

U.S. GOVERNMENT & POLITICS

POL-110-001 and POL-110-002, Spring 2009

MWF 8:00 – 8:50 am (001) and 9:00 – 9:50 am (002), Old Main 05

Instructor: Dr. Chris Gilbert
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Chris's Office Hours: Monday, 10:30 – 11:25 am, 2:00 – 4:00 pm
Wednesday, 10:30 – 11:25 am
and by appointment

COURSE OVERVIEW: This course is intended to introduce students to the institutions, policies, and processes that comprise the American political system. The course will address three central questions:

- What are the major characteristics of American political institutions (inside and outside government) and the people who run them?
- How has the American system of government changed over time, and what factors spark the continual evolution of key features in U.S. government and politics?
- **Why should we care** about any of this?

We will address these questions by focusing on national politics and the federal government. We will give special attention to important historical events, contemporary political issues and debates, and the actions of President Obama and his new administration. By the end of the class, you will be a more informed citizen, whether you want to be or not (and hopefully you will want to be!).

AREA SOSCI: This course satisfies the Gustavus general education Social Science requirement. Two aspects in particular make this class fit within the SOSCI area: 1) the subject matter – the nature of the political institutions that comprise the American system of government, and the actions of individuals within these institutions; 2) methods of inquiry – the class readings and discussions will demonstrate the diverse perspectives from which political scientists study government and politics.

BOOKS: Both required books are available at the Book Mark:

- Karen O'Connor, Larry Sabato, and Alixandra Yanus, *Essentials of American Government: Roots and Reform (2009 edition ONLY)*. Abbreviated in syllabus as **O'Connor**. ISBN 9780205662838
- Allan Cigler and Burdett Loomis, eds., *American Politics: Classic and Contemporary Readings (7th edition ONLY)*. Abbreviated in syllabus as **Cigler**. ISBN: 9780618802890

CLASS HOME PAGE: <http://www.gustavus.edu/~cgilbert/p110/usgov.htm>

The class home page will have links to **all** class handouts, an updated schedule page, links to the online blog that will be used occasionally for discussion, and other useful links for studying U.S. government. If you miss class for some reason, or the schedule changes, this is the place to go. Exam study guides and information about class assignments will also be posted here. Bookmark this page and visit it on a regular basis!

CLASS FORMAT: This is **not** strictly speaking a lecture course, although I will be presenting material on most class days. A typical class period will cover material you have read in advance, elaborate on important topics the readings do not cover, and discuss the implications of this material. Occasional simulations/role-playing situations will also be used. You are expected to be prepared for class each day; see the attendance and participation section (page 4) for full details.

GRADED ASSIGNMENTS

First exam (March 9)	20%*
Second exam (April 20)	25%*
* - the lower of the first two exam scores will count for 20% and the higher of the first two will count for 25%	
Final exam (May 25)	25%
News summaries (5 short papers)	15%
Cigler brief chapter synopsis	5%
Attendance and participation	10%

GRADING SCALE

A =	93.000 average and above
A- =	90.000 through 92.999
B+ =	87.000 through 89.999
B =	83.000 through 86.999
B- =	80.000 through 82.999
C+ =	77.000 through 79.999
C =	73.000 through 76.999
C- =	70.000 through 72.999
D+ =	67.000 through 69.999
D =	60.000 through 66.999
F =	less than 60.000

ASSIGNMENT DETAILS

EXAMS: Each exam will cover approximately one-third of the course; the final exam is not cumulative. Each exam will have a combination of multiple-choice, short paragraph identifications, and an essay. At least one week before each exam, a study guide – with full details about question formats and topics covered – will be posted to the class website, to assist and direct your studying.

All students should expect to take all exams at the scheduled dates and times.

NEWS SUMMARIES: This course covers contemporary U.S. politics, and therefore it is important for you to become familiar with current political events by regularly reading a good major national newspaper, such as the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Washington Post*, or the *Christian Science Monitor*. These national newspapers offer more information and news analysis than regional papers (like the *Star Tribune*); some major news networks, cable news sources, and independent or partisan organizations also have websites with a great deal of political content. The leading national newspapers are available on campus, in the Gustavus library, and/or online (with most content being free if you register).

