

**FRESHMAN LEARNING COMMUNITY 2008
UNDERSTANDING POWER**

**POS 221 A F : Government and Politics in the United States
Fall Semester 2008**

Meeting Times: MWF 9:00 a.m. – 9:50 a.m. Location: K413

Instructor: Dr. Rachel Cremona, Assistant Professor of Political Science

Credit Hours: 3

Office Location/Hours: Kenan 514; MWF 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

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Of all tyrannies, a tyranny exercised for the good of its victims may be the most oppressive. It may be better to live under robber barons than under omnipotent moral busybodies. The robber baron's cruelty may sometimes sleep, his cupidity may at some point be satiated; but those who torment us for our own good will torment us without end, for they do so with the approval of their own conscience.

- C. S. Lewis

Course Description:

This course will provide an introduction to the functioning of the U.S. Political system, with a central focus on an understanding of the concept of political power. Beginning with a survey of the cultural and constitutional contexts of U.S. politics, the course will be focused on an investigation of the workings of the American political system in an attempt to determine where real power lies.

Prerequisites:

N/A

Required Text:

Berman, Larry & Bruce Allen Murphy. *Approaching Democracy*. Pearson, 2009.

Dahl, Robert A. *How Democratic is the American Constitution*. Yale University Press, 2003.

Robinson, Tony. *The 2008 Presidential Campaign Workbook*. Pearson, 2009.

Course Objectives:

- To examine the concept of democratic government in the context of American Liberal Democracy and the often contentious relationship between popular sovereignty and individual freedom.
- To explore the concept of political power in the context of American Democracy and to consider how power is secured and exercised in the political system.
- To consider both the roots of electoral behavior and of widespread electoral indifference and their implications for political power in the United States.
- To examine the main institutions of the national government, with particular regard to debates over presidential power, the strengths and weaknesses of the legislative process and the role of the judiciary.

- To apply a well-grounded knowledge of the system's evolution and current character to major policy issues.
- Ultimately, to explore and address the question of “Who Governs?” in the contemporary United States.

Methods of Instruction:

This course will be taught through a combination of lecture and in-class discussion.

POS221 Course Requirements & Methods of Assessment:

Students will be required to complete both assignments exclusive to this course and broader learning community assignments as part of their final grade assessment.

Reading: Details of the reading assignments are listed on the attached **Course Schedule**. The readings will provide the foundations for class discussion. Every student is expected to complete the reading assigned for that day before the beginning of class. Student and Instructor discussion will provide the framework of this class; Instructor lectures will, in contrast, play a much more limited role. It is clearly essential then that students complete the required reading before each class. Additionally, students are expected to keep up with current events in American Politics (it is, after all, election time!) and are required to read *The New York Times* daily.

Class Participation: Class participation will provide the foundation stone for advancing each student’s knowledge and understanding of American politics. For this reason, student participation will be the most fundamental and common feature of this class. In this vein, students should expect to be randomly called upon to answer questions, offer opinions and, at times, effectively lead class discussions. While it is not expected that students will fully master the course material prior to the class, they will nevertheless be expected to participate actively in order to gain a better understanding of the literature and issues under discussion. In this sense, students should bear in mind that valuable participation also includes raising questions aimed at clarifying readings and arguments, as well as questioning and challenging the arguments themselves. In preparing for class meetings, students should consider the following questions in relation to the assigned readings:

- What are the central issues being addressed?
- What is the perspective of the author and what evidence is provided to support his/her argument?
- What is your own point of view? Do you agree/disagree with the points being presented?
- How does the literature clarify your understanding of American politics?

Grades for participation will constitute a significant part of the final class grade and will be evaluated with regard to student performance on the following four items. While distinct conceptually, there will clearly be some overlap between items:

- **Participation:** Ability to both answer and raise questions related to the assigned readings and to provide informed opinions.
- **Engagement:** Evidence that the student is following the discussion. Are comments relevant? Is the student listening and taking notes? Can the student engage in an intelligent and informed discussion on the pertinent issues?
- **Initiative/application:** This will include reference by students to outside sources and/or current events related to the issues under discussion, as well as a demonstrated ability to apply theoretical arguments to practical, real-world issues.

Presentations: Every Friday, students will bring an article (pertinent to American Politics) from that week's *NY Times* for discussion in class. Each week, the instructor will select students to discuss their article – why they selected it; what they believe is interesting about it; how it relates to issues studied/covered in the class; how the issue reflects on the broader question of democracy and political power in America.

Tests: There will be no formal examinations in this class.

Election Assignments: Students are required to complete 12 election assignments. The assignments are drawn from the assigned Presidential Campaign Workbook. The instructor will provide further details of these assignments in class.

