

POLSCI 2US3: US POLITICS **Winter 2019**

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Lecture: Monday/Thursday 1:30 - 2:20pm

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Course Description

This course will provide an introductory understanding of the institutions of American Government, their origins and their evolution. While the expectations of the founders of the institutions are important, sometimes they did not have a clear understanding of how these institutions would function. And, of course, these institutions are like just about all institutions, they evolve as they are affected by events and by those who inhabit the offices in these institutions. Finally it is important to evaluate these institutions as they evolved and in light of current events.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course students should have the following understandings:

- A systematic understanding of American political institutions, the intentions of the founders and how these institutions evolved.
- An understanding of the relatively small number of really significant concepts that help us to understand the American political world.
- An understanding of political roles in America from the president to the citizen,
- An understanding of the offices of government, the nuts and bolts or the machinery of government in comparison with individuals who temporarily occupy these offices.
- An analytical understanding of the dynamic of the American political process.
- The ability to access information about American government and politics based on a free and open media that can educate Americans about the workings of American government without fear or favour.

Required Materials and Texts

- Theodore J. Lowi *et. al.*, American Government: Power and Purpose, (Brief Fourteenth Edition; New York: W.W. Norton, 2017).

Class Format

Two 50 minute lectures per week; one tutorial, Week 3 to Week 13.

Course Evaluation – Overview

1. Test 1 (25%), Monday, February 11, 2019. This will cover the required reading for Weeks 1 to 5 and all information associated with classes in those weeks.
2. Test 2 (25%), Monday, March 25, 2019. This will cover the required readings for Weeks 6 to 11 and all information associated with classes in those weeks.
3. Participation in Tutorial (10%), Week 3 to 13
4. Final Examination (40%), April 2019. This will cover the material in the required text and all information associated with all classes in the term.

Course Information – Details

The tests and the final examination will cover all the material in our textbook and all information provided in any handouts distributed, all lecture material in the lectures by the instructor and all material presented by any guest speakers.

I assume that all students will attend all lectures. I urge all students to get this winter's flu vaccination. While I will answer emails and questions put to me in person or by phone, I will not go over any of my lecture material or presentation material by guest speakers.

Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings

Week 1 (January 7 and 10)

Introduction to the course

Readings: Up to page 22

Week 2 (January 14 and 17)

The Founding and the Constitution

Readings: Chapter 2

Week 3 (January 21 and 24)

Congress: The First Branch

Readings: Chapter 5

Week 4 (January 28 and 31)

The Presidency

Readings: Chapter 6

Week 5 (February 4 and 7)

The Bureaucracy

Readings: Chapter 7

Week 6 (February 11 and 14)

February 11 - First Term Test

February 14 - The Federal Courts

Readings: Chapter 8

Week 7 (Feb 18 - 24)

Reading Week – No Classes

Week 8 (February 25 and 28)

Elections

Readings: Chapter 10

Week 9 (March 4 and 7)

Civil Liberties and Civil Rights

Readings: Chapter 4

Week 10 (March 11 and 14)

Political Parties

Readings: Chapter 11

Week 11 (March 18 and 21)

Interest Associations

Readings: Chapter 12

Week 12 (March 25 and 28)

March 25 – Second Term Test

March 28 - Federalism and the Separation of Powers

Readings: Chapter 3

Week 13 (April 1 and 4)

Public Opinion and the Media

Readings: Chapter 9

Week 14 (April 8)

Introduction to Public Policy

Readings: Chapter 13

Course Policies

Grades

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

MARK	GRADE
90-100	A+
85-90	A
80-84	A-
77-79	B+

MARK	GRADE
73-76	B
70-72	B-
67-69	C+
63-66	C
60-62	C-
57-59	D+
53-56	D
50-52	D-
0-49	F

What Grades at McMaster Mean

Grade	Meaning
A+	You are teaching me.
A	Outstanding work.
A-	Excellent work, nearly perfect.
B+	Very good work. This work is good enough for admission to Graduate School at McMaster
B	Good Honours Level work.
B-	Passing Honours work.
Note: All the above grades are Honours Grades at McMaster	
C+	Better than average work.
C	Average undergraduate work at Level III (third year).
C-	Slightly below average work
D+	Considerably below average
D	Very poor work.
D-	Barely Passable work
F	Unacceptable work at undergraduate Level III.

Absences and Expectations about Class Attendance

Successful political and government careers, especially getting that First Job after University are based on the social skill of interacting on a face-to-face basis with professors, fellow students, tutorial assistants, visiting speakers and potential employers. This skill is necessary to obtain and do well in a Political Science related position. Even in today's communication environment with electronic and digital exchanges, success in political work life and careers is based on personal interactions.

I do comment on my face-to-face interactions, including class attendance, with students whenever I provide a reference. You should be aware that for academic, professional and intern programs, directors as well as potential employers may contact me about a student even if that student does not name me as a referee. Potential employers, especially in intern programs, often do ask about a student's personal interaction with me and especially my estimates of a student's personal class attendance. Potential employers often assume that class attendance, including on time arrival, indicates likely similar behaviour in a paid job situation.

Class Etiquette and Digital and Social Media

Proper decorum during class meetings can be undermined by inappropriate and rude use of digital and social media as well as phone messages. Thus, I expect all digital, phone and social media to be turned off during our class meetings. Second, all this hardware, except for laptops for note-taking should be out-of-sight and out-of-reach during class times.

Unprofessional behaviour will be noted in my letters of reference and my recommendation for professional and graduate school as well as for intern programs. I will take note of students violating classroom etiquette for the use of phones, digital and social media. I am especially concerned how the inappropriate use of laptops may distract other students nearby. Any student being negatively affected by such rude behavior is urged to contact me. The source of student complaints will be kept confidential.

I would also point out that leaving the classroom to read messages, make phones calls or send text messages is also considered to be rude by professional standards.

University Policies

Academic Integrity Statement

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behavior in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behavior can result in serious

consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or e-mail sas@mcmaster.ca. For further information, consult McMaster University’s Policy for [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#).

Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail Communication Policy

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student’s own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

Course Modification

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.