

MWF 10-10:50 Buckman 334
MWF 12-12:50 Buckman 330

Professor Margaret Carne
Department of Political Science

PS 151
United States Politics
Fall 2004

This course surveys the U.S. political system, looking at its major institutions, processes, and actors. Specific topics we will examine include the nature of politics, constitutionalism, federalism, political ideologies, public opinion and political participation, interest groups, elections and campaigns, political parties, congressional, presidential, and bureaucratic politics, the Supreme Court and federal judiciary, and public policy-making. The thematic focus of the course is the importance of electoral politics in the contemporary U.S. political context, and the related normative debate over the appropriate role and level of popular influence in our democracy.

Course Objectives

As an introductory American politics class, this course should help you:

- Explore what we mean by “politics”
- Understand the political structures, actors, and processes of the United States
- Introduce the major debates, conflicts and issues in politics that we as political scientists struggle with and try to inform
- Improve your writing and critical thinking skills

I also hope you will leave this course:

- Engaged by the study of politics
- More effective and discriminating consumers of political information
- Empowered by your skills and knowledge to petition the government and/or otherwise undertake political change, should you wish to do so

Requirements

Books and Readings

There are two required books for this course:

1. Fiorina, Morris P., Paul E. Peterson, and Bertram Johnson. 2003. *The New American Democracy, 3rd edition*. New York: Longman.
2. Kernell, Samuel and Steven S. Smith. 2003. *Principles and Practice of American Politics, 2nd edition*. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

These books are available for purchase at the college bookstore.

In addition to these readings, you are strongly encouraged to read a national newspaper such as *The New York Times* (NYT) or *The Wall Street Journal* on a daily basis. I encourage you to do so as literate, thoughtful individuals and,

because we are in the midst of a presidential election season, we will draw upon current events frequently in our discussions of the course readings and topics.

All other readings in the course outline below are also required.

Please stay current on the readings. I have honestly tried to give you less reading rather than more because I want you to actually do it. My theory is longer reading lists inspire fear, intimidation, and the urge to chuck the reading entirely. While a shorter reading list will mean you are in theory exposed to less written material, in practice I hope it is the opposite. I would rather have you do one or two readings well than be intimidated by six and do a poor job with them, or worse, ignore them entirely.

To profit from lecture and discussion, you must do the assigned reading before class and do it well. If I sense you are not coming to class prepared, I will quickly start issuing pop quizzes, additional writing assignments, or perhaps arriving in class on my motorcycle—whatever it takes to gain and keep your attention

Assignments and Grading

Your grade in the course will be a weighted average of the following required components of the course:

- | | | |
|--------------------|-------------|-----|
| • Participation | | 15% |
| • Quizzes (3 of 4) | | 20% |
| • Midterm | | 20% |
| • Longer paper | (6-8 pages) | 20% |
| • Final exam | | 25% |

The details of these assignments are as follows:

Quizzes

During the course of the semester, we will have four in-class quizzes. Their dates are noted below. At the end of the semester, I will drop your lowest quiz score when calculating your final grade.

These assignments are designed to test whether you are keeping up with and understanding the main points of the readings and lectures, and to be practice for the midterm and final exams. The quizzes will be relatively short, and be some combination of identifications, short answers, and/or maybe a brief essay. I will give more details as the first quiz approaches. You will also be invited to submit questions for inclusion on these quizzes.

Longer paper

This paper is designed as a role-playing exercise, though you will not be assuming the roles of elite actors in the political process (as is typical) but of an “ordinary” citizen. It does require outside research. You will receive a separate handout that explains this paper in full detail. The paper should be about six to eight double-

spaced pages with standard (i.e. about 1 inch) margins. We will talk more about this paper later in the semester.

Midterm and final exams

The midterm and final exams will be in class, and comprised of some combination of identification, short answer, and essay questions. You will get more information about the format and content of these exams as they get closer. The final will be cumulative, with more emphasis on the latter half of the course.

Class Attendance and Participation

Since this course is voluntary and interactive, your regular attendance is both assumed and critical. However, I realize that there may come a day when you need to miss class. Therefore, you are entitled to three “free” absences over the course of the semester. In other words, you may miss as many as three class periods (one week’s worth of class) over the course of the semester without being penalized. You do not need to clear any absences with me, either before or after they occur. They’re yours; you may use them or not as you see fit. However, if you miss more than three class periods *for any reason* over the course of the semester, you will receive an ‘F’ for your participation grade. Finally, even if you miss a class you are still responsible for doing the readings and assignments for that day.

