## **Introduction to American Politics**

# **Course Description**

This course investigates the American political system in thematic and historical perspective. We first consider the thinking of the founders of the United States, from their views on religion in public life, to commerce, to the balance between liberty and government. We then analyze the main components of the federal system, especially its institutions and the various ways that citizens participate in governance. In the final third of the course, we use our understanding of American politics to understand significant shifts of politics and policy in U.S. history.

## **Assignments**

There will be two examinations in this class based on readings, lectures, class discussions, and films. In addition, you will write an 8-10 research page paper on a political or policy issue of interest. You will be required to keep a journal of news stories on your topic; submit a proposal for an outline of your paper; turn in rough drafts and meet with the instructor to work on improving your ideas and your writing; submit a polished version; and present a version of your paper to the class.

### **Texts**

Most of our readings are in the public domain. Those that are not will be available in a CoursePak. In addition, we will use these texts and tools:

Cal Jillson, *American Government: Political Development and Institutional Change, Sixth Edition* (New York: Routledge, 2011)

David L. Paletz, Diana Owen and Timothy E. Cook, *American Government and Politics in the Information Age* (FlatworldKnowledge.com, 2011)

## **Readings and Film Viewings**

Students are responsible for reading all of the material on the syllabus. Before each week, I will distribute a list of questions to guide your reading. As well, I list a different film for each week of the class. You must view at least seven of these films during the course of the semester. We will discuss them, and they will be covered on one of the exams.

## I. Early American Political Thought and Culture

#### Week One:

Founding and Reawakening the North American Colonies

Mayflower Compact (1620) <a href="http://tinyurl.com/MayConf">http://tinyurl.com/MayConf</a>

John Winthrop, "City Upon a Hill" (1630)

### http://tinyurl.com/3odr5t

Jonathan Edwards, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" (1741) <a href="http://tinyurl.com/b3m3mn">http://tinyurl.com/b3m3mn</a>

James Madison, "Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments" (1785) <a href="http://tinyurl.com/mrara">http://tinyurl.com/mrara</a>

Thomas Jefferson, The Virginia Act For Establishing Religious Freedom (1786) <a href="http://tinyurl.com/Vaact">http://tinyurl.com/Vaact</a>

George Washington, "Reply to the Address to the President from the Hebrew Congregation in Newport, Rhode Island" (1790)

Washington's reply: <a href="http://gwpapers.virginia.edu/documents/hebrew/reply.html">http://gwpapers.virginia.edu/documents/hebrew/reply.html</a>
Original address: <a href="http://gwpapers.virginia.edu/documents/hebrew/address.html">http://gwpapers.virginia.edu/documents/hebrew/address.html</a>

**Film:** *The Crucible*, directed by Nicholas Hytner, 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, 1996.

### Week Two:

## The Search for Rights and Self-Rule

John Locke, Second Treatise of Government, excerpt

Adam Smith, The Wealth of Nations, excerpt

Samuel Adams, "The Rights of the Colonists"

Thomas Paine, Common Sense, excerpt

John Adams, "Thoughts on Government"

The Declaration of Independence http://tinyurl.com/6zh37w

Film: John Adams, directed by Tom Hooper, HBO, 2008, parts I and II.

## Week Three: Making a Constitution

The Articles of Confederation (1781) http://tinyurl.com/ArtConf

The Constitution of the United States of America (1787) <a href="http://tinyurl.com/b878w">http://tinyurl.com/b878w</a>

Madison *et al*, *The Federalist Papers*, No. 1, 10, 51 (1787-88) <a href="http://tinyurl.com/yutlc">http://tinyurl.com/yutlc</a>

Melancton Smith, Speech in the New York Ratifying Convention (June 21, 1788) <a href="http://tinyurl.com/MelanctonSmith">http://tinyurl.com/MelanctonSmith</a> (Speech can be found on pages 243-251)

**Film:** The People vs. Larry Flynt, directed by Milos Forman, Columbia Pictures, 1996.

## Week Four:

## **American Political Culture, Then and Now**

Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); excerpts, including on "Unlimited Power of the Majority" and "On the Principal Causes Tending to Maintain a Democratic Republic in the United States."

Paletz, Owen, and Cook, Chapter 6

Film: The Searchers, directed by John Ford, Warner Brothers, 1956.

### II. National Institutions

#### Week Five:

### The Presidency

Jillson, Chapter 10

Paletz, Owen, and Cook, Chapter 13

**Film:** Frost/Nixon, directed by Ron Howard, Universal Pictures, 2009.

### Week Six:

## Congress

Jillson, Chapter 9

Paletz, Owen, and Cook, Chapter 12

Film: Mr. Smith Goes to Washington, directed by Frank Capra, Columbia Pictures, 1939.

### **Week Seven:**

# The Bureaucracy and the Courts

Jillson, Chapters 11 and 12

Paletz, Owen, and Cook, Chapter 14

**Film:** *Brazil*, directed by Terry Gilliam, Universal Studios, 1985.

## Week Eight:

# The Media, Interest Groups and Social Movements

Jillson, Chapters 5 and 6 Paletz, Owen, and Cook, Chapter 9

**Film:** *Network*, directed by Sidney Lumet, United Artists, 1976.

# Week Nine:

## **Parties and Elections**

Jillson, Chapters 7 and 8

Paletz, Owen, and Cook, Chapters 10 and 11

Film: The Candidate, directed by Michael Ritchie, Warner Brothers, 1972.

