

AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

Mark Hall
Center Street House, Room 12
Class time: 3:15-4:05, MWF

PSC 190
Fall 2003
ESC 109

Contact Info: (O) 554-2674, (H) 554-0324, foxmail: mhall
Office Hours, MWF 8:15-8:50, 11:00-12:00; TTH 2:00-4:30, or by appointment.

This course provides an introduction to the American system of government. The origin, development, and present state of its major institutions are examined in detail. Special emphasis is placed on current policy issues in which the government plays an important role. Students are encouraged to think about these subjects from a Christian perspective.

Required text:

James Q. Wilson and John Dilulio, American Government, **9th ed.**

Course Requirements and Grading:

Students are required to read The New York Times on a daily basis. You can subscribe to the Times free of charge at <http://www.nytimes.com>. (Once you have subscribed, save the page as a bookmark or make it your homepage). Students should read all of the front-page stories dealing with national and international politics. We will discuss these stories regularly.

I expect students to attend class regularly, complete reading assignments on time, and participate in class discussions. Throughout the semester I will give 15 short quizzes at the beginning of class over assigned readings and the preceding week's The New York Times. I will drop 5 of the 15 quizzes under the assumption that students will miss or do poorly on 5 quizzes because of illness, sporting events, travel, job interviews, family emergencies, tardiness, etc. **I will not give make up quizzes for any reason.** If you think you will miss more than five quizzes this semester, let me know immediately. Combined quiz scores are worth 10% of your final grade. As well, we will have four exams, each of which is worth 15% of your final grade.

Finally, students are required to write three opinion pieces based on their reading of The New York Times (each is worth 10% of your final grade). Editorials should be 600-800 words (about two pages—use the “word count” function under the “tools” bar in Microsoft Word to ensure that you fall within these guidelines) and must argue a clear thesis. One piece should be written for The Crescent, one for The Oregonian, and one for either. I will add three points to your score if you publish your piece in The Crescent, and five points if you publish it The Oregonian, The Graphic, or a similar paper. You must come and talk with me in my office about your first topic. You may e-mail your topics for the last two editorials.

Each opinion piece should rigorously argue a thesis. You should **not** include footnotes, but you should indicate where you got quotations, statistics, etc. If you are unfamiliar with the format, you should read columnists such as William Safire or George Will on the editorial page of the Times (or elsewhere). For op-ed pieces, paragraphs should generally not be more than three sentences long. I strongly recommend that you buy, read, and follow religiously Strunk and White, The Elements of Style.

The editorials are due at the beginning of class on October 3, October 31, and December 1. All written assignments must be turned in by hand and on paper (no e-mail submissions). Late assignments will be penalized 3 points every 24-hour period they are late (excluding weekends). Absolutely no extensions will be given for computer/printer problems.

You may discuss your topic with other students, and they may proofread your essay, but all of your research and writing must be done by you alone. Plagiarism will result in an automatic "F" on the paper or, if flagrant enough, the course. A good definition of plagiarism, with links to sites that show you how to avoid it, may be found at: (<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/workshops/hypertext/ResearchW/plag.html>). I encourage you to take your essay to George Fox's new writing center for assistance.

A final letter grade based upon the percentage of points you earn in this course will be given based on the following scale:

93-100; A, 90-92.99, A-
87-89.99, B+; 83-86.99, B; 80-82.99, B-
77-79.99, C+; 73-76.99, C; 70-72.99, C-
67-69.99, D+; 60-66.99, D
0-59.99, F

Reading Assignments

All page numbers refer to the Wilson text unless otherwise noted.

September

1. Introduction to course.
3. Power and Politics, 2-15; The Declaration of Independence.
5. The Constitution, 16-47.
8. Federalism, read 48-75, Article I, section 8 of Constitution.
10. Serve Day
12. Federalism: Internet Assignment. States have a great amount of freedom to address various policy issues, e.g., education, poverty relief, crime, etc. Explore one of these areas. Find different ways states approach the same issue, and find studies that compare policy outcomes by state in this area. Please note: this and other internet

assignments should take approximately 2 hours. If you find something right away, search for other data, studies, etc. Be prepared to report on your issue in class.

15. Public Opinion, 102-129.

17. Internet Assignment. First go to (<http://www.pollingreport.com/>). Study and be prepared to discuss several polls that interest you (e.g., Bush's approval rating, leading Democratic candidates, etc.). [A fun, related site, <http://www.campaignline.com/odds/> places odds on current races.] Then go to the following report: (<http://pewforum.org/docs/index.php?DocID=26>). You do not need to read the whole thing, but skim through it noting the major findings. Do read the methodology section at the end of the report. Be prepared to discuss it in class.

Please note: these links worked at the beginning of the semester. If you have trouble making them work, double check to make sure you have typed the correct address. If you still have problems try to solve them creatively, or contact me.

19. Elections and Campaigns, 184-200.

22. Elections and Campaigns, 200-221.

24. Catch-up and review.

26. Test #1

29. Congress, 281-294. Article I of Constitution.

October

1. Congress, 294-310.

3. Congress, 310-327. Go to Congress's websites (www.house.gov and www.senate.gov) and skim through the web pages of Oregon's two Senators and the representative from this district (David Wu). Compare what you see here to what you read about Congress in the Constitution. EDITORIAL #1 DUE

6. Presidency, 328-346, Article II of the Constitution

8. Presidency, 347-371. Go to and investigate the White House website (<http://www.whitehouse.gov>). Compare what you see there to the Executive's role as envisioned by Article Two of the Constitution. Come to class prepared to talk about whether Bush has done a good job as president and to make an argument as to which Democratic candidate for president could do better.

10. Holiday

13. Bureaucracy, 373-385

15. Bureaucracy, 385-401

17. Parties, 150-162.

20. Parties, 162-184.

22. Catch-up and Review

24. Test #2

27. Judiciary, 402-414, Article III of the Constitution

29. Judiciary, 414-432. Go to: (<http://www.supremecourtus.gov/about/about.html>).

Read several of the articles and be prepared to talk about them in class.

31. Civil Liberties, 497-513, Read Amendments 1-10, 14.

EDITORIAL #2 DUE

November

3. Go to The Becket Fund's website (<http://www.becketfund.org/>). Read and be prepared to discuss several stories on the website. Find their special section on the Blaine Amendments (scroll down the homepage and you will see a special link on the right). Read about these. Why were they passed? Does Oregon have one?

5. Civil Liberties, 510-521

7. Find and read, Zelman v. Simmons-Harris (2002) on Findlaw.com.

10. Civil Rights, 522-539

12. Civil Rights, 539-551.

14. Internet Assignment: Go to two judicial advocacy organization's websites (e.g., ACLU, ACLJ, CLS, etc.) What do they want you to do? Do they put a slant on their coverage of different issues? Finally, go to findlaw.com, find Grutter v. Bollinger (2003), read the headnote and skim the opinion.

17. Test #3.

19. Public Policy, 434-453

21. Public Policy, 453-477.

24. Social Welfare, 478-495.

26. Handout: "Is The American Welfare State Unusually Small?"; TBA.

28. Thanksgiving!

December

1. Foreign and Military Policy, 552-565, EDITORIAL #3 DUE

3. Foreign and Military Policy, 566-583.

5. Environmental Policy, 584-600.

8. Conclusion, 602-614

10. Christian critique of institutions and policies: Come prepared to class to discuss one major reform of a political institution and one major reform of a policy from an explicitly Christian perspective.

12. Catch-up and review.

Final Exam: Wed. Dec. 17, 1:00. I will not give finals at other times. Plan accordingly.