

Political Science 1101-200: The American Political System

Fall 2007

Tuesday/Thursday, 12:30–1:45 pm

HUMN 250

Professor: Nancy Billica, Ph.D.

Office: Ketchum 5D

Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays 11:00 to 12:15; and by appointment

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The purpose of this course is to introduce the institutions, processes and actors operating in the American political system. We will be critically examining the nature and quality of American democracy and evaluating the influence of these various factors on the development of public policy. No prior coursework in political science is necessary as a prerequisite for this course. At the end of the semester students should have a solid understanding of the American political system and be well prepared for more advanced coursework in political science.

READING AND OTHER COURSE MATERIALS

There is one required textbook: Shea, Daniel, Joanne Green and Christopher Smith, *Living Democracy*, Pearson Prentice Hall, 2007.

In addition, the required textbook comes packaged with two *ABC News American Government Student Library Video DVDs*, providing example cases from news broadcasts.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The course is designed to engage students in the materials through a variety of assignments. Specifically, students will be graded on: three exams (two midterms and a final), four short written assignments, and one longer paper describing observations of government in action. Exams will cover material from the assigned readings and class lectures. Written assignments include many options to allow students to choose topics and opportunities of interest. A full description of all paper assignments follows the Class Schedule. Due dates and grading breakdown are as follows:

IMPORTANT DATES AND ASSIGNMENTS

Thu, 6 Sept	Short paper #1	(7.5 percent)
Thu, 20 Sept	Short paper #2	(7.5 percent)
Tue, 2 Oct	Midterm exam #1	(15 percent)
Tue, 16 Oct	Short paper #3	(7.5 percent)
Tue, 30 Oct	Short paper #4	(7.5 percent)
Thu, 8 Nov	Midterm exam #2	(15 percent)
Thu, 29 Nov	Observing government paper	(20 percent)
Tue, 18 Dec	FINAL, 10:30 am – 1:00 pm	(20 percent)

EXPECTATIONS

- Attend class and be prepared. This means reading each assignment prior to that class.
- Contact me early and often. Individual meetings are valuable to both of us. If you cannot meet during my office hours, I am easily reached via e-mail or telephone. You should especially talk with me as soon as possible when particular questions or concerns arise.
- Academic honesty. Any cheating is grounds for an automatic F, expulsion from the class, and referral to the College Committee on Academic Dishonesty. Cheating specifically includes use of unauthorized materials or others' work during exams, plagiarism (which also covers the use of materials made available on the internet), and misrepresentation of someone else's work or work from another course as your own. If you have questions about what is or is not permissible, ask first.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Any student eligible for and needing academic adjustments or accommodations because of a disability should let me know early in the semester so that your learning needs may be appropriately met. You may be required to provide documentation of your special needs to the Disability Services Office. Contact: 303-492-8671, Willard 322, and www.Colorado.edu/disabilityservices.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to reasonably and fairly deal with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. Let me know as soon as possible any schedule conflicts due to religious observances. See full details at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html.

BEHAVIORAL STANDARDS

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Students who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Faculty members have the professional responsibility to treat all students with understanding, dignity and respect, to guide classroom discussion and to set reasonable limits on the manner in which they and their students express opinions. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. See policies at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html> and at http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu; 303-725-2273). Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). Other information on the Honor Code can be found at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html> and at <http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/>.

DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT

The University of Colorado at Boulder policies on Discrimination and Harassment, Sexual Harassment, and Amorous Relationships (found at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/discrimination.html>) apply to all students, staff and faculty. Any student, staff or faculty member who believes s/he has been the subject of discrimination or harassment based upon race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status should contact the Office of Discrimination and Harassment (ODH) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550. Information about the ODH and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding discrimination or harassment can be obtained at <http://www.colorado.edu/odh>.