# III. Case Studies: The Development of Politics and Policy

#### Week Ten:

**Labor Politics and the New Deal** 

Jillson, Chapter 15

Eugene V. Debs, "Revolutionary Unionism" (1905)

http://tinyurl.com/DebsRev

Progressive Party platform (1912)

http://tinyurl.com/ProgPlat

Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Executive Order 6763 Creating of the First National Labor Relations Board (1934)

http://tinyurl.com/EO6763

FDR, Statement Accompanying Executive Order 6763 (1934)

http://tinyurl.com/FDRstat

FDR, Second Fireside Chat (1934)

http://tinyurl.com/FDRFire2

**Film:** *Reds*, directed by Warren Beatty, Paramount Pictures, 1981.

#### Week Eleven:

Slavery, Women's Rights, and States' Rights

John C. Calhoun, *Disquisition on Government*, excerpt (1848) http://tinyurl.com/Disq-Gov

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, The Seneca Falls Declaration and Resolutions (1848) http://ecssba.rutgers.edu/docs/seneca.html

Frederick Douglass, "Speech at the Anti-Slavery Association" (1848)

Abraham Lincoln - Stephen A. Douglas Debates (1858) – 2nd Debate in Freeport, Illinois <a href="http://tinyurl.com/ok8pyu">http://tinyurl.com/ok8pyu</a>

Alexander H. Stephens, "Cornerstone Speech" (1861) <a href="http://tinyurl.com/yuc7nv">http://tinyurl.com/yuc7nv</a>

Abraham Lincoln, Emancipation Proclamation (1863) http://tinyurl.com/EmanProc

Film: Gone With the Wind, directed by Victor Fleming, MGM, 1939.

# Week Twelve: Civil Rights

Jillson, Chapter 14

Paletz, Owen, and Cook, Chapter 5

U.S. Constitution, Amendments 13, 14, and 15 <a href="http://tinyurl.com/b878w">http://tinyurl.com/b878w</a> (p. 28-30 in file)

Plessy v. Ferguson, 163 U.S. 537 (1896) http://laws.findlaw.com/us/163/537.html

*Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954). http://laws.findlaw.com/us/347/483.html

Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from the Birmingham City Jail" (1963) <a href="http://tinyurl.com/MLKBirm">http://tinyurl.com/MLKBirm</a>

Civil Rights Act of 1964, Titles I, II, III, and IV <a href="http://tinyurl.com/CRA1964">http://tinyurl.com/CRA1964</a>

Lyndon B. Johnson , Commencement Address at Howard University (1965) http://tinyurl.com/LBJ1965

**Film:** *Malcolm X*, directed by Spike Lee, Warner Brothers, 1992.

# Week Thirteen: Immigration

Aristide Zolberg, *A Nation by Design: Immigration Policy in the Fashioning of America* (New York and Cambridge: Russell Sage Foundation and Harvard University Press, 2006). Chapter 7, "An Intelligent and Effective Restriction," p. 199-242 Appendix, "Immigration Graphs," p. 461-474

James H. Johnson Jr., Walter C. Farrell Jr., and Chandra Guinn, "Immigration Reform and the Browning of America: Tensions, Conflicts, and Community Instability in Metropolitan Los Angeles," in *The Handbook of International Migration: The American Experience*, ed. Charles Hirschman, Philip Kasinitz, and Josh DeWind (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1999).

Peter Andreas, "The Escalation of Border Policing" and "The Escalation of Immigration Control," in *Border Games: The Policing of the U.S.-Mexico Divide* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000).

**Film:** *Under the Same Moon*, directed by Patricia Riggen, Fox Searchlight Pictures, 2008.

# Week Fourteen: Creating the National-Security State

The Federalist Nos. 74 and 75

Jillson, pages 496-527

George F. Kennan long telegram, part 5 (1946) <a href="http://www.ntanet.net/KENNAN.html">http://www.ntanet.net/KENNAN.html</a>

NSC-68 – chapter 9 (1950)

Chapter 9: <a href="http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsc-hst/nsc-68-9.htm">http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsc-hst/nsc-68-9.htm</a>

*The New York Times*, "U.S. Strategy Plan Calls for Ensuring No Rivals Develop," March 8, 1992.

http://tinyurl.com/c3zvdz

The New York Times, "Excerpts From Pentagon's Plan," March 8, 1992.

http://tinyurl.com/dpg-excerpts

National Security Strategy of the United States of America (2002) <a href="http://tinyurl.com/NSS2002">http://tinyurl.com/NSS2002</a>

National Security Strategy of the United States of America (2010) <a href="http://tinyurl.com/NSS2010">http://tinyurl.com/NSS2010</a>

Film: Doctor Strangelove, directed by Stanley Kubrick, Columbia Pictures, 1964.