American Government and Politics

Instructor: Ole J. Forsberg, Ph.D.
Resident Assistant Professor: Creighton University

Course: PLS 121 // AMS 121 (70635)
Location: Administration 435
Time: 8.30 – 9.20 MWF

Office: Rigge 324
Office Hours: 14.30 – 16.30 MWF

Email: OleForsberg@creighton.edu
Website: http://oforsber.kvasaheim.com/courses/pls121/

Catalog Description:

PLS 121 // AMS 121 — American Government And Politics (3 Credits):

Analysis and evaluation of American political institutions and processes. Cultural and intellectual foundations of the American Constitution. Exploration of effectiveness of popular political activity, role of the media, elections and public opinion; review of such issues as congressional fragmentation, presidential power, bureaucratization and judicial activism. Selected case studies.

Course Objectives:

By the conclusion of this course, students will have gained practice writing effective research papers. Additionally, students will understand the three-ring circus, the origins of the Constitution, and the broad effects of its construction.

Requirements:

This course has two exams, some quizzes, and five smaller assignments.

Required Books:

Schmidt, Steffen W., Mack C. Shelley, II, and Barbara A. Bardes. 2005. *American Government and Politics Today*, Brief Edition (2004–2005). New York: Thomson. (ISBN: 0-534-63180-0)

O'Connor, Sandra Day. 2003. *The Majesty of the Law: Reflections of a Supreme Court Justice*. New York: Random House. (ISBN: 0-812-96747-X)

Marx, Karl, Friedrich Engels, and Martin Malia, ed. 1998 [1848]. *The Communist Manifesto*. New York: New American Library (Signet Classic). (ISBN: 0-451-52710-0)

Additional Readings:

Other readings will be assigned as necessary and available by link on the class web site, in the electronic reserve section (ERes) of the library's website, or in the reserve section of the library. If you are unable to access any of the readings, please alert me as soon as possible.

Class Policies and Expectations

Taking Notes

Note taking is an essential part of any college course, especially any course that is introductory in nature. Not only does the act of taking notes reinforce the material in question (it is not merely read and heard, but physically reproduced), it creates a record essential to preparation for quizzes and exams. If you are forced by circumstance to miss class, you will be expected to catch up on all missed notes. Make friends in the class; they will be there for you if you miss a day.

Attendance

Attendance will be checked at the beginning of class. *Tardiness counts as absence*. Since participation is a component of your grade, it is very important that you show up for class on time and participate fully. Your participation indicates that you have read the assignment, applied it, and have grappled with some of the more obvious themes. I strongly urge you to come to class with deep questions on the readings.

Late Assignments

No late assignments will be accepted.

Preparation and Participation

This is a college course. You are expected to have not only done the homework and all of the readings, but you are to have thought about the readings and *implications*. Many classes will revolve around a lecture, many around discussions brought up by you from the readings or from current events.

Conduct

All students are at all times expected to be attentive, to take part in class discussions, and above all else to be courteous and sensitive towards their fellow students. Impropriety will not be tolerated. Further, emotionally charged subject material may be dealt with in this course (ethical, religious, political, etc.); such material requires maturity and openness to views which may conflict with one's own.

Writing

All assignments need to follow the style sheet for this class. All writings reflect you and your ability (thus, plagiarism will be strongly punished). Make sure that *you* are satisfied with your finished product. Your grade depends upon how well you write.

Athletics

Notify me as soon as possible if there is a conflict between an athletic performance and a class requirement. If notice is not made in a timely manner, no adjustments will be made. As an athletic

calendar already exists, such notice should be forthcoming within the first week of classes. In any case, last-minute notification will not be accepted. It is your responsibility. Club athletics do not count as excused absences.

Disabilities

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a documented disability, contact the Director of the Office of Disability Accommodations at (402) 280-2749. Also, as soon as is reasonable, inform me of their response.

Making-up the Exams

If you miss an exam, you must speak to me on the day of return to arrange for a time and place to take the make-up test. If you fail to do this, you will receive a zero for the exam. The make-up exam may be different than the original, not only in actual content, but also in terms of format.

If your absence is pre-planned, you need to make arrangements to take the test before you leave. This replacement examination may also be different from the one given to the rest of the class.

Cheating, Plagiarism, & Academic Dishonesty

Any instance of cheating, plagiarism, and/or academic dishonesty will *at least* result in an automatic failure of the course (if not expulsion from the university) and will be dealt with according to those rules outlined in the Creighton University Student Handbook (pages 25–26). What is plagiarism?

> **Plagiarism is both theft and cheating. It is using the intellectual property (words and/or ideas) or product of someone else without giving proper credit. This includes (but is not limited to) not citing a quotation, not citing the underlying source of a paraphrase, and not placing quotation marks around a quotation. Such undocumented use of other's words or ideas in any medium of communication (unless such information is recognized as common knowledge) is an extremely serious offense, subject to disciplinary action that will include failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University.**

Evaluation

Your grade is calculated using the following point values:

First Examination	100	October 26
Second Examination	100	December 11
Scavenger Hunt	20	August 24
Five Hypotheses	20	August 31
Purpose of Government	20	September 7
US Supreme Court Paper	50	October 3
Political Leanings	30	December 3
Quizzes	60	Various
Class Participation	100	December 11
Total		**500**

Grades

Grade reports will be emailed to your official school email account at intervals throughout the semester. Your final letter grade will be based on the following percentage scale:

90 – 100%	A		
80 – 88%	B	88 – 90%	B+
70 – 78%	C	78 – 80%	C+
60 – 70%	D		

You are responsible for keeping track of your grades and ensuring that what I have emailed is correct.