Papers: Students will be required to write three 7-page papers (see course schedule for details and topics). All papers should have 12-point font, 1-inch margins and be double-spaced. Papers must also include works cited. Late papers will not be accepted.

Learning Community Course Requirements & Methods of Assessment:

SEE ATTACHED 'LEARNING COMMUNITY' SHEET.

Assessment:

Final grades will be determined based on student performance on the requirements listed above. The weight carried by each component is listed below. It should be noted that the Instructor will also take into account significant student improvement demonstrated throughout the term of the course.

Participation	7%
Presentation	3%
Election Assignments	30% (2.5% each)
Papers	30% (10% each)
LC Group Project I	15%
LC Group Project II	15%

Grading Standards/Scales:

Grades will reflect the following scale:

A (90-100):	Excellent
B (80-89):	Good
C (70-79):	Average
D (60-69):	Below Average
F (59 and below):	Failure

Expected Student Learning Outcomes:

1. **FOUNDATIONAL KNOWLEDGE.** Students completing this course will demonstrate a comprehensive knowledge of the main Institutional characteristics of the US political system and the main features of political behaviour in the United States both through research papers and oral presentations.
2. **APPLICATION.** Students completing this course will be able to understand and critically evaluate the competing interpretations of the system's origins, development and current character in the broader context of democratic governance. Additionally, they will demonstrate an understanding of the concept of power in the American political system

and be able to articulate conceptions of power in terms of both its expression and its implications.

3. **INTEGRATION.** Students who successfully complete this course will be able to understand and articulate the dynamic relationships between ideas, individuals and the social and political realms of American life within the context of power.
4. **INTERACTION.** Students will develop and demonstrate their communication skills, both oral and written, through group assignments, presentations and papers that will require them to clearly articulate and explain political ideas and arguments.
5. **DEVELOPMENT.** Students successfully completing this course will demonstrate an ability to understand and appreciate multiple perspectives on politics and power in the United States. They will also be required to reflect upon and develop their own political and social values and defend those values in both intellectual and academic terms.

Class Attendance Policy:

A student who is absent, for any reason, (excused or unexcused), more than 20% of the scheduled class meetings for the academic semester or term will not receive credit for the course. Students must request excused absences through the Office of the Assistant Dean of Academic Affairs or through the College Nurse and must provide appropriate documentation to obtain an excused absence.

Please also see Learning Community specific policies for class attendance.

Academic Honesty:

Cheating, plagiarism, violation of test conditions, complicity in dishonest behavior, or other falsification of academic work is a serious breach of College expectations and is subject to immediate disciplinary action.

Statement on Disabilities:

Flagler College offers special academic accommodations to students with documented disabilities. Services include alternative test administration and/or services of interpreters, note-takers, and readers. In order to receive special academic accommodations a student must register with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (OSSD) and provide documentation of the disability. Please contact Ms. Deborah Kamm, at Ext. 460 or at dkamm@flagler.edu.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1

COURSE INTRODUCTION

I. UNDERSTANDING POWER

II. POWER IN THE AMERICAN CONTEXT

Berman & Murphy, chpt 1

Zakaria, Fareed. 1997 (Nov). "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy." *Foreign Affairs* at:

<http://www.fareedzakaria.com/articles/other/democracy.html>

Dahl, Robert A. Spring 2000. "A Democratic Paradox." *Political Science Quarterly*, 115(1): 35-40.

ASSIGNMENT 1: DEFINING THE DEMOCRATS (Robinson 1-12) DUE MON 9/8

Week 2

THE FOUNDATIONS OF POWER:

THE FOUNDING FATHERS AND THE CONSTITUTION

CLA Exam:

LC1: Weds 9/10, 9:00 – 11:00 a.m.

LC2: Fri 9/12, 10:00 - noon

Berman & Murphy, chpt 2

James & Merickel, Whitman's "Beat! Beat! Drums!" p. 613

Dahl, chpts 1 & 2 (& Appendix A)

ASSIGNMENT 2: DEFINING THE REPUBLICANS (Robinson 13-20) DUE MON 9/15

Week 3

POWER DISPERSED:

AMERICAN FEDERALISM

Berman & Murphy, chpt 3

Dahl, chpt 3

**ASSIGNMENT 3: THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE BATTLEGROUND (Robinson 49-58)
DUE MON 9/22**

Week 4

POWER CONSOLIDATED?

THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT

Berman & Murphy, chpt 5

James & Merickel, Kennedy's Inaugural Address, p. 676

Dahl, chpt 4

Neustadt, Richard E. Jan 2001. "The Weakening White House." *British Journal of Political Science*, 31(1): 1-11.

