or <<http://www.sdstatebookstore.com>>. If the bookstore runs out of books, notify them and me immediately, so that we can order more copies.

Aguiar, Gary, ed. 2007. Government in the Countryside: Politics and Policies in Rural America. Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt Publishing.

Patterson, Thomas E. 2009. We the People: A Concise Introduction to American Politics. 8th Edition. Boston: McGraw Hill.

These textbooks have been carefully selected from a large number of choices to provide SDSU students with the best, most accessible readings in American politics. Our main text by Tom Patterson is the brief edition of his comprehensive text. He was raised just across the border from Brookings in Minnesota and graduated with a political science degree from SDSU in the mid-60s. He went on to earn a Ph.D. in political science from the University of Minnesota and now teaches at Harvard University. So, he may be an East-coaster now, but he understands and is able to communicate with students from our region.

Students should note that the volume I edited is the first study of rural politics in more than a quarter-century. The study of rural democracy in America is much neglected; thus, you are provided with an opportunity to study U.S. politics from a unique vantage point. (According to state law, I cannot personally benefit from any sales of this textbook in the state of South Dakota. Any royalties I earn will be deposited into a SDSU Foundation account to be used to further my research, including employing students as research assistants.)

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS

Unit # - Topic	Reading Assignments
Introduction to U.S. Politics	Patterson, Chapter 1. Aguiar, Chapters 1 and 2.
Constitutionalism	Patterson, Chapter 2. Aguiar, Chapters 4 and 5. The Declaration of Independence and U.S. Constitution (in the Appendix of Patterson). Federalist Papers #10 and #51. Found at any of these locations: http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/federal/fed.htm ; http://www.foundingfathers.info/federalistpapers/ ; http://thomas.loc.gov/home/histdox/fedpapers.html
Federalism	Patterson, Chapter 3. Aguiar, Chapter 13.
EXAM ONE	From "Introduction" to "Federalism," inclusive.
Equal Rights and Social Structure	Patterson, Chapter 5.
Public Opinion and Political Participation	Patterson, Chapters 6 and 7. Aguiar, Chapters 6, 7 and 8.
Political Parties and Campaigns	Patterson, Chapter 8. Aguiar, Chapter 9
EXAM TWO	From "Equal Rights" to "Political Parties," inclusive.

Unit # - Topic	Reading Assignments
Interest Groups	Patterson, Chapter 9. Aguiar, Chapter 10.
Mass Media	Patterson, Chapter 10
Congress	Patterson, Chapter 11; Aguiar, Chapter 15
The Presidency and the Executive Branch	Patterson, Chapters 12 and 13
The Judiciary	Patterson, Chapter 14
EXAM THREE	From "Interest Groups" to "The Judiciary," inclusive.

NOTICES

Advising is a very important resource designed to help students complete the requirements of the University and their individual majors. Students should consult with their advisor at least once per semester to decide on courses, check progress towards graduation, and discuss career options and other educational opportunities provided by SDSU. Advising is a shared responsibility, but students have final responsibility for meeting degree requirements.

Students may check their grades online at <https://wa-sdsu.prod.sdbor.edu/WebAdvisor/webadvisor>. Moreover, SDSU uses your student "jacks" email address as the primary means of communicating with students regarding official matters (including advising, billing, and notification of course deficiencies). Students should regularly check this account for pertinent information.

South Dakota State University is committed to providing equal access to University programs and services for all students. Under University policy and federal and state laws, students with documented disabilities are entitled to reasonable accommodations to ensure the student has an equal opportunity to perform in class. If any member of the class has such a disability and needs special academic accommodations, please notify me and make the appropriate arrangements with the Office of Disabilities Services. The ODS is located in SWSC 125. To schedule an appointment, call (605) 688-4504 and request to speak with Nancy Hartenhoff-Crooks, the Coordinator of Disability Services. Reasonable accommodations may be arranged after the Office of Disabilities Services has verified your situation. Do not hesitate to contact me if any assistance is needed in this process.

DISCLAIMER: This syllabus is subject to change. Email messages via the d2l system are sufficient notification of such alterations.