PSCI 1101-200, The American Political System
CLASS SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

Aug 28	Course overview
Aug 30	Introduction to American government and politics <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chapter 1
Sept 4	Principles of American government <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Declaration of Independence</i>, Appendix 1
Sept 6	The U.S. constitutional framework <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chapter 2• <i>Constitution of the United States</i>, Appendix 2 Short paper #1 due, beginning of class
Sept 11	The U.S. constitutional framework <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Federalist No. 10</i>, Appendix 3• <i>Federalist No. 51</i>, Appendix 4
Sept 13	Federalism <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chapter 3• Federalism: “Report Card,” DVD 1, ABC News Student Library; Appendix 9 questions
Sept 18	Federalism <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Federalism: “Moment of Crisis—System Failure,” DVD 1, ABC News Student Library; Appendix 9 questions
Sept 20	Civil liberties <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chapter 5• <i>Constitution of the United States</i>, Appendix 2 Short paper #2 due, beginning of class
Sept 25	Civil liberties <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Civil Liberties: “Life or Death Decision,” DVD 2, ABC News Student Library• Civil Liberties: “Voices of Dissent,” DVD 2, ABC News Student Library• Review questions for both video clips, Appendix 9
Sept 27	Civil liberties <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Civil Liberties: “Crime & Punishment,” DVD 2, ABC News Student Library• Civil Liberties: “Church & State, and Pledge of Allegiance,” DVD 2, ABC News Student Library• Review questions for both video clips, Appendix 9
Oct 2	Midterm exam #1
Oct 4	Civil rights
Oct 9	Congress <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chapter 6
Oct 11	Congress <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Congress: “Price of Victory,” DVD 1, ABC News Student Library; Appendix 9 questions• Take a look at Thomas, the Library of Congress source for federal legislative information, available at: http://thomas.loc.gov/. Look at “public laws.” How many have been enacted

to date in the 110th Congress? What is the nature of the five most recent bills enacted into law?

- Oct 16** Congress
Short paper #3 due, beginning of class
- Oct 18** Presidency
• Chapter 7
- Oct 23** Presidency
• Look at the White House “Presidential News and Speeches” webpage, available at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/>. What issues have been discussed over the past week?
- Oct 25** Bureaucracy
• Chapter 8
- Oct 30** Bureaucracy
Short paper #4 due, beginning of class
- Nov 1** Judiciary
• Chapter 4
- Nov 6** Judiciary
- Nov 8** **Midterm exam #2**
- Nov 13** Public opinion & media
• Chapter 9
• Public Opinion, Participation, and Voting: “Air Wars,” DVD 1, ABC News Student Library; Appendix 9 questions
- Nov 15** Public opinion & media
• Chapter 10
• Mass Media: “Q & A,” DVD 1, ABC News Student Library; Appendix 9 questions
- THANKSGIVING BREAK**
- Nov 27** Interest groups
• Chapter 11
- Nov 29** Voting & elections
• Chapter 12
Observing Government in Action paper due
- Dec 4** Voting & elections
• Complete the tutorial and self test from IDEALog, available at <http://idealog.org/idealog.asp>
- Dec 6** Political parties
• Chapter 13
- Dec 11** Public policy
• Chapter 14
- Dec 13** Public policy
- Tues, Dec 18** **FINAL EXAM, 10:30 am – 1:00 pm**

PAPER ASSIGNMENTS

PSCI 1101, Section 200: The American Political System Professor Nancy Billica FALL 2007

The paper assignments are intended to deepen student understanding of issues and processes in American politics and the resources available to better understand these issues. In every case, students are given choices of topics. Some general guidelines:

- To reduce paper waste, all written assignments should be printed single-spaced. If possible, print double-sided, or print on reused paper.¹
- Include a bibliography with full information on sources at the end of each paper. Remember that a bibliography is always presented in alphabetical order by author's last name. Where there is no individual author, the name of the organization is considered to be the author. Web addresses alone are insufficient bibliographic information. These should be listed like any other source (starting with author, title, date, etc., with the web address listed last as the publisher).
- All papers need to be submitted in hard copy at the beginning of class on the due date. Points will be deducted for late papers.
- Feel free to ask questions about any of the assignment options!

