GOVERNMENT 1111
THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES

Fall 2009

This is an introduction to government through the study of the government of the United States. Although history has proven time and again that government is essential to the functioning of society, Americans have never been comfortable with it. Government legitimacy runs a cycle similar to but not parallel to the business cycle, and it appears that government legitimacy was in something of a depression during the 1980's and 90's, with the end not yet in sight. Millions of Americans agree with President Reagan's assertion that "Government is the problem, not the solution." If so, why have any government at all? And why has government grown even during Republican administrations, including President Reagan's? The purpose of Government 1111 is to develop an informed, critical posture toward government and political power by looking beyond casual and self-interested assertions and behind constitutions, institutions, bureaucracies, parties, pressure groups, policies and elections to understand how we got to where we are and why, how, for what and on whose behalf we are governed today. My task in all of this is to tell you not what to think but what to think about.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

REQUIRED BOOKS

Benjamin Ginsberg, Theodore J. Lowi, & Margaret Weir, We the People: An Introduction to American Politics, 7th EDITION (TEXT)*

David T. Canon, Kenneth R. Mayer, and John Coleman, The Enduring Debate: Classic and Contemporary Readings in American Politics, 5th EDITION (Reader)*

Benjamin Ginsberg, The American Lie: Government by the People and Other Political Fables (BG)

Paula D. McClain & Joseph Stewart Jr., Can We All Get Along?, 5th EDITION (M&S)

*NOTE: Only these particular editions are acceptable for the course.

MEETINGS AND REQUIREMENTS

There will be two lectures and one discussion section each week. The sections will be directed by the TAs. Questions regarding the course should be addressed to your TA in section. Individual questions can be brought to the TA during their office hours, which will be posted early in the term. Students are welcome to consult with me during my office hours and by appointment; however, questions pertaining to the course should be taken first to your TA. Note well: You are not properly and fully enrolled in this course until you are officially signed up in a Section. Section attendance is mandatory and missing more than five without proper documentation could result in failure of the course.

There will be a mid-term exam, a final exam, and two or three writing assignments to be announced later in the course. Make-ups and incompletes will be given only where excuses are properly documented. The mid-term will weigh 20% in the final mark; the final exam will weigh 40% and the writing assignment will weigh 30%. A factor of 10% is reserved for performance in section, to be assessed by your TA.

Each student in this course is expected to abide by the Cornell University Code of Academic Integrity. Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit must be the student's own work.

Students registered with Student Disability Services are responsible for providing documentation to either Jackie or Hollie in Professor Lowi's office (116 White Hall) PRIOR TO assignments or exams.


COURSE OUTLINE

PART ONE: FOUNDATIONS

1

Aug 27 & Sept 1. Who are We the People? What does government have to do with that question?

North America was the Godforsaken, unwanted half of the New World. What kind of people wanted to go there and stay there? And what were the consequences? Who were "we the people" in 1620? 1776? 1787? 1857? We the People have had a love-hate relationship with government for over 200 years. The War for Independence was not a revolution. It was a Rebellion, followed by a Founding, for a "constitutional government." Is that an oxymoron?

Assigned Readings:

TEXT, Chapter 1
BG, pp. 1-20
M&S, Chapter 1, pp. 1-12
Reader, Chapter 1

2

Sept 3 & 8. The Constitution: What is it and what's it for?

Americans won independence with 13 separate state militias against a remote, absentee English government. The Articles of Confederation provided that the 13 states retain their "sovereignty, freedom and independence [as a] league of friendship with each other." It failed. The Constitution was an effort to make a "united state" out of 13 very independent states, while maintaining popular consent. Each Article of the Constitution has to be read and understood in that context.

Assigned Readings:

TEXT, Chapters 2 & 3
Reader, Chapter 2 (Each week your TA will choose 2 or 3 readings to assign from each chapter.)
BG, pp. 20-37
M&S, pp. 12-27
Marbury v. Madison (cases found in Appendix of Reader)
McCulloch v. Maryland

3


Some say federalism and the separation of powers have been "in exile" since