To encourage you to foster the habit of reading a daily newspaper or some other source that presents political news, and to make connections between our class material and today's political world, five times during the semester you will write summaries of news articles on some designated topic. For each topic, I will provide you with some guidelines on what to look for in selecting articles; for some topics I will provide **one** of the articles as well. **Informational guidelines/initial articles will be posted on the class webpage.**

Your task for each news summary paper is to find two additional articles in addition to the one I give you, **or** to find three articles if you are not given an initial article. In a **short paper (one single-spaced page maximum)**, *summarize all three articles* and *discuss **one** of them at more length* – explain the issue or problem at stake, describe how political actors and institutions are responding, and offer some of your own thoughts on the issue in question.

News summary paper topic	due date	discussion format
#1 federalism, federal-state relations	Friday, February 27	online
#2 presidential-congressional relations	Friday, March 13	in class
#3 civil rights, civil liberties	Wednesday, April 8	in class
#4 public opinion and/or media coverage	Friday, May 1	online
#5 the first 100 days of the Obama presidency	Monday, May 18	in class

Papers 1 and 4 are due in the box outside Chris's office door by **10 am** on the due date (both sections will be due at 10 am); online discussion instructions will be posted.

Papers 2, 3, and 5 are due **in person, in class** on the designated due dates.

Students who give advanced notice of an **excused absence** on paper due dates should turn in papers **prior to** (not after) the due date.

Late papers will lose 20 points (out of 100) and could lose more if not turned in within 24 hours.

Plan on turning in a **complete paper** – your one-page summary AND the articles you found, which must be attached to your paper when submitting it. Any paper that is not complete when submitted is considered late.

To assist in writing these papers, a **style guide** appears on the last page of this syllabus. Please consult it when writing your papers!!

CIGLER BRIEF CHAPTER SYNOPSIS: The Cigler & Loomis book contains numerous readings – some old, some very recent – on U.S. government and politics. **ONCE** during the semester, you will be responsible for giving the class a **BRIEF** (3 minutes) oral synopsis of **one reading selection** from the Cigler & Loomis book. You will get to choose the reading for your synopsis; sign-up will take place by Wednesday, February 18, and assignments will be posted on the class web page.

You need to cover two points in each synopsis: 1) **summarize** the reading's main point; 2) **relate the reading to the class's main topic** – connect to key points we've previously read about or discussed, and talk about what you find most interesting or relevant in the reading.

Everyone is responsible for reading these selections, not just the presenter, and everyone is expected to be able to answer the discussion questions that accompany each reading.

Your synopsis is due in written form at the end of the class period when you present. Papers

should be **no more than one typed, double-sided page** (front and back), which is about 3 minutes worth of material. If you present but do not have the written version completed, the paper loses 20 points (out of 100) and could lose more if not turned in within 24 hours; failure to present on your assigned date will result in a 0 for this assignment.

ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION: Class attendance and class participation do factor directly into your grade (10%). This grade is based on how well you meet these simple expectations:

- 1) I expect you **to attend every class session**, and to notify me (in advance whenever possible) when you know you will miss a class session for some reason; such “excused” absences may be made up by completing a short assignment of my choosing. Accumulating more than 2 absences without some legitimate reason (e.g., being sick) and without making up the missed class will reduce this portion of your class grade. ***I reserve the right to lower the final course grade of students who make it a habit of skipping this class.***
- 2) **Have the day’s assigned reading completed before class, for every class.** This is the best way to maximize your learning (and your grade) in this course, and the best preparation for meeting all of the other expectations below.
- 3) **Be prepared to show some understanding of what you have read.** I will call randomly on people (not just volunteers) during class to answer questions. But everyone deserves the right to decline to answer – once – so once during the semester you can say “I have no idea,” without any penalty or judgment from me; I want you to be accountable by always being ready to answer, with the freedom to give less than a perfect answer, too – take a shot at it, don’t be afraid to be wrong.
- 4) Feel free **to ask questions** (at any time), **to comment** (when appropriate) and **to have your comments challenged by others.** At all times I expect that all of us will respect one another’s viewpoints when discussing often contentious political issues, ideas, and individual political figures.
- 5) **Attend the section you registered for;** 8 am students (section 001) come at 8 am, and 9 am students (section 2) come at 9 am.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND CLASS POLICIES

CELL PHONES, IPODS, and other such electronic devices: Turn them OFF when class is in session – no ringing/vibrating/texting/IM, no distractions for yourself, your classmates, or your professor.

SCHEDULE CONFLICTS: Students with advance notice of schedule conflicts (e.g., school-related activities that conflict with our class time) should present a list of these to Chris at the beginning of the semester. There should be few or no schedule conflicts that cannot be resolved in ways acceptable to you and to me – the key is early notification. The Academic Schedule Conflicts policy found in the *College Catalog* exists to inform you of your obligations and to help us work out any problems.