With respect to class participation, I value quality as much as quantity, and good questions as much as good comments. Although near perfect attendance is expected, it is not the same as participation. I emphasize participation and discussion in this class because of the nature of American politics, and the nature of the course material in particular. First, deliberation and debate is a fundamental feature of a healthy democratic society. Second, many people have strong opinions about politics, and right and wrong. Conflict in a democracy, while distasteful to many, is normal. It is a valuable skill to be able to recognize and engage with other’s arguments thoughtfully, systematically, and with respect. It is also useful to realize that smart people can and do disagree about these issues; there is indeed no one right answer, but you can articulate your positions well or poorly. Finally, and most pragmatically, employers value good verbal and written communication skills.

Class participation is not limited to discussion. You may also be asked (as part of a group) to lead a brief discussion, participate in the debate, take part in small group activity, etc. This is part and parcel of class participation and is required.

This course touches on a variety of moral and political problems, most of which can be viewed from a variety of perspectives and are always subject to new and different policy approaches. Reasonable people in these situations can and do disagree. I expect us to treat each other with courtesy and respect at all times. I also expect you to try new things and to submit your opinions to tests of reasoning and evidence. I want this class to encourage you to develop your

critical thinking and the associated intellectual and moral virtues of humility, courage, integrity, perseverance, empathy, and fair-mindedness.

I also expect that most of our work will be interesting and stimulating, and that your contribution will make it so.

Grading

I grade on the following scale: A (90-100), B (80-89), C (70-79), D (60-69), and F (0-59). Please note: if you do not turn in an assignment, I will give you a 0 for the assignment.

Improving (or Deteriorating) Performance

I reserve the right to raise or lower your final grade by up to one third of a letter grade (e.g. from a B+ to an A-) based on a pattern of continuing improvement or regression during the semester.

Late Assignments and Extensions

I will accept late assignments *only* from those with *documented* medical emergencies. Extra curricular obligations, computer problems, family and job obligations can be anticipated or managed. There will be no extensions given on papers.

I also reserve the right to make changes to the assignment topics and due dates as I see fit, but with fair warning.

Academic Support

If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services at x3994 as soon as possible. The SDS website provides detailed information about office policies and procedures: <http://www.rhodes.edu/disability>.

Rhodes has a variety of academic support services such as peer tutors, study skills assistance workshops, and a writing lab. Contact the Office of Student Academic Support at x3433 for more information. The Writing Center is located in 315 Palmer Hall, and has a variety of online resources available at: <http://www.rhodes.edu/writingcenter>.

Academic Dishonesty

Quite simply, any type of academic dishonesty (cheating, plagiarism, etc.) will not be tolerated.

You are responsible for knowing the Rhodes College Honor Code, and its rules and regulations concerning these matters. Please read them carefully (see the Rhodes College Honor Council Constitution at: <http://www.rhodes.edu/Rhodes/CampusCommunity/PoliciesandProcedures/Student-Handbook.cfm>).

In any case, ignorance of the law is not an excuse. Cases of suspected academic dishonesty will be referred immediately to the Honor Council. I have no qualms about failing students found guilty of cheating.

Finally, by continuing in this course you and I enter into a social contract as student and professor. This relationship includes all the normal and expected costs and benefits, in addition to those discussed above. I expect all of us to honor the terms of this contract to the best of our abilities at all times. In other words, I expect good classroom citizenship from each and every one of us, including but not limited to academic honesty.

Office Hours and Other Contact Info

My office is 305 Buckman, in the Political Science department. Office hours are Tuesday and Thursday from 3:00 until 5:00 p.m and Wednesdays from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. My email is carnem@rhodes.edu. Please come by or write with your questions or concerns.

