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Fall 2021

PSCI 100-001: United States National Government syllabus

Gregory P. Williams

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PSCI 100 (001):
United States National Government
Fall 2021

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Office hours: MW, 2:20-3:20, and by appointment
Registration: PSCI 100-001 (20240)
Meetings in Harrison 163, 10:10-11:00

The course is an introduction to American national politics. It surveys the founding of the government, major institutions, government-society relations, the federal judiciary, and foreign policy. By the end of the course, students should be able to develop critical perspectives on the fundamentals of U.S. national government.

All course readings are freely available to you on Canvas. Most are open educational resources (OER), some are open access articles, and a few are online resources available through the library. Occasionally, I will also assign freely available videos and podcasts. The main book is David Hubert, *Attenuated Democracy: A Critical Introduction to U.S. Government and Politics* (2020), available in print, online, and on Canvas.

We will follow the schedule below. Before the week begins, read the assignment listed here. Then, during the week, read, watch, or listen to the other materials provided on Canvas.

Week 1 (8/23-8/27): What is Democracy?

Hubert, Ch. 8: “Six Very Powerful Questions”
Hubert, Ch. 10: “The Context of U.S. Government and Politics”
Audio podcast on presidential powers and federalism, Noah Feldman, “The Power of the Presidential Pardon,” *Deep Background* (December 9, 2020).

Week 2 (8/30-9/3): Comparing Models of Democracy and the Founding

Quiz 1

Hubert, Ch. 12: “Articles of Confederation, Shays’ Rebellion and the Road to the Constitution”
Hubert, Ch. 13: “Key Features of the U.S. Constitution”
Hubert, Ch. 14: “The Battle for Ratification and the Bill of Rights”

Week 3 (9/6-9/10): The 1789 Constitution

Quiz 2

Federalist 10
Federalist 51

Week 4 (9/13-9/17): Individualism and Constitutional Systems (Presidential and Parliamentary)

Quiz 3

John T. Ishiyama, *Comparative Politics: Principles of Democracy and Democratization*, Ch. 8:
“Legislatures and Executives” (pp. 177-199)

McKay Coppins, “The Man Who Broke Politics,” *The Atlantic* (October 17, 2018).

Audio podcast on legislative dysfunction, Terry Gross, “How Newt Gingrich ‘Broke Politics,’”
Fresh Air (November 1, 2018).

Week 5 (9/20-9/24): The Legislative Difference

Quiz 4

Hubert, Ch. 20: “Who are Our Members of Congress and Whom Do They Represent?”

Hubert, Ch. 22: “How Congress Passes Legislation”

Hubert, Ch. 24: “The Undemocratic Senate”

Audio podcast, Terry Gross, “The Racist History of the Senate Filibuster,” *Fresh Air* (January
12, 2021).

Week 6 (9/27-10/1): Separation of Powers

Quiz 5

Hubert, Ch. 25: “The President as Person and Institution”

Hubert, Ch. 27: “The President’s Domestic Powers”

Hubert, Ch. 29: “Contemporary Issues of Presidential Power”

Hubert, Ch. 30: “Impeachment and Removal of the President”

Week 7 (10/4-10/8): Packing, Cracking, and Elections

Quiz 6

Hubert, Ch. 53: “Gerrymandering”

Hubert, Ch. 54: “Campaign Finance”

Hubert, Ch. 57: “Voting”

Mid-term study guide handed out

Week 8 (10/11-10/15): The Court and Policymaking

Hubert, Ch. 31: “Purpose and Operation of the Supreme Court”

Hubert, Ch. 32: “Paths to the Supreme Court”

Hubert, Ch. 34: “The Interpretive Work of the Supreme Court”

Bruce Allen Murphy, “Justice Antonin Scalia and the ‘Dead’ Constitution,” *The New York Times*
(February 14, 2016).

Video on the job of Supreme Court justices, “The Kalb Report—Ruth Bader Ginsburg and
Antonin Scalia,” The National Press Club (2014).

Friday, October 15th: Mid-term exam

Week 9 (10/18-10/22): Judicial Personalities

Linda Greenhouse, “Is Clarence Thomas the Supreme Court’s Future?” *The New York Times* (August 2, 2018).

[Additional essays to be assigned]

Week 10 (10/25-10/29): Cases and Plans for Reform

Quiz 7

[Essays to be assigned]

Week 11 (11/1-11/5): Foreign Policy

Quiz 8

Hubert, Ch. 28: “The President’s Foreign Policy Powers”

Jonathan Fenby, “When the World Went Cold,” *History Today* June (2019): 72-83.

