

Political Science 2051  
Introduction to American Government  
Fall 2011

**Instructor:**

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Office Hours: Tues. 5:15-6:00 pm

**Purpose:**

American government works better to the extent that thoughtful citizens invest time and effort in making it work. And making it work requires more of us than simply making demands of it.

In this class, we will work on understanding the historical, structural, and philosophical context of modern American government and politics. Ideally, this context will provide you with a framework for making sense out of the governmental and political landscape, a landscape which often appears unnecessarily complex and even chaotic. And hopefully this understanding will facilitate your lifelong engagement in the betterment of American government and society. Said another way, my goal is to plug you in to your own government by making it seem less strange.

This course is designed to meet the goals of the LSU General Education requirements for the Social Sciences and as such is intended to introduce you to systematic inquiry into the nature of human association so that you better appreciate the complexity of the social world and may act as a free and informed citizen, able to make informed choices in governing your own life and participating in your communities.

**Grading:**

Three tests-- 2/3 of final grade

Final Exam--1/3 of final grade (the final exam is cumulative)

**Extra credit:**

There will be a small extra credit assignment after each of the three tests. All assignments are due during the next class period after they are assigned. For example, the first extra credit assignment will be given out after the first test on Sept. 20 and will be due in class on Sept. 27.

### **Make-up tests:**

If you must miss any of the three tests, you may take a make-up test on Tuesday, **November 29**, during the regular class meeting time. However, you should plan on taking a make-up test only if absolutely necessary because: a) you will probably find it more difficult than the original test; b) the last week before exams is usually not a good time to be taking a test; c) you will not have the graded test to use in studying for the cumulative final.

### **Readings:**

Course reading will include a combination of classic texts and contemporary articles. Assignments and links to the readings will be posted on Moodle. No textbook is required for this class.

### **Tentative Class Schedule:**

Aug. 23: Influences on the Constitution	Oct. 25: State and Local Government
Aug. 30: The Constitution & The Legislative Branch	Nov. 1: Civil Rights
Sept. 6: The Legislative Branch	Nov. 9: Civil Rights
Sept. 13: The Executive Branch	<b>Nov. 15: TEST NO. 3; Economic Policy</b>
<b>Sept. 20: TEST NO. 1; The Judicial Branch</b>	Nov. 22: Economic Policy
Sept. 27: The Bill of Rights/Civil Liberties	<b>Nov. 29: NO CLASS; make-up day for all tests</b>
Oct. 4: Political Culture	<b>Friday, Dec. 2: Final Exam review session (2:00-4:00); location TBA</b>
Oct. 11: Public Opinion & Democracy	<b>Dec. 6: Final Exam 8:00-10:00 pm</b>
<b>Oct. 18: TEST NO. 2; Federalism</b>	