

Fall 2008
American Government
POLA 210-02

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Harold Lasswell, a prominent American political scientist, defined politics as “who gets what, when, and how.” The structure of the American political system, as well as the participants who operate in that system and the values those participants hold, have a large impact on how that definition takes shape. Particularly important in the case of the United States is the prominent role elections play in helping to decide “who gets what, when, and how.”

This course will introduce students to American government, the structures and participants that make it work, and the role of elections in binding citizens to their government and in controlling the behavior of elected (and un-elected) officials. Students will leave this course with not only an understanding of American government but also with the tools necessary for them to be responsible citizens, informed voters, and critical consumers of political information.

Required Texts: There are four required texts for this course:

- Fiorina, Morris P., Paul E. Peterson, Bertram Johnson, D. Stephen Voss, and William G. Mayer. 2008. *America's New Democracy*. Fourth Edition. New York, NY: Longman.
- Golding, William. 1954. *Lord of the Flies*. New York, NY: Perigee.
- Shakespeare, William. 1608. *Coriolanus*. New York, NY: Signet Classics (2nd revised edition, 2002).
- Sophocles. 440 BC. *Antigone*. Clayton, DE: Prestwick House (translation by J.E. Thomas, 2005).

Assignments: There will be three noncumulative exams in this course. Exams will be closed book; the format of each will be discussed before the first exam. Attendance and participation will also be factored into the final course grade. These components will contribute to the course grade as follows:

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Points</u>
Exam 1	Sept. 29	75
Exam 2	Nov. 5	75
Exam 3	Dec. 8	120
Att./Part.	–	30
TOTAL		300

Grading: This course will be graded according to Tulane’s plus/minus grading system:

	+		-
A		92.5 and above	90 to 92.4
B	87.5 to 89.9	82.5 to 87.4	80 to 82.4
C	77.5 to 79.9	72.5 to 77.4	70 to 72.4
D	67.5 to 69.9	62.5 to 67.4	60 to 62.4
F		59.9 and below	

Grades will be available at <http://tulane.blackboard.com/>. You can also get your grade by coming to see me during office hours. I will not provide grades over email or by phone.

Course Policies: Students are expected to attend each class, to be on time, and to have all course materials read **prior** to the class in which they are discussed. Please turn off all electronic devices during class. The use of laptop computers in class is a privilege; their use in class will be prohibited if they are used for anything beyond taking notes. All assignments must be completed for a student to pass the course. Requests for regrading any exam or assignment must be made no later than one week after it has been handed back. No make-ups will be allowed except in very serious circumstances (I reserve the right to determine what is “very serious”). Course incompletes will only be allowed for circumstances in which the student is physically unable to complete the course; the student must otherwise be passing the course in order to be granted the incomplete.

If you have any kind of special circumstances, such as a disability, illness or handicap, or if you are involved with a university activity that requires you to miss class, let me know as soon as possible. This information is confidential. All students attending Tulane University with documented disabilities are eligible and encouraged to apply for services with the Office of Disability Services (ODS). Please see me for information, or go to <http://erc.tulane.edu/disability/index.html>. Students needing accommodations must provide me a copy of the accommodation granted by ODS at least seven days before an exam.

Course Format: Classes will primarily consist of lecture. However, I will frequently interrupt lecture to call on students to answer questions and give opinions. Students are also encouraged to stop me for questions or comments.

Policy regarding Academic Freedom: In any classroom situation that includes discussion and critical thinking, particularly about political ideas, there are bound to be many differing viewpoints. Students may disagree with each other at times, or with me. These differences can help enhance class discussion and create an atmosphere where students (and I) will be encouraged to think and learn. In any event, grades will not be adversely affected by any beliefs expressed in class or in assignments.

Policy regarding Academic Integrity: As described in the Tulane University Honor Code, students are expected to uphold the honor and integrity of the academic process. Violations of the Honor Code include, but are not limited to, cheating on an exam (either providing answers to or receiving answers from another student), plagiarism (the use of another author’s words or arguments without attribution), and unauthorized collaboration (working with another person in preparing written work for fulfillment of any course requirement). If a student commits any violation of the Honor Code, I will pursue disciplinary action as outlined in the Honor Code.

Course Outline:

Aug 27	Introduction to the Class	(none)
Aug 29/Sept 3	The State of Nature	<i>Lord of the Flies</i> (all)
Sept 5, 8	The Founding	FPJVM Ch 2, pp. 463-485
Sept 10, 12	Federalism	FPJVM Ch 3
Sept 15, 17	Public Opinion	FPJVM pp. 99-120
Sept 19, 22	Participation	FPJVM Ch 6
Sept 24, 26	Interest Groups	FPJVM pp. 218-232
Sept 29	Exam 1	(none)
Oct 1, 3	The Trials of Democracy	<i>Coriolanus</i> (all)
Oct 6, 8, 10	Media	FPJVM pp. 120-139
Oct 13, 15, 17	Parties	FPJVM pp. 201-217
Oct 20, 22, 24	Campaigns & Elections	FPJVM Ch 7
Oct 27, 29	Congress	FPJVM Ch 9
Oct 31/Nov 3	Presidency	FPJVM Ch 10
Nov 5	Exam 2	(none)
Nov 7, 10	Civil Disobedience	<i>Antigone</i> (all)
Nov 12	Bureaucracy	FPJVM Ch 11
Nov 14, 17	Judiciary	FPJVM Ch 12
Nov 19, 21	Civil Liberties	FPJVM Ch 13
Nov 24/Dec 1	Civil Rights	FPJVM Ch 14
Dec 3	Public Policy	FPJVM Ch 15
Dec 5	Prepare for Exam	(none)
Dec 8	Exam 3 8:00 am – 12:00 pm	(none)