Paper Assignment Schedule

Thu, 6 Sept	Short paper #1	(7.5 percent)
Thu, 20 Sept	Short paper #2	(7.5 percent)
Tue, 16 Oct	Short paper #3	(7.5 percent)
Tue, 30 Oct	Short paper #4	(7.5 percent)
Thu, 29 Nov	Observing government paper	(20 percent)

A. SHORT PAPER ASSIGNMENTS

Each short paper should be approximately one page, single spaced, in length. Cite your specific references at the end, even if they are limited to the sources described in the assignment (so that anyone reading your paper will know your sources).

SHORT PAPER #1, due Thursday, 6 September. Select from the following options:

a) It's been said that many countries around the world have fashioned their systems of government after ours – that our Constitution has become a model. But is this really true? Check for yourself on the Findlaw.com website, available at <http://findlaw.com/01topics/06constitutional/03forconst/>. The Findlaw “Constitutional Law” webpage includes over 125 national constitutions from around the world. Using the U.S. Constitutional structure and contents as your foundation, compare the constitutions of three other constitutions, noting both similarities and differences.

b) The great weakness of the Articles of Confederation was that the Congress had no real powers. Without Congress being granted any real powers, any problems that occurred between states were difficult if not impossible for Congress to handle. The most striking example of the inability of Congress to deal with problems was Shay's rebellion. Take a look at the Articles of Confederation (available at

¹ NOTE: The U.S. is, by far, the world's largest producer and consumer of paper. Per capita U.S. consumption of paper is over six times greater than the world average and about 25 percent greater than Japan, the world's second largest per capita paper consumer. The average U.S. office worker uses over 10,000 sheets of printing and copying paper per year; the average U.S. office worker generates about 2 lbs. of paper waste per day; annual per capita consumption of paper in the U.S. is currently over 748 lbs. This is a lot of paper! Let's try to use less.

<http://libertyonline.hypermall.com/ArtConfed.html>) and answer the following questions: Where did ultimate power reside? The Articles of Confederation note that the states entered into a "firm league of friendship . . ." What is implied by friendship? Who was represented in Congress, people or states? Why might this have been a problem? What powers were denied to the Congress unless a majority of states agreed? Why was this a problem? Be sure to support your answers with specific evidence (e.g., quoting from the Articles, noting which specific article provides support to your point).

c) The U.S. Constitution was adopted without placing any limit on the number of times an individual could be elected president. In fact, in *Federalist Paper 72*, Alexander Hamilton argued very specifically against limiting the number of presidential terms. However, after Franklin D. Roosevelt won four presidential elections in a row, a constitutional amendment (the 22nd) was passed limiting a person to two terms as president. While Amendment 22 guides our choices in the presidential arena today, not everyone agrees that this limit is in the best interest of the country. For example, President Reagan remarked that there should not be a limit on the number of times a person may serve as president. Using *Federalist Paper 72* (available at <http://www.constitution.org/fed/federa00.htm>), summarize the argument Hamilton gives against limiting the number of times a person may be elected president (using quotes as necessary). What arguments do you suppose would have been made by those who proposed the 22nd Amendment? Do you agree we should go back to the original intent of the Constitution and allow individuals to be elected for any number of presidential terms?

SHORT PAPER #2, due Thursday, 20 September. Select from the following options:

a) Compare the Colorado State Constitution (available at <http://www.i2i.org/Publications/ColoradoConstitution/iscolocn.htm>) with the U.S. Constitution, including the Bill of Rights and other Amendments. Discuss differences in structure and contents – eg., what is included and excluded, the order in which provisions are organized, level of detail, etc. Use specific examples. Focusing on issues of rights and liberties, compare the U.S. Bill of Rights with the Colorado Bill of Rights. Why are these rights and liberties different in the two political contexts?

b) Compare the Constitution of the state of your choice with the U.S. Constitution, as outlined in the previous paper option.

