

Fall 1990

National Government 1990 Syllabus

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DESCRIPTION

This course offers an introduction to the American political system with an emphasis on its operative principles and practical issues. The course objectives are as follows:

1. To provide the student with frameworks for understanding, evaluating, and interacting with the structures, functions, and policies of the national government in the context of our American political culture.
2. To examine areas of constitutional and political continuity and change within the federal system.
3. To develop skills in political research and effective citizenship.
4. To enable students to explore the role of ideological presuppositions that help shape contemporary social and political issues.

REQUIREMENTS

1. Each student is responsible for all assigned readings, including handouts and other supplementary materials. Students should keep lecture notes and supplementary materials in a looseleaf notebook.
2. Students will be tested on their knowledge of material covered in the reading assignments and classroom lectures through six biweekly quizzes (50%) and a comprehensive final exam (20%). The quizzes will be graded in class. The lowest score will not be counted. The remaining 30% of the grade is divided between an oral report (5%), a short paper on a selected member of the United States Senate (5%), and participation in the Mock Senate (10%). Extra credit adds 2% to the overall score.
3. The report consists of a five to seven minute presentation on one of the following: a delegate to the Constitutional Convention of 1787, a former President (prior to 1960), or a justice of the Supreme Court. Particular attention should be given to, first, the subject's background and character, including his early political or military career (Why was he chosen for a leading role?); second, the positions he took as a delegate or while in office (What was his attitude toward and interpretation of the Constitution and/or the functions of his office? Was he an active participant?); third, his subsequent career; and, finally, evaluations of his character and career by his contemporaries and by later historians. Prepare a 2-3 page outline to accompany your report. Presentations will be scheduled between September 17 (Constitution Day) and November 12.
4. The paper consists of three parts. The first part (3-4 pages) is a background report on a U. S. Senator of the student's choice (each student must choose a different Senator) based on information supplied by the Senator's office as well as secondary sources. The second part (1-2 pages) is a background report on the political culture of the Senator's home state. Be able to answer the following questions: What are the distinctive geographical, economic, demographic, cultural, and historical features that help shape the political character of the state? How are these factors reflected in the Senator's political career, choice of party, and voting behavior? The third part (4-5 pages) summarizes the Senator's positions on key policy positions, including the issues dealt with during the Mock Senate. This paper is due on November 5th.

5. Attendance is mandatory. One absence may be excused for good cause. Two absences subtract 2% from the overall score. Three absences require a withdrawal or result in a failing grade.
6. It is imperative that papers, reports, and Mock Senate activities be completed on time. Tardiness subtracts 1% each time and 2% if work is at least three days overdue.
7. An in-class Mock Senate is scheduled to begin on November 19th. Details will be provided in class.
8. Two extra credit points may be earned by attending two talks by Russell Kirk during his Presidential Lectures, November 14th-16th.
9. The grading scale is 93-100=A, 91-92=A-, 89-90=B+, 83-88=B, 81-82=B-, 79-80=C+, 73-78=C, 71-72=C-, 69-70=D+, 63-68=D, 61-62=D-, 0-60=F.

READING

Textbook:

Holmes, Jack E., Michael J. Engelhardt, and Robert E. Elder, Jr.
The System Works! U. S. Government: Fundamentals and
 Alternative Viewpoints.
 Schlossberg, Herbert, and Marvin Olasky. Turning Point: A
 Christian Worldview Declaration.
 Supplementary Readings (on reserve)

CALENDAR

9/3 Introduction; Library
 9/10 H. 1; Selection of Topics for Report and Paper (U. S. Senator)
 9/17 H. 2; First Quiz; Announcement of Mock Senate Issues
 9/24 H. 3
 10/1 H. 4; S. 1-4; Second Quiz
 10/8 Fall Break
 10/15 H. 5; S. 5-8
 10/22 H. 6; Third Quiz
 10/29 H. 7; Selection of Mock Senate Committees
 11/5 H. 8; Fourth Quiz
 11/12 H. 9; Paper Due; Russell Kirk Lectures (11/14-16)
 11/19 H. 10; Fifth Quiz; Mock Senate
 11/26 H. 11; Mock Senate
 12/3 H. 12; Sixth Quiz; Mock Senate and Wrap-Up
 12/10 Final Exam