

GSS 1100 Politics and American Culture

Online
Fall 2010

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Smith, Mark (Dr.) on Groupwise

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course serves as an introduction to America's politics and culture, with emphases on the Constitution, political institutions, and political participation, and their interaction with the Christian faith.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. Students must become habitual consumers of quality political information, particularly through electronic media.
2. Students must learn to evaluate critically a range of contemporary and historic political and legal issues and, when appropriate, analyze these issues from a biblical perspective.
3. Students must learn the tools of effective political participation in America.
4. Students must learn and recall critical knowledge related to the political process in America and from the discipline of political science and/or related disciplines.
5. Students must understand initial and changing American political culture, particularly as translated through our founding documents, court decisions, relevant thinkers, and mass media.
6. Students must develop a coherent idea of Christian citizenship.

TEXTS

Besette, Joseph M. and John J. Pitney, Jr. 2010. *American Government and Politics: Deliberation, Democracy, and Citizenship*. Wadsworth. (Hereafter referred to as "B & P")

Gerber, Mitchel, editor. 2009. *Classic Edition Sources: American Government, 3rd Edition*. New York: Dushkin/McGraw-Hill. (Hereafter referred to as "Sources")

Other readings are linked to on WebCT.

GRADING

Scale:

| | | | | | | | |
|----|--------|----|-------------|----|-------|----|-------|
| A | 94-100 | A- | 90-93 | B+ | 87-89 | B | 84-86 |
| B- | 80-83 | C+ | 77-79 | C | 74-76 | C- | 70-73 |
| D | 65-69 | F | 64 or below | | | | |

Distribution:

Quizzes (35% of course grade): Quizzes will be delivered via WebCT. There are nine quizzes for the term, one per week, starting in week two and running through week ten. These will be objective (multiple choice) in nature. Quizzes generally consist of between twelve and twenty questions and are timed, usually lasting between 20 and 30 minutes. Quizzes will cover readings, or podcasts, or other assigned media due for that week, so the material covered in week two will be quizzed at the end of that week. All quizzes are due on Saturday evenings by 11:59 p.m. Eastern time of the week they are assigned.

Group Project (20% of course grade): Each students will work with a group for the capstone project, which is due at the end of week twelve. Each group will have between three and six members. All group work should be done on the Groups site that can be linked to via WebCT. There are several additional

deadlines throughout the term for the group project. These are all listed in the online classroom. At the end of the semester, students will have the opportunity to grade the other members of the group. This should discourage laziness and encourage all students to work together to complete assignments. Though a group grade will be assigned, individual grades may be changed due to poor grades from other group members. The professor will use his discretion in making these decisions based on the evidence at hand. Details about the project are below.

Individual Writing Assignments (30% of course grade): About every two weeks, each student will post an essay on their individual page (as hosted in Groups and linked to via WebCT). These assignments are graded according to the rubric at the end of this syllabus. Details for the assignments are found in the online classroom. All writing assignments are due at 11:59 PM Eastern Time of the week in which they are assigned.

Pre-Test/Post-Test Assessment (15% of course grade): All students must complete the online pre-test during week one of the course. This pre-test is not graded based on performance, but upon completion alone, so by completing the test, students will earn 5% of their course grade. During week twelve, students must take a randomized version of the same test. This one will be graded and will count for the remaining 10% of the course grade.

COURSE SCHEDULE

The schedule below is subject to change, but that is highly unlikely given the nature of this course. If I must change the course calendar, I will notify you by email as soon as possible. Also, the professor reserves the right to change assignments and, if necessary, the grade distribution as a result. For example, if it is clear students are not reading I might give more quizzes and make the quiz component larger in the final grade distribution.

ALL DUE DATES ARE BY 11:59 PM (Eastern) OF THE DATE LISTED.

| WEEK | DATE | TOPIC/ASSIGNMENT |
|--|-------|--|
| Course Introduction | | |
| 1 | 9/11 | Pre-Test Meet Your Group |
| Unit 1: God, Government, and Political Culture | | |
| 2 | 9/18 | Quiz #1 |
| 3 | 9/25 | Quiz #2 Individual Project #1 Group Work Deadline #1 |
| Unit 2: The American Experiment | | |
| 4 | 10/2 | Quiz #3 |
| 5 | 10/9 | Quiz #4 Individual Project #2 Group Work Deadline #2 |
| Unit 3: Political Action in America | | |
| 6 | 10/16 | Quiz #5 |
| 7 | 10/23 | Quiz #6 Individual Project #3 Group Work Deadline #3 |