**ASSIGNMENT 4: INVESTIGATING CAMPAIGN ADS (Robinson 33-48) DUE MON 9/29
PAPER 1 DUE FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 26TH**

Week 5

POWER TRANSFERRED:

THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS

Berman & Murphy, chpt 4

Miller, Warren E. & Donald E. Stokes. Mar 1963. "Constituency Influence in Congress." *The American Political Science Review*, 57(1): 45-56.

Dahl, chpt 5.

ASSIGNMENT 5: PREDICTING THE SWING SEATS (Robinson 71-88) DUE MON 10/6

Week 6

GOVERNMENT BY LAW:

THE FEDERAL JUDICIARY

Berman & Murphy, chpt 6

James & Merickel, Thoreau's *Civil Disobedience*, p. 240

Berry, Mary Frances. Sept. 2001. "Diluting the Vote: The Irony of Bush v. Gore." *The Journal of American History*, 88(2): 436-443.

ASSIGNMENT 6: KEY VOTER GROUPS (Robinson 111-120) DUE MON 10/13

Week 7

EXERCISING POWER:

PARTICIPATION, VOTING & ELECTIONS

Berman & Murphy, chpt 10

Dahl, chpt 6.

Converse, Philip E. 1985. Power and the Monopoly of Information. *The American Political Science Review* 79 (1): 1-9.

ASSIGNMENT 7: PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES (Robinson 89-98) DUE MON 10/20

Week 8

THE POWER OF [MIS]INFORMATION:

THE MEDIA IN AMERICAN SOCIETY

Berman & Murphy, chpt 12

Newton, Kenneth. 1999. "Mass Media Effects: Mobilization or Media Malaise?" *British Journal of Political Science*, 29(4): 577-599.

ASSIGNMENT 8: EVALUATING THE MEDIA (Robinson 99-110) DUE 10/27

Week 9

THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

PUBLIC OPINION & AMERICAN POLITICAL CULTURE

Berman & Murphy, chpt 8

Dahl, chpt 7

"Only in America." *The Economist*, April 26, 2008.

"An Odd Bunch." *The Economist*, Jan 13, 2007.

James & Merickel: Peter D. Kramer's "*Divorce and Our National Values*." P. 503-505.

ASSIGNMENT 9: TARGETING THE BATTLEGROUND STATES (Robinson 59-70) DUE MON 11/3

PAPER 2 DUE FRIDAY NOVEMBER 7TH

Week 10**ORGANIZING POWER:*****INTEREST GROUPS & AMERICAN PLURALISM***

Berman & Murphy, chpt 11

Guidry, John A & Mark Q. Sawyer. June 2003. "Contentious Pluralism: The Public Sphere and Democracy." *Perspectives on Politics*, 1(2): 273-289.

Dahl, chpt 8

ASSIGNMENT 10: ELECTORAL GEOGRAPHY (Robinson 133-142) DUE MON 11/10**Week 11****CIVIL LIBERTIES**

Berman & Murphy, chpt 13

Davis, Darren W & Brian D. Silver. 2004. "Civil Liberties vs. Security: Public Opinion in the Context of the Terrorist Attacks on America." *American Journal of Political Science*, 48(1): 28-46.

Gibson, James L. 1987. "Homosexuals and the Klu Klux Klan: A Contextual Analysis of Political Tolerance." *The Western Political Quarterly*, 40(3): 427-448.

ASSIGNMENT 11: CAMPAIGN FINANCES (Robinson 143-156) DUE MON 11/17**Week 12****CIVIL RIGHTS**

Berman & Murphy, chpt 14

Lipset, Seymour Martin. 1992. "Equal Chances versus Equal Results." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 523: 63-74.

James & Merickel: Scott Russell Sanders' "The Men We Carry in Our Minds" p. 510-513.

James & Merickel: Martin Luther King's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" p. 204-215.

James & Merickel: Richard Rodriguez' "The Chinese in All of us." P. 221-228.

ASSIGNMENT 12: WHO VOTED? FOR WHAT? (Robinson 157-168) DUE MON/24**Week 13****FOREIGN POLICY**

Berman & Murphy, chpt 16

Leffler, Melvyn P. 2004 (Sep-Oct). "Bush's Foreign Policy." *Foreign Policy*, 144: 22-24 & 26-28.

Zakaria, Fareed. 2001 (Oct 15). "The Politics of Rage: Why Do They Hate US?" *Newsweek* at: http://www.fareedzakaria.com/articles/newsweek/101501_why.html

James & Merickel: John Crawford's "Lies" p. 660.

James & Merickel: Tim O'Brien's "The Things They Carried" p.556

PAPER 2 DUE FRIDAY NOVEMBER 28**Week 14****COURSE REVIEW****FINAL PROJECT PRESENTATIONS**