c) Many social commentators have argued that the black civil rights movement has paved the way for other societal groups to assert their own civil rights. Go to the following groups' Web sites and see how they frame their agendas in terms of "civil rights" (using the "search" function in each case):

- AARP
- National Organization for Women (NOW)
- National Gay and Lesbian Task Force
- Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund

Discuss the similarities and differences in the civil rights focus of each of these groups. Be specific, using examples. Then do an Internet search for "bill of rights." Describe the different types of groups that are pursuing or have acquired their own "bill of rights."

d) How does the Bill of Rights of the United States compare with those of other governments? Read and compare the following:

- Hong Kong Bill of Rights (http://www.oefre.unibe.ch/law/icl/hk05000_.html)
- New Zealand Bill of Rights (http://www.justice.govt.nz/lac/pubs/1991/legislative_change/appendix_c.html)
- California Declaration of Rights (http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/const/article_1)

Discuss the following: What freedoms are present in all three documents? Which document seems to grant the broadest freedoms? Which places the most limitations on the granted freedoms? What are the other important differences between the documents? Provide evidence or specific examples to support your assessments.

e) Slavery is a fundamental violation of basic civil rights. Learn about the continuing existence of slavery in various countries. See, for example, the websites of Anti-Slavery International (at <http://www.antislavery.org>) and Free the Slaves (at <http://www.freetheslaves.net>). How would you define slavery in the modern context?

Where is it occurring? In what ways is this an issue that affects you as a citizen of the U.S.? What actions can be taken today to eliminate modern slavery? What role should the United States play?

SHORT PAPER #3, due Tuesday, 16 October. Select from the following options:

a) Describe your congressional district. This could be the district that includes Boulder, Colorado, or a district elsewhere that you consider home. What counties, towns and neighborhoods are located in this district? The U.S. Census Bureau is an excellent source for demographic data, organized by county, congressional district, and other units (see <http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?lang=en>). Members of Congress often describe the geographic and demographic characteristics of their districts as well. (Locate individual Representatives' websites at <http://www.house.gov/>.) Would you say that the interests of most constituents in this district would be similar, or do you think there is a great deal of diversity? What are the implications for representation?

b) Take a look at the biographies of the leaders of both parties in both chambers of Congress: the Democratic and Republican leaders as well as the Speaker of the House (look under "Leadership" at <http://www.house.gov/>); and the Majority and Minority Leaders of the Senate (look under "Leadership" at http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm). Are there any surprises, or are these the types of people you would expect to find in these positions? Explain.

c) Millions of dollars go into Congressional campaigns each election cycle. Where is the money coming from? Go to the Federal Election Commission's (FEC's) Summary Report Search site (<http://www.fec.gov/finance/disclosure/srssea.shtml>). Select any state(s) and congressional districts to complete this assignment. Compare the contributions to candidates running for office in three different districts in 2006. If the race had an incumbent, did he or she receive more contributions than did the challenger? By what amount or percent? Where did each candidate get most of his or her money: donations from individuals, other committees, or personal funds? Provide examples of individual contributions and non-party (e.g., PAC) contributions, (specifying contributor and amount). How much cash on hand did each candidate still have at the end of the campaign? Who won the election? Did close fundraising totals seem to translate into close election outcomes?

SHORT PAPER #4, due Tuesday, 30 October. Select from the following options:

a) Go to the White House briefing room online (<http://whitehouse.gov/news/briefings>) and examine the content of a recent press conference or briefing. Describe the questions and issues being discussed. Do all of the questions receive answers? Which, if any, questions remain unanswered? Next, go to the online site of two major news outlets such as the *Washington Post* (<http://washingtonpost.com>) and the *New York Times* (<http://www.nytimes.com/>) and try to find an article in each in which material from the press conference is cited. Generally speaking, what kind of information is selected? What information is not selected? Any differences in coverage across the two media sources? Explain these observations.

b) Check the backgrounds of three appointed officials who head federal agencies (for example, the Secretary of State, the Attorney General, the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, the Secretary of Agriculture, the Treasury Secretary). Is there evidence of connections to interest groups? Provide evidence. How could this be avoided?

c) Learn how judges are selected at the state level. Using information from the American Judicature Society, summarize the method of selection of judges in any one state (look under "Judicial Selection" and then "State Judicial Selection" at <http://www.ajs.org/>). Consider who is making the selection, for what period, and how politics might influence these choices. How might the method of selection affect court influences on law and policy in this state?