Unit 4: Civil Rights & Liberties

8 10/30 Quiz #7
9 11/6 Quiz #8
Individual Project #4
Group Work Deadline #4

Unit 5: The Institutions of Government

10 11/13 Quiz #9
11 11/20 Quiz #10
Individual Project #5

Course Wrap-Up

12 12/4 Post-Test
Group Projects Completed

GROUP PROJECT

Groups must construct a minimal campaign for a political candidate for the US House, Senate, or Presidency. This campaign must include at least the following:

- a brief (3-4 pages) analysis of the candidate's strengths and weaknesses and how those mesh with the political climate of the relevant state or geographic region in which the campaign takes place
- a slogan
- Two pieces of media
 - One poster or brochure
 - One recorded original song or jingle, tv or radio commercial
- a speech or position paper (on an issue approved by Dr. Smith)
- identification of a popular song that might typify the campaign's approach.

Students must do a significant amount of research for these campaigns. The internet has a tremendous amount of information about individuals, locations, economics, political history and nearly everything else your group might need. Also, the group may find it worthwhile to look for books or other monographs written by some of these individuals.

For existing politicians, students would be wise to determine their ideology, the issues upon which they focus, their political history (including their successes and failures), and their strengths and weaknesses as candidates. These should all be reasonably factored into your strategy for completing the assignment.

Here are the races to choose from for this term. Notice that the races are fictional in the sense that they are not taking place right now, but they do involve real situations and sometimes real candidates, real places, and real strategies.

RACE 1—OHIO

U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown (D) vs. Earnest Johnson (R), 2012.

Students may choose to represent either candidate.

Johnson, a fictional conservative Republican closely associated with the "Tea-Party" movement in Ohio, won the party nomination by defeating some better known and more experienced candidates. Johnson, a successful businessman (he has long family roots in the southwestern part of the state), is able and willing to finance most of his campaign on his own. He is white, married, with two high school aged children, with undergraduate and graduate degrees (in business) from Ohio State. He is an outspoken evangelical Christian in his religious beliefs, with positions one might deduce from such beliefs.

Brown is the incumbent Senator for Ohio. Information about him is plentiful and easy to find.

Assume the social, foreign/domestic, and economic conditions in America, and in Ohio, remain constant between now and 2012. Also, assume, for our purposes, that the Obama Administration suffered terrific defeats in the mid-term elections in 2010, losing control of both houses of Congress, where Republicans have slim majorities. The President's key initiative on health care remains in tact, and the Bush tax cuts were allowed to expire in January 2011. You should do a significant amount of research into Ohio's recent political and economic history, the past candidates that have succeeded and failed, and a thorough analysis of the incumbent in the race.

RACE 2—President of the United States, 2012

President Barack Obama (D) vs. Mitt Romney (R)

Students may choose to represent either candidate. Information about both men is readily available.

Assume the social, foreign/domestic, and economic conditions in America remain constant between now and 2012. Also, assume, for our purposes, that the Obama Administration suffered terrific defeats in the mid-term elections in 2010, losing control of both houses of Congress, where Republicans have slim majorities. The President's key initiative on health care remains in tact, and the Bush tax cuts were allowed to expire in January 2011.

RACE 3—Republican Party Nomination, 2012

Bobby Jindal (LA), Tim Pawlenty (MN), Mike Huckabee (AR), Newt Gingrich (GA), Mitt Romney (MA), Mitch Daniels (IN), Paul Ryan (WI), and Sarah Palin (AK)

Students may choose any of the above candidates. Information about all of them is readily available.

Assume the social, foreign/domestic, and economic conditions in America remain constant between now and 2012. Also, assume, for our purposes, that the Obama Administration suffered terrific defeats in the mid-term elections in 2010, losing control of both houses of Congress, where Republicans have slim majorities. The President's key initiative on health care remains in tact, and the Bush tax cuts were allowed to expire in January 2011.

Students must examine the primary calendar, as it stands now, for 2012. Which states hold early elections and how will your candidate appeal to the party's supporters in those states?