Course Outline & Reading Schedule

Week 1 (8/25, 8/27): Introduction; Designing Institutions

- Fiorina, Chapter 1 (pp. 1-25)
- Olson, Excerpt from *The Logic of Collective Action*; Hardin, *The Tragedy of the Commons*; and Jehl, *Arkansas Rice Farmers Run Dry* in Kernell and Smith (K&S, pp.1-28)

Week 2 (8/30-9/3): Constitutional Framework and Federalism

- Fiorina, Chapters 2 and 3 (pp. 26-87)
- Madison, *Federalist 10*, *Federalist 51* (read these most closely); and Wald, *Clean Air Battlfield* (K&S, pp. 75-84, 118-120)

Week 3 (9/8, 9/10): How and What We Think: Socialization, Public Opinion, and Participation

- Quiz 1 on 9/10
- Fiorina, Chapters 4 and 5 (pp. 88-155)
- Asher, "Analyzing and Interpreting Polls" (K&S, pp. 412-440)
- Tierney, "A Nation Divided? Who Says?," NYT, 6/13/04

Week 4 (9/13-9/17): How and What We Think: Socialization, Public Opinion, and Participation

- Fiorina, Chapter 6 (pp. 124-156)
- Popkin, *The Reasoning Voter* (K&S, pp. 475-482)
- Hibbing, "The People's Craving for Unselfish Government" (K&S, 456-474)

Week 5 (9/20-9/24): Political Parties and Interest Groups

In-class film: *Vote for Me: Politics in America*

- Quiz 2 on 9/24
- Fiorina, Chapters 7 and 8 (pp. 184-241)
- Aldrich, *Why Parties?* (K&S, pp. 517-529)
- Schattschneider, "The Scope and Bias of the Pressure System" (K&S, pp.559-567)

Week 6 (9/27-10/1): The Media

In-class film: *Journeys With George*

- Fiorina, Chapter 9 (pp. 242-277)
- Auletta, "Fortress Bush: How the White House Keeps the Press Under Control," *The New Yorker*, 1/19/04
- Schudson, "Is Journalism Hopelessly Cynical?" and Edsall, "The People and the Press: Whose Views Shape the News?" (K&S, pp. 596-608)

Week 7 (10/4-10/8): Campaigns and Elections

Special guest (10/6): Dr. John Geer, Vanderbilt University

(see <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/psci/geer/>)

- Fiorina, Chapters 10 and 11 (pp. 278-349)
- Read *The New York Times'* Campaign 2004 coverage all this week

Week 8 (10/11-10/15): Midterm Review; Midterm Exam; Congress

- Fiorina, Chapter 12 (pp. 350-379)

Week 9 (10/20, 10/22): Congress

- Fenno, *The Senate in Bicameral Perspective* and Mayhew, excerpt from *Congress: The Electoral Connection* (K&S, pp. 222-254)
- Mahew, excerpt from *Congress: The Electoral Connection*, (pp. 246-254)

Week 10 (10/25-10/29): The Presidency

- Quiz 3 on 10/27
- Fiorina, Chapter 13 (pp. 379-411)
- Neustadt, *Presidential Power* (K&S, pp. 274-294)
- Kernell, *Going Public: New Strategies of Presidential Leadership* (K&S, pp. 295-310)

Week 11 (11/1-11/5): The Bureaucracy; Election 2004

- Fiorina, Chapter 14 (pp. 412-443)
- Daalder et al., "Assessing the Department of Homeland Security" (K&S, pp. 357-371)
- Fiorina, "Voices of the Permanent Campaign: The Politics of the New Department of Homeland Security," (pp.478-483)

Week 12 (11/8-11/12): Peer Editing ; The Courts

Bring rough draft of your paper into class on Monday

- Quiz 4 on 11/10
- Fiorina, Chapter 15 (pp.444-483)
- Listen to "Federal Courts Face Budgetary Crisis" on NPR's *Morning Edition* broadcast 8/12/04 at:
<http://www.npr.org/rundowns/rundown.php?prgDate=12-Aug-2004&prgId=3>
- Epstein and Knight, *The Choices Justices Make* (K&S, pp. 372-389)

Week 13 (11/15-11/19): Research debriefing; Civil Liberties

Long paper due Monday, 11/15

- Fiorina, Chapter 16 (pp. 484-517)
- Scardaville and Levy, "Competing Views of Civil Liberties and the War Against Terrorism" (K&S, 199-203)

Week 14 (11/22): Civil Liberties

- Happy Thanksgiving!

Week 15 (11/29-12/3): Civil Rights

- Fiorina, Chapter 17 (pp. 518-550)
- Hajnal and Gerber, "Minority Rights in Direct Democracy" (K&S, 121-139)
- Moody, "Sacred Rite or Civil Right," *The Nation*, 7/5/04 (available through ProQuest)

Week 16 (12/6, 12/8): Review