B. OBSERVING GOVERNMENT IN ACTION

Assignment requiring a visit to a government office, meeting or courtroom, due Thursday, 29 November.

In order to write this paper, you'll need to get some first-hand knowledge about how the institutions of government actually work. Choose **one** of the following options:

Option 1: Visit the local office of your member of Congress, senator, state legislator, or city councilperson. Speak with a staff member in the office and find out what the office does, how much staff it maintains, and how the legislator spends his or her time.

Option 2: Visit the office of your mayor or deputy mayor. Speak with the mayor, deputy mayor, or a staff member in the office and find out what the office does, how much staff it maintains, and how the mayor spends his or her time.

Option 3: Attend a meeting of your local governing body (in Boulder it's the City Council), or local school board. Take special note of the roles and actions of the meeting's participants, the procedures followed and the issues under discussion.

Option 4: Visit any courtroom (city, state, U.S.) and spend at least one hour observing the activities. Take special note of the roles and actions of the attorneys, judge and the jury (if there is one); the procedures followed by the court, and the kinds of cases that came up.

Write a paper documenting your observations/interview and relating it to course materials. Total length: approximately 2½ to 3 pages, single-spaced, not including the bibliography. Keep the following guidelines in mind as you write:

1. The bulk of your paper should detail the findings from your interview/observations.
2. Your paper should also take care to relate your findings to course materials. For example, if you choose option 4, relevant course materials will probably include the U.S. Constitution, the role and functions of courts in the American system, the Bill of Rights, and the role of federalism in structuring the court system. This is not an exhaustive list; you may discover additional links as you write your paper. Similarly, if you choose option 1, relevant course materials will probably include the U.S. Constitution, the role of legislatures in the American system, voting, campaigns, elections, and political parties. Again, this list is not exhaustive.
3. When you discuss course materials, cite your sources. If you are quoting specific words or passages, make sure to enclose the words in quotation marks and include a page number in your citation to refer to the page from which you are drawing the quotation. If you are referring to an author's argument without specifically quoting his/her words, also include the page number(s) in parentheses. Citations may be noted either in parentheses immediately following the quote or other information or in footnotes/endnotes. Example of a parenthetical citation: (Billica 2007, 14). Listing the name leads you to the specific item in your bibliography. The year published distinguishes the item from others that might be included from the same author (if more than one item published in that year by the same author, then add a, b, c, etc. ; for example: Billica 2007b, 14). The last number indicates the specific page from which the material was drawn.

General Instructions and Tips:

1. The following websites may be of use to you in locating offices, etc: <http://www.colorado.gov/>; <http://www.bouldercolorado.gov/>; <http://www.courts.state.co.us/district/20th/20dist.htm>; <http://www.co.uscourts.gov/dindex.htm> ; <http://markudall.house.gov/HoR/CO02/Visiting+Us/>
2. No matter which option you choose, it is important that you dress appropriately.
3. If you choose an option that involves interviewing someone, it is important that you conduct yourself professionally. Check out the website (if there is one) before the interview so that you're familiar with the interviewee's position. Develop a list of questions before the interview as well. Be interested in the interview. (E.g., "I'd like to ask you some questions," **not** "I have to ask you some questions for school.") Nobody will want to talk to you if you act like you don't want to be there. Above all, be polite! Say "please" and "thank you" and send a small thank-you note afterwards. These small gestures will make you appear professional (and may even get you invited back as an intern!) and will reflect well on you and CU.