Topic and Reading Calendar:

The current calendar can be found online at

http://oforsber.kvasaheim.com/courses/pls121/calendar.php

Section 0: Introduction

August 22 (Wednesday)

Discussion Topic: Introduction to Class
Do tonight: Scavenger Hunt
Read: The Communist Manifesto, Part I

Section 1: The Spectre of Communism

August 24 (Friday)

Discussion Topic: What is class, and why does Marx use *this* division?
Read: The Communist Manifesto, Part II

August 27 (Monday)

Discussion Topic: How close is America to Communism?
Read: The Communist Manifesto, Part III/IIII

August 29 (Wednesday)

Discussion Topic: Final Thoughts on Marx's Manifesto
Read: Cargo Cult Science (Feynman 1971)
Read: What Is Science? (Forsberg 2007)

Section 2: Science

August 31 (Friday)

Discussion Topic: What is science? Why does it matter?
Do tonight: Write five hypotheses

September 3 (Monday)

Holiday: Labor Day: No Classes

September 5 (Wednesday)

Discussion Topic: Discuss/Critique your hypotheses
Do tonight: What is the purpose of government?

Section 4: What is the Purpose of Government?

September 7 (Friday)

Discussion Topic: Purpose = Support Justice
Discussion Topic: Purpose = Ensure Equality

September 10 (Monday)

Discussion Topic: Purpose = Create Strength

September 12 (Wednesday)

Discussion Topic: Purpose = Protect
Discussion Topic: The State of Nature
Read: SSB: Chapter 1

Section 5: Before the Constitution: The Articles of Confederation

September 14 (Friday)

Discussion Topic: The Constitutional Tradition
Read: The Articles of Confederation
Read: SSB: Chapter 2

September 17 (Monday)

Discussion Topic: The Articles of Confederation
Read: SSB: Chapter 10
Read: Article II (Constitution)

Section 6: The Constitution: The Three-Ring Circus

September 19 (Wednesday)

Discussion Topic: The Executive: Original Intent
Read: SSB: Chapter 11

September 21 (Friday)

Discussion Topic: The Bureaucracy
Discussion Topic: Electoral College
Read: Article I (Constitution)
Read: SSB: Chapter 9

September 24 (Monday)

Discussion Topic: The Congress: Original Intent

September 26 (Wednesday)

Discussion Topic: Lawmaking Process

September 28 (Friday)

Discussion Topic: Budgetary Process
Read: SSB: Chapter 12
Read: Article III (Constitution)

October 1 (Monday)

Discussion Topic: The Judiciary: Original Intent

October 3 (Wednesday)

Discussion Topic: US Court Structure
Discussion Topic: Momentous Court Cases
Read: SSB: Chapter 4
Assignment Due: US Supreme Court Paper

October 5 (Friday)

Discussion Topic: Civil Liberties

October 8 (Monday)

Discussion Topic: Civil Liberties
Read: SSB: Chapter 5

October 10 (Wednesday)

Discussion Topic: Civil Rights

October 12 (Friday)

Discussion Topic: Civil Rights
Read: Constitution (Entirity)
Read: The Majesty of the Law (O'Connor)

October 15 (Monday)

Holiday: Fall Break: No Classes

October 17 (Wednesday)

Holiday: Fall Break: No Classes

October 19 (Friday)

Holiday: Fall Break: No Classes

October 22 (Monday)

Discussion Topic: The Rest of the Constitution

October 24 (Wednesday)

Discussion Topic: Review

October 26 (Friday)

Examination: First Examination
Read: SSB: Chapter 8

Section 7: The Results of the Constitution

October 29 (Monday)

Discussion Topic: Campaigns, Elections, and Voting Behavior

October 31 (Wednesday)

Discussion Topic: Campaigns, Elections, and Voting Behavior

November 2 (Friday)

Note: No Class: Conference

November 5 (Monday)

Note: No Class: Conference

November 7 (Wednesday)

Discussion Topic: Public Policy: Policy Process
Read: SSB: Chapter 13

November 9 (Friday)

Discussion Topic: Domestic Policy

November 12 (Monday)

Discussion Topic: Foreign Policy
Read: SSB: Chapter 14

November 14 (Wednesday)

Discussion Topic: Foreign Policy
Read: Tocqueville. Democracy in America. Vol 1. Ch 14
Read: Tocqueville. Democracy in America. Vol 2. §4. Ch 8

November 16 (Friday)

Discussion Topic: Democracy

November 19 (Monday)

Discussion Topic: Direct vs. Representative
Discussion Topic: Delegate vs. Trustee

November 21 (Wednesday)

Holiday: Thanksgiving Recess: No Classes

November 23 (Friday)

Holiday: Thanksgiving Recess: No Classes

November 26 (Monday)

Discussion Topic: Structure Functionalism
Read: SSB: Chapter 7

November 28 (Wednesday)

Discussion Topic: Political Parties and Interest Groups
Read: SSB: Chapter 6

November 30 (Friday)

Discussion Topic: Public Opinion and Polls
Do tonight: Political Leanings

December 3 (Monday)

Discussion Topic: Political Ideology

December 5 (Wednesday)

Discussion Topic: Political Socialization
Read: SSB: Chapter 3

Section 8: All Good Things…

December 7 (Friday)

Discussion Topic: Last Thoughts on Government

December 11 (Tuesday)

Examination: Second Examination (8:00–9:40)

End Matter

Changes and Supremacy

Should it become necessary to change the syllabus, an announcement in class will be made that the new syllabus is posted on the class website. In the event of a discrepancy between this printed syllabus and the website's syllabus, the website will take precedence.

Class Website

All classroom documents can be found at the classroom website. This website will also contain supplemental notes and documents. Anything posted to the website will be assumed read by every member of the class (http://oforsber.kvasaheim.com/courses/pls121/).