

Syllabus for POLS 2210  
Introduction to US Government and Politics  
Spring 2006

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Classroom: Bruner 119  
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Course Web Site: <http://web.utk.edu/~oforsber/pols2210/>

## Course Description

Students taking POLS 2210: Introduction to American Government should seek to study the power structures existing in America. These structures include formal governmental agencies and structures, such as the Congress and the Presidency, along with informal structure, such as the bureaucracy, interest groups, and the media. Special attention will be given to the foundations of the constitution, the political culture of the US, the paradox of democracy, and political socialization.

## The Four Primary Texts

- Schmidt, Steffen W., Mack C. Shelley, II, and Bardes. 2005. *American Government and Politics Today*, Brief Edition (2004-2005) Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth. (ISBN: 0-534-63180-0);
- Schmidt, Steffen W., Mack C. Shelley, II, and Erica Merkley. 2006. *Readings in American Government*, 5th edn. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth. (ISBN: 0-534-63171-1);
- 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);
- Other readings will be assigned as necessary and available by link on the class web site, or online.

## Policy on Note-Taking

Note-taking is an essential part of any course, and in particular of 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 if you miss a day.

## Policy on Attendance

Attendance will be checked at some point during the class. Showing up to class is a necessary, although not a sufficient, condition for participation. If all you do is show up, do not expect to get an A for participation.

## Policy on Behavior

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, bioethical, religious, political, etc.); such material requires maturity and openness to views which may conflict with one's own. Under no circumstances will racial, religious, or ethnic slurs be accepted in this course.

## **Policy on Writing**

All assignments need to follow the style sheet for this class. All writings reflect you and your ability. Make sure that you are satisfied with your finished product. Your grade partially depends upon how well you write. Tennessee Technical University does have a writing center located somewhere. If you are unsure about your abilities, please make extensive use of them.

## **Policy on Disabilities**

I recommend that any student with a recognized disability contact the Office of Disability Services as soon as possible. The office is located in Room 112 of the university center. Telephone: 372-6119.

## **Policy on 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.

## **Academic Dishonesty**

Any instance of cheating, plagiarism, and/or academic dishonesty will result in an automatic failure of the course and will be dealt with according to those rules outlined in the TTU Student Handbook, Academic Regulations #8:

*Plagiarism.* When you use (for example, quote or even summarize or paraphrase) someone else's media, words, data, ideas, or other works, you must cite your source. You should be especially careful to avoid plagiarizing Internet sources (for example, e-mail, chat rooms, Web sites, or discussion groups). It does not matter whether

you borrow material from print sources, from the Internet, from on-line data bases, or from interviews. Failure to cite your source is plagiarism. Students who plagiarize may receive an “F” or a “0” for the assignment, or an “F” for the course.

## Evaluation

The following is how I will calculate your semester grade.

Homework Assignments:	200	33%
Quizzes:	100	17%
Group Project:	100	17%
Final Exam:	100	17%
Participation/Attendance:	100	17%

## Grades

Grades will be posted to the website at intervals throughout the semester. They will be based on the following point scale:

540 – 600:	A
480 – 539:	B
420 – 479:	C
360 – 419:	D

## Weekly Assignments

Each week, there is at least one writing assignment due. Each one is worth twenty points. They will be graded on how well you follow directions, how well you write the paper, and how deep and concise your thoughts. Of the twelve assigned, I will count your ten best.

## Extra Credit

Do not expect any extra credit in this course.

## Policy on Making-up Quizzes and Exams

Quizzes and in-class activities cannot be made up under any circumstances. If you miss a test, 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 may receive a zero for the test. The make-up test may be different than the original test.

## 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 web site. 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. Its address is: <http://web.utk.edu/~oforsber/pols2210/>

## Class Topics

### Week 1: January 23, 2006

Political Socialization in the World:

- Introduction to the class
- Political Socialization

### Week 2: January 30, 2006

Purpose of Government:

- What is the purpose of government?
- The purpose of government is to support justice (Plato)
- The purpose of government is to ensure equality (Aristotle, Locke, Nietzsche, Vonnegut)

- The purpose of government is to organize for strength (Machiavelli, Montesquieu)
- The purpose of government is to protect (Hobbes, Locke, Burke, Mill)

**Week 3: February 6, 2006**

How we got there— Before the Constitution:

- The Constitutional Tradition: The Purpose of a Constitution
- Historical roots of the Constitution
- The Constitutions of Clarendon
- The Magna Carta
- The English Bill of Rights
- The French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen
- The Virginia Declaration of Rights
- The Articles of Confederation

**Week 4: February 13, 2006**

The Constitution of the United States of America:

- The Constitution
- Constitution Activity
- The purpose of the Constitution

**Week 5: February 20, 2006**

Federalism— A Hobbled Government:

- Federalism
- Machiavelli
- Montesquieu (Separation of Powers)
- Madison (Checks and Balances)
- Divided power

**Week 6: February 27, 2006**

The Lawmaking Process:

- How a bill becomes a law
- Bill discussions focusing on issue addressed and how it ties in to the purpose of government, the philosophers, etc.

**Week 7: March 6, 2006**

Spring Break: No Classes for you. Enjoy yourself!

**Week 8: March 13, 2006**

The Judicial Branch:

- Original Intent
- The Constitution and the Third Branch
- How the Court quickly changed

**Week 9: March 20, 2006**

Conference Week: No Class for us. Enjoy yourself!

**Week 10: March 27, 2006**

The Legal System:

- Structure of the courts in the US
- What the police can and cannot do
- Civil Liberties in the Courts
- The jury system

**Week 11: April 3, 2006**

The Court Cases:

- Civil Rights in the Courts
- Habeas Corpus

**Week 12: April 10, 2006**

Political Parties and Interest Groups:

- Structure Functionalism
- Political Parties
- Interest Groups
- Purposes of each

**Week 13: April 17, 2006**

Public Policy:

- The policy process
- Domestic policy
- Monetary policy
- Foreign policy

**Week 14: April 24, 2006**

The Spectre of Communism:

- The Communist Manifesto
- The "C" Word (and the "L" word, and the "T" word, and the "A" word) and Its Effects
- The Effects of a Loss of Dialogue
- The Power of Public Opinion
- The Effects of Blindness
- The Effects of Socialization

**Week 15: May 1, 2006**

Final Exams.