RACE 4—Democratic Party Nomination, 2012

Barack Obama vs. Hillary Clinton

Students may only choose Sec. Clinton for this contest. Information about her is readily available.

Assume the social, foreign/domestic, and economic conditions in America remain constant between now and 2012. Also, assume, for our purposes, that the Obama Administration suffered terrific defeats in the mid-term elections in 2010, losing control of both houses of Congress, where Republicans have slim majorities. The President's key initiative on health care remains in tact, and the Bush tax cuts were allowed to expire in January 2011.

Students must examine the primary calendar, as it stands now, for 2012. Which states hold early elections and how will your candidate appeal to the party's supporters in those states?

RACE 5—United States House of Representatives, District 9, Ohio, 2012

Rep. Marcy Kaptur (D) vs. Candidate of Your Own Construction (R)

Students may choose either candidate. Information about Mrs. Kaptur is readily available. The other candidate can be constructed for the group's purposes, but they must provide a reasonable biographical sketch as part of their strategic vision for the race.

Assume the social, foreign/domestic, and economic conditions in America remain constant between now and 2012. Also, assume, for our purposes, that the Obama Administration suffered terrific defeats in the

mid-term elections in 2010, losing control of both houses of Congress, where Republicans have slim majorities. The President's key initiative on health care remains in tact, and the Bush tax cuts were allowed to expire in January 2011.

RACE 6—United States House of Representatives, District 12, Ohio, 2012

Rep. Pat Tiberi (R) vs. Candidate of Your Own Construction (D)

Students may choose either candidate. Information about Mr. Tiberi is readily available. The other candidate can be constructed for the group's purposes, but they must provide a reasonable biographical sketch as part of their strategic vision for the race.

Assume the social, foreign/domestic, and economic conditions in America remain constant between now and 2012. Also, assume, for our purposes, that the Obama Administration suffered terrific defeats in the mid-term elections in 2010, losing control of both houses of Congress, where Republicans have slim majorities. The President's key initiative on health care remains in tact, and the Bush tax cuts were allowed to expire in January 2011.

Guidelines for GSS 1100 Writing Assignments

All assignments are due on the dates set forth on the syllabus. No late assignments are accepted. Also, all assignments are to be posted on the student's webpage.

- Be sure to include the unit number and topic in the blog post.
- All posts should be 350-750 words

Writing Assignments are graded on a **10 point** scale, with six points devoted to content and four for execution.

Content:

- 6 This paper displays independence of thought and uncommon insight into the issues it addresses. The paper shows preparation, care for source material, and a thorough understanding of the relevant issues and arguments.
- 5 This paper is well thought-out and shows preparation, care for source material, and a thorough understanding of the relevant issues and arguments, but perhaps lacks independence of thought or fine distinction between ideas and arguments.
- 4 This paper shows a tolerable understanding of the issues and arguments relevant to the assignment, but little more than that.
- 3 This paper displays a lack of preparation, only a glancing knowledge of the issues at hand, and little effort. This work is not acceptable for college students.
- 2 This paper displays a lack of preparation, only a glancing knowledge of the issues at hand, and little effort. This work is not acceptable for college students.
- 1 This paper displays a lack of preparation, only a glancing knowledge of the issues at hand, and little effort. This work is not acceptable for college students.
- 0 This paper displays a lack of preparation, only a glancing knowledge of the issues at hand, and little effort. This work is not acceptable for college students.

Execution:

- 4 This paper is well-written, concise, and flawless in grammar and syntax. There is excellent flow to the work and it is easily read. The paper stayed true to format guidelines.
- 3 Though well-written, clear, and true to format guidelines, this paper has minor mistakes in grammar and/or syntax. The paper stays true to format guidelines.
- 2 Adequately composed, this paper lacks concision (too wordy), or contains several minor mistakes in grammar and syntax, has one or more significant mistakes (comma-splice/run-on sentence, incomplete sentence, several spelling or subject/verb agreement issues), and, perhaps has noticeably strayed on one or more formatting guidelines.
- 1 This paper is a mess and is clearly the result of haste or poor effort. There are many syntax, grammar, punctuation, or spelling errors. Guidelines are either ignored or severely botched. This is not acceptable work for college students.
- 0 This paper is a mess and is clearly the result of haste or poor effort. There are many syntax, grammar, punctuation, or spelling errors. Guidelines are either ignored or severely botched. This is not acceptable work for college students.