Immanuel Wallerstein, “What Cold War in Asia? An Interpretive Essay,” in *The Cold War in Asia: The Battle for Hearts and Minds*, Zheng Yangwen, Hong Liu, and Michael Szonyi, eds. (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 15-24.

Week 12 (11/8-11/12): Cuba, the Cold War at Its Coldest

Quiz 9

Dan Allosso and Tom Williford, *Modern World History* (2021), Ch. 11: “Cold War”

Video selections from *The Fog of War* (2003)

Video on Castro’s fateful decision: “Was Castro Crazy?”

Week 13 (11/15-11/19): Crisis and the End of the Cold War

Quiz 10 (Hooray, it’s the last one!)

Allosso and Williford, *Modern World History* (2021), Ch. 12: “Neoliberal Globalization”

[Additional essays to be assigned]

Week 14 (11/22-11/26): The Era of Liberal Hegemony

No Class on Wednesday or Friday—Thanksgiving holiday

Daniel Deudney and G. John Ikenberry, “Liberal World: The Resilient Order,” *Foreign Affairs*, July-August (2018): 16-24.

Tom Engelhardt, “American wars and self-decline,” *Le Monde Diplomatique* (June 18, 2018).

Video on values versus interests, “Values and Diplomacy: Conversation with Former Secretaries of State” (2011).

Week 15 (11/29-12/3: Offshore Balancing as Strategic Alternative

John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, “The Case for Offshore Balancing: A Superior U.S. Grand Strategy,” *Foreign Affairs* July-August (2016): 70-83.

Video on liberal hegemony, Stephen Walt, “Can the U.S. Still Have a Successful Foreign Policy?” (2019).

Study guide for the final exam handed out

Week 16 (12/6-12/10): Final Exam Week

Wednesday, December 8th at 8:00am: Final Exam

Grades are comprised of the following three components:

1) Exams (65%). Twice you will write timed, thesis-based essay exams, submitted through Canvas. More information will be provided closer to the first deadline. Students caught cheating will likely fail the course and may face disciplinary action.

2) Quizzes (30%). Most weeks we will have a multiple-choice or true/false reading quiz. Questions are based off the Hubert reading for the week. (If no Hubert material is assigned, the class will be notified of the readings to be covered.) Quizzes are based on major aspects of the reading, not the fine details, and are not intended to be comprehensive evaluations of the material. The quiz will go live every Monday at 7:00pm, and will remain open until Tuesday at 7:00pm. Though open book, you will only have about 60 seconds per question, and quizzes will range from 5 to 10 questions.

Put another way, you are expected to read the material below by the start of the week. For example: chapters 12 and 13 in Hubert are listed for Week 2, which means you should have them read by the beginning of Week 2. Have the reading completed by Monday morning, and be ready for a quiz.

You do not have to take each quiz. Students may elect, without penalty, to skip 3 quizzes, taking only 7 of 10 offered. Students who take all 10 will have their 3 lowest grades discarded. If a student skips more than 3 quizzes, grades of 0 will be entered for the missed assignments.

3) Participation (5%). Grades are holistic and non-formulaic, based on the quality of your comments in class. Remember, this class is a safe space for discussing ideas. Students are expected to treat one another with respect and hold themselves to high academic standards. Class etiquette also means putting one’s phone away for the session.

Let me close with a few final notes. One, here is UNC’s mask policy, lightly edited:

UNC's mask policy requires students, employees, and visitors to wear cloth face coverings over their nose and mouths at all times while in classrooms. Student failure to comply with UNC's mask requirement is subject to disciplinary action under the Code of Student Conduct. There is no individual medical exemption for wearing a mask in an in-person course; students who cannot wear a mask because of medical or psychological conditions can contact the Disability Resource Center to explore alternative course modalities. Exceptions include individuals who are fully vaccinated and engaged in indoor instructional activity or laboratory work and can maintain at least 6 feet from the nearest person.

Two, don't be a stranger. Got questions? Want to talk politics? Send me an e-mail or make an appointment for office hours. I like hearing from students. It shows that you care about the class and want to be involved. Given the volume of e-mails I receive, I cannot write back and forth like a text exchange. To me, and to employers out there, e-mails are more like letters. They should have a greeting/salutation, a message, and a closing. E-mails should contain relevant information and questions that the recipient can understand. E-mails don't have to be fancy. Many of you already do them just fine. But they are not text messages. However old-timey this sounds, a touch of e-mail formality will take you far in life.

Three, treat your syllabus as your primary guide to the course. You will need to keep it as a reference for the entire semester. Treat Canvas as a secondary resource. I will post announcements there, as well as all the readings.

Finally, I am excited for this class and for our great conversations!