

**POLITICAL SCIENCE 101: INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN POLITICS**  
**Spring 2006**

- Instructor:** Stephanie Maruska  
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(614) 989-4306 cell
- Class Meetings:** Monday/Wednesday, 3:30 to 5:18, Caldwell Lab 277
- Office Hours:** Wednesday, 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.; Friday, 11 to noon; or by appointment
- Required Texts:** Kernell, S. and Smith, S. (2004). *Principles and Practice of American Politics*. CQ Press. (*Abbreviated **Principles***)  
Fallon, R.H. (2004). *Dynamic Constitution: An Introduction to American Constitutional Law*. Cambridge University Press.  
Fiornia, M. (2004) *Culture War?* Longman Press.

Each of the required texts is available at SBX and on reserve at the main library. Additional readings can be downloaded from the course Web site ([www.carmen.osu.edu](http://www.carmen.osu.edu)).

**Purpose of the course:** My goal for this course is to help you develop a broad understanding of American constitutional theory, political institutions, and opportunities for citizen participation. By its nature, political decision making involves collective choice. This course gives special attention to the difficulties inherent in making collective decisions and arriving at logical and stable outcomes. By the end of this course, you should be able to answer a variety of puzzling questions about American politics: *If so many people are dissatisfied with the two major parties, why are third parties so rarely successful? If everyone is in favor of campaign finance reform, why don't we have it? If our government is based on "liberty and justice" for all, how could we have condoned slavery?* Understanding the logic of collective action and American politics will shed light on many such questions and, I hope, help you to make effective political choices.

Though this is an introductory course in American politics, I do assume some prior knowledge. Essentially, I expect that you have mastered the civics-type information covered in typical high school social science courses. If you believe you are insufficiently prepared in this area, see me for additional reading suggestions. Lectures and assignments will emphasize theoretical contributions from the fields of law and political science rather than memorization of "facts" about the government.

**General Education Curriculum (GEC):** This course contributes five credits toward the GEC social science requirement.

**Goals and Rationale:** GEC social science courses help students understand human behavior and cognition, and the structures of human societies, cultures and institutions.

**Learning Objectives:**

- Understand the theories and methods of scientific inquiry as they are applied to the studies of individuals, groups, organizations, and societies.

- Comprehend human differences and similarities in various psychological, social, cultural, economic, geographic, and political contexts.
- Develop abilities to comprehend and assess individual and social values, and recognize their importance in social problem solving and policy making.

**Carmen:** This course will make extensive use of the Carmen computerized course-management system ([www.carmen.osu.edu](http://www.carmen.osu.edu)). There are a variety of helpful materials on the Web site, including required readings from sources other than the textbooks, optional supplementary readings and news articles, background information to aid in understanding the readings, lecture outlines, and study guides for exams. You are required to visit the Web site prior to each class meeting to complete a brief quiz on the assigned readings and to check for special announcements.

**Grading:** Your cumulative grade in the course will be comprised of three components: quizzes (30 percent), exams (70 percent), and participation (variable).

**Reading Quizzes:** In order to participate fully in class discussions and to maximize learning during lecture, it is important that you complete the readings before the class period for which they are assigned. To encourage this, there will be a quiz over the assigned readings prior to each lecture, with each quiz contributing up to two percentage points toward your final course grade. The quizzes are conducted outside of class time using the class Web site. Each quiz consists of five multiple choice and true/false items. You have the opportunity to take each quiz up to two times; if you repeat a quiz, the higher score will count toward your final grade and the lower score will be dropped. The computer randomly chooses quiz questions, so the original questions may or may not be repeated on the second attempt. All quiz attempts must be completed by the start of lecture on the day the corresponding readings are assigned. Once lecture begins, the quiz is removed from the Web site, and there will be no additional opportunities to obtain points for that day.

There are two bonus opportunities associated with the quizzes. The quizzes are worth a total of 30 points (15 quizzes times 2 points per quiz). Throughout the quarter, however, there will be a total of 16 quizzes offered. If you obtain full credit for all 16 quizzes, you will receive 32 points out of 30 (two percentage points of extra credit toward your final grade). Alternatively, you can miss one quiz altogether and still obtain a perfect cumulative quiz score of 30 points. In addition to the points score, you will also receive a grade of satisfactory/unsatisfactory for each quiz. If you answer 80 percent of the questions correctly (at least four out of five), the quiz will be designated as satisfactory (S). If you satisfactorily complete at least 15 quizzes during the quarter, you will be exempted from taking the comprehensive portion of the final exam; instead, you will automatically receive a perfect 10 out of 10 on this section of the test.

**Exams:** There are two midterms (each worth 20 percent of the final grade) and a final exam (worth 30 percent). The midterms are not cumulative except inasmuch as knowing the earlier material will help you to understand the later material; each midterm will cover one major section of the course. The final exam will include a noncumulative section focused on section three of the course (worth 20 points) and a comprehensive portion (worth 10 points). Exams will likely contain a combination of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions.

**Class Participation:** I reserve the right to adjust final grades in the class by 1/3 of a letter grade in either direction to reflect especially strong or poor class attendance and participation. Attendance will be taken at random, approximately five times during the quarter. Participation is evaluated according to contributions to class discussions. Students who are uncomfortable speaking in class can contribute via the threaded discussion list on the class Web site.

I follow standard guidelines for assigning grades, such that 93 to 100 is an A, 90 to 92.9 is an A-, 87 to 89.9 is a B+, 83 to 86.9 is a B, etc.

**Attendance:** If you must miss an exam, you will have the opportunity to complete an alternate exam. You must contact me to arrange the makeup during the seven days following the original exam date or no make-up exam will be allowed.

**Honesty:** Cases of suspected dishonesty will be referred to the university's committee on academic misconduct and handled in accordance with university rules and procedures.

**Disability:** If you have any sort of physically, mentally, or emotionally disabling condition that affects your ability to participate in this course, please bring this to my attention as soon as possible. The university offers a variety of options for students with disabilities, and I will do all I can to ensure that you have the opportunity to gain full benefit from the course and to be graded appropriately.

**Schedule:** Attached is a course schedule. Any additional readings or adjustments to the schedule will also be posted at [www.carmen.osu.edu](http://www.carmen.osu.edu).