POLICY ON EXCEPTIONS: It is expected that all exams will be taken at the appointed time and all

other work will be completed by indicated due dates. Because of events beyond your control (e.g. a major illness), I realize that sometimes this is not possible despite good-faith efforts on your part. Therefore, exceptions and extensions will be considered on an individual basis. **NOTE: nonacademic personal commitments and end-of-semester travel plans are NOT valid reasons for requesting extensions or exceptions. Nor are activities scheduled well in advance, e.g. extracurricular activities or obligations for other classes.** As with class attendance, please inform Chris well in advance of such conflicts. This policy is consistent with the Academic Schedule Conflicts policy found in the *College Catalog*.

ACCOMMODATIONS for students with documented disabilities: Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) work together to ensure “reasonable accommodation” and non-discrimination for students with disabilities in higher education. A student who has a physical, psychiatric/emotional, medical, learning, or attentional disability that may have an effect on the student’s ability to complete assigned course work should contact Laurie Bickett, the Disability Services Coordinator in the Advising Center (lbickett@gustavus.edu or x6286), who will review the concerns and decide with the student what accommodations are necessary. Following this review, the student and I will determine specific, reasonable accommodations for our course, maintaining confidentiality throughout the process.

ACADEMIC HONESTY: Plagiarism or cheating in any form corrupts the intent of all that we do as a community of scholars. Consistent with the Gustavus Academic Honesty Policy (found in the *College Catalog*) and the Honor Code (also in the *College Catalog*), the policies and procedures for this course are as follows:

- Violations of the Academic Honesty Policy will result in at least a grade of 0 for the specific assignment, and failure for the course in the case of egregious violations. Students accused and/or penalized for these violations, AND students who become aware of such violations, have specific rights and responsibilities, as outlined in the Honor Code section of the *College Catalog*.
- Each exam blue book will contain the statement "**On my honor, I pledge that I have not given, received, or tolerated others' use of unauthorized aid in completing this work.**" Students are required to sign on each exam blue book. For the short papers, typing this statement **or** simply signing your name on the **first news summary paper** will signify agreement to uphold the Honor Code on **all subsequent papers** in the course.
- Students CAN consult with each another and with the professor while working on assignments and preparing for exams; these are examples of "authorized aid." Individual papers should consist only of each student's (or students', if the assignment is a group project) own work.
- Under the Honor Code, proctoring of exams is at the instructor's discretion. Generally I prefer to be present during exams in order to answer questions that may arise.

DAILY SCHEDULE - TOPICS, READING ASSIGNMENTS

The web version of this syllabus will have links to any handouts distributed in class; click on links in the "Topics covered" column for the handouts. Exam study guides and the online discussion forum will also be linked from the web version of the schedule below.

If this schedule changes for some reason, I will alert you via email as soon as possible; I will then update the webpage, which at all times should be considered the "official" course schedule.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Topics covered</i>	<i>Readings/activity/announcements</i>
M February 9	Key characteristics of U.S. politics; major themes of the course	No reading for today!
W February 11	Foundations: the Declaration of Independence, responsibilities of citizens	O'Connor Appendix I (Declaration of Independence); Cigler 5.2
F February 13	American political culture	O'Connor 1; Cigler 5.3, 5.4
M February 16	Roots of the Constitution	O'Connor 2 (including the Constitution, pp. 52-81)
W February 18	The Constitutional Convention	Cigler 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 Today is the deadline to sign up for Cigler synopsis presentations
F February 20	Constitutional structure: separation of powers, checks and balances	Federalist 10, 51 (O'Connor appendix II, III or Cigler 9.1, 1.4) and review the Constitution (O'Connor pp. 52-81)
M February 23	Federalism	O'Connor 3; Cigler 2.1, 2.3, 2.4
W February 25	Federal-state relations in practice: an online exercise	No regular class meeting today; online discussion activity
F February 27	News summary #1: contemporary issues in federalism; online discussion	No regular class meeting today; News summary #1 due by 10 am at Chris's office (both sections); post comment online by 5 pm today
M March 2	The legislative branch	O'Connor 6; Cigler 10.1 First exam study guide posted by today
W March 4	Congress in action, or inaction?	Cigler 10.2, 10.3, 10.4
F March 6	The President versus Congress	O'Connor 7, Cigler 10.5

