

POLI 2051-1 American Government

Professor Christopher Kenny

Fall 2015 T/TH 9:00-10:20; 103 Design Building

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Office Hours: 10:30-12:00 T/TH and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to acquaint you with the fundamentals of American government and politics; to improve your skills in evaluating and analyzing issues in American politics. The class will be organized into four main sections. The first describes the foundations of our American system including the Constitution and federalism. The second section examines public opinion and the role that parties, interest groups, and the media play in the political process. The third section covers voting, campaigns, elections and the US Congress, Presidency, and Executive branch. The final section looks at the courts and questions concerning the democratic nature of our government (civil liberties and rights). In this final section we will also read the book *Hardball*, which describes how the game of politics is really played. Throughout the course we will keep in mind the general education goal that, "LSU graduates will demonstrate an understanding of the informing factors of global interdependence, including economic forces, political dynamics, and cultural and linguistic difference."

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Four exams will be given in this class. Each is worth 150 points. All reading materials and lectures are fair game. Questions coming from the reading materials will primarily focus on the key concepts identified in the text in boldface type (also list in the deck of cards at the end of the chapter in REVEL). The format of the exams and quizzes will be discussed prior to the first test. The dates for readings and exams are listed on moodle. Your grade will be determined as follows:

582 – 600 (97%+)	A+
558 – 581 (93-97%)	A
540 – 557 (90-93%)	A-
522 – 539 (87-90%)	B+
498 – 521 (83-87%)	B
480 – 497 (80-83%)	B-
462 – 479 (77-80%)	C+
438 – 461 (73-77%)	C
420 – 437 (70-73%)	C-
402 – 419 (67-70%)	D+
378 – 401 (63-67%)	D
360 – 377 (60-63%)	D-
Below 360 (60%)	F

Class attendance is expected. It is quite possible that the lectures will contain material not found in either of the books, and that not all of the reading material will be covered in lectures. In addition, attending class can earn you bonus points. On random days throughout the semester you will be asked to give your opinion on various controversies in American politics. These "attendance checks" are worth 1 point each and can be added directly to your total. It is therefore in your interest to attend class as often as possible. You can also earn bonus points by participating in a certain number of REVEL activities. These will be discussed the first week of class.

TEXTBOOKS

Required texts for this class:

The Struggle for Democracy 2014 REVEL Elections and Updates Edition by Greenberg and Page.
Hardball by Christopher Matthews.