

**PS 111: Introduction to American Politics
Winter 2005**

Professors:
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Classroom: Auditorium A., Haven Hall.
Meeting Time: Tuesday & Thursday 9-10.
Office Hours of Professors & GSIs: TBA

Overview:

This course introduces students to the central processes and institutions of American politics. It is designed to help you approach American politics with a critical eye and an analytical frame of mind. Such skills are important because politics plays an important role in your lives. As we gather today, governments amass trillions of dollars of debt that you will inherit, prosecutes a war on terrorism that may enhance your safety or diminish your liberties, sets policies that affect the college tuition you pay and designs regulations that affect who you can marry and the kinds of careers that you can pursue. Politics matters to you. You can also matter to it. The University of Michigan was once a hotbed of anti-war radicalism. It could be again. Or it could be something else, say, a hotbed of religious or right-wing radicalism. Or it could be a place, which it really already is, where students with varied interests and opinions can engage in lively debate, community activism, protest behavior, letter-writing campaigns, or get-out-the-vote efforts in state or national elections. Cynics will say that such activities don't change anything, and it would be hard to say they're wrong in any particular case. The correct response is that citizen engagement in politics doesn't necessarily change any policies, but it does increase the probability of desired outcomes. What citizens do and think affect the kind of politics we get. The connections are not always transparent or as simple as many news reports allege. Public opinion and behavior may matter, but their impact is affected through the medium of institutions: through elections and referenda, in the calculations of executives and legislators, via the organization of interest groups and parties, through the lobbying of corporations and NGOs, because of the issue attentiveness of policy entrepreneurs and the media. This course will help you to understand those institutions and thereby locate yourself in your political world.

To this end, we have selected a textbook with a strong analytical bent. It does not simply describe political processes and institutions for you. It provides the conceptual tools you will need to analyze politics for yourself. The main concepts are laid out in the first chapter. It is important that you comprehend them clearly and quickly, for they will recur in subsequent chapters, lectures, and discussions in section. Do *not* assume that the book is a substitute for the lectures and sections, or vice versa. In lectures and sections we will often invoke but not always redefine key concepts or arguments presented in the text. Often we will use the text as the point of departure for issues or ideas not covered, or not covered well, in the text. If something is not clear during lecture, of course, you are welcome to ask

questions and we will do our best to answer them, given time available, or invite you to meet outside of class, either with one of us or your GSI.

Your participation in discussion section is critical to the educational value-added of this course. Often in lecture we will have to paint political phenomena with a broad brush or deploy too-abstract terms. In section, you have the opportunity to clarify what you don't understand, to make the abstract more concrete, to engage your GSI and your classmates around key issues and ideas. Do not miss any of these opportunities.

Evaluation:

Midterm Exam:30% (In-class, February 22)

Final Exam: 30% (Final exam period)

Papers (2): 20%

Section Grade: 20%

Books for Purchase: (Shaman Drum Books)

Theodore Lowi, Benjamin Ginsberg, and Kenneth Shepsle, *American Government: Power and Purpose*, 8th Edition

Choices: An American Government Reader, Boston, MA: Pearson Custom Publishing, (mistakenly labeled 2003). This version has 202 pages. All assigned readings are included in this book except where noted.

Lecture and Reading Schedule

- Week 1. January 6: Introduction to Course & Critical Concepts
Lowi, Ginsberg, & Shepsle, Ch. 1
Lupia, "Evaluating Political Science Research: Information for Buyers and Sellers." Can be read online at www.apsanet.org/PS/march00/lupia.cfm.
- Week 2. January 11/13: The Constitution: The Basic Design of Government
Lowi, Ginsberg, & Shepsle, Ch. 2,
Marbury v. Madison (1803)
- Week 3. January 18/20: Federalism: Its Design and Implications
Lowi, Ginsberg, & Shepsle, Chs. 3
Bush v. Gore (2000)
Bush v. Gore Dissent (2000)
- Week 4. January 25/27: The Legislative Branch
Lowi, Ginsberg, & Shepsle, Ch. 5

Cox and McCubbins “Legislative Leviathan: Party Government in the House”

Week 5: February 1/3: Presidential Power
Lowi, Ginsberg, & Shepsle, Ch. 6
Fiorina “An Era of Divided Government”

Week 6: February 8/10: Delegation to the Bureaucracy
Lowi, Ginsberg, & Shepsle, Ch. 7
Arthur Lupia. 2001. "Delegation of Power: Agency Theory." In Neil J. Smelser and Paul B. Baltes (eds.) *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences* 5: 3375 - 3377. Oxford, UK: Elsevier Science Limited. [This article will be posted at <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~lupia/classes.html>].

Week 7: February 15/17: Policy-making
Lowi, Ginsberg, & Shepsle, Ch. 14, 16
Becker, Estate Taxes: An Idea Whose Time has Gone”
Reich, “Why the Rich are Getting Richer...”

Week 8: February 22 *Midterm Exam*

February 24 & March 1/3: Spring Break

Week 9: March 8/10 Judiciary and Civil Rights and Liberties
Lowi, Ginsberg, & Shepsle, Chs. 4, 8
Epstein and Knight, “Choices Justices Make”

Week 10: March 15/17 Public Opinion
Lowi, Ginsberg, & Shepsle, Ch. 9
Page et al., “What Moves Public Opinion?”

Week 11: March 22/24 Elections and Participation
Lowi, Ginsberg, & Shepsle, Ch. 10
Kirchhoff, “Dollars and Sensitivities:...”
Texeira, “Voter Turnout in America: Ten Myths”

Week 12: March 29/31: Political Parties

Lowi, Ginsberg, & Shepsle, Ch. 11
Aldrich, "Politics and Parties in America"

Week 13: April 5/7: Interest Groups and Social Movements
Lowi, Ginsberg, & Shepsle, Ch. 12
Theda Skocpol. 1999. Associations Without Members. *The American Prospect*, vol 10, issue 44, pages 66-73. [This article will be circulated to the class via email or the web.]

Week 14: April 12/14: The Mass Media
Lowi, Ginsberg, & Shepsle, Ch. 13
Fallows, "Why Americans Hate the Media"

Week 15: April 19 Review

See Course Guide for the time and place of the *Final Exam*.