M March 9	FIRST EXAM	
W March 11	Presidential power	Cigler 11.1, 11.2
F March 13	News summary #2: presidential-congressional relations	News summary #2 due in class
M March 16	Executive branch agencies	O'Connor 8; Cigler 12.1, 12.2
W March 18	The judicial branch	O'Connor 9; Cigler 13.1
F March 20	Supreme Court: powers, selection of justices, political roles	Cigler 13.2, 13.3, 13.4
March 21-29	No class – Spring break!	
M March 30	Principles of civil liberties	O'Connor 4
W April 1	First Amendment rights in practice	Cigler 3.1, 3.2, 3.3
F April 3	Interpreting civil liberties principles	Cigler 3.4, 3.5, 3.6
M April 6	Civil rights struggles	O'Connor 5; Cigler 3.7, 3.8
W April 8	News Summary #3: civil rights/civil liberties issues	Cigler 3.9, 3.10; News summary #3 due in class
F April 10	No class – Easter Recess	
M April 13	No class – Easter Recess	Second exam study guide posted by today
W April 15	Public policy concepts and goals	O'Connor 13; Cigler 9.4, 14.3
F April 17	Making public policy	Cigler 12.4, 14.1
M April 20	SECOND EXAM	
W April 22	Foreign and defense policy	O'Connor 14
F April 24	Meeting new international challenges	Cigler 14.4, 14.5
M April 27	Public opinion: origins and consequences	O'Connor 10, pp. 276-293
W April 29	Measuring and interpreting public opinion	Cigler 4.1, 4.2, 8.2, 8.3
F May 1	News summary #4: public opinion polls and/or media coverage; online discussion	No regular class meeting today; News summary #4 due by 10 am at Chris's office (both sections); post comment online by 5 pm today
M May 4	Media roles in U.S. politics	O'Connor 10, pp. 293-310; Cigler 8.1

W May 6	Political parties in U.S. politics	O'Connor 11, pp. 312-330; Cigler 6.1
F May 8	The changing nature of parties and voters	Cigler 6.2, 6.3
M May 11	Interest groups	O'Connor 11, pp. 330-342; Cigler 9.2, 9.3
W May 13	Electoral politics	O'Connor 12; Cigler 5.1
F May 15	Understanding campaigns and elections	Cigler 7.1, 7.2, 7.3
M May 18	News summary #5: the first 100 days of the Obama presidency	News summary #5 due in class; Final exam study guide posted by today
W May 20	Final exam review, course evaluation	No new reading
Monday, May 25	FINAL EXAM (both sections) 3:30 – 5:30 pm Nobel Hall of Science 201	Students with an exam conflict should notify Chris ASAP, if an alternate time needs to be arranged

WRITING ABOUT THE GOVERNMENT: A BRIEF STYLE GUIDE

These are writing conventions and styles normally used when writing about U.S. government. Please observe them and write accordingly! Consult *The Everyday Writer* or other style guides for more detail.

- people elected to the House of Representatives are **representatives** or **members of Congress**; people elected to the Senate are **senators**; while you may use "congressmen" and "congresswomen," these are **not** the preferred terms
- **Congress** is capitalized, but **congressional** is not!
- on first reference, it is standard practice to give the party affiliation and state of specific members of Congress in parentheses after their names; state names can be abbreviated or given in full
e.g. Representative Michelle Bachmann (R-MN), Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-Minnesota)
- capitalize **Senator** or **Representative** only when referring to a specific one
Senator Collins visited a child care center in Augusta
The senators debated the economic stimulus bill for 139 hours before adjourning for libations
- capitalize **President** and **Administration** only when referring to a specific one
e.g. President Obama and the Obama Administration decided to eat lunch in Baltimore on Fridays
Most presidents see their popularity rise and fall during their terms in office
- italicize Supreme Court case names; usually, the date of the **decision** is given in parentheses
e.g. *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896)
- **Supreme Court** is capitalized; second and future references can be shortened to "the Court" (note that Court is capitalized when using this shorthand reference)
- members of the Supreme Court are **justices**, not judges; members of lower federal courts are **judges**
- capitalize **Justice** only when referring to a specific one
Justice Scalia wrote the majority opinion
Seven justices voted not to hear the appeal
- acronyms (initials that form a name) do **not** need periods in between; give the FULL name when referencing the acronym for the first time, then you can use the acronym thereafter
e.g. CIA, FBI, IRS; "The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) said today..."
- Use periods with the abbreviation **U.S.**, and use **U.S.** or **United States** rather than **America**
- the names of the parties **are** capitalized - Democratic Party, Republican Party, and all references to party labels are capitalized (the lower-case words **democratic** and **republican** mean something different than **Democratic** and **Republican**!)
- Do not use "we" or "us" in reference to the United States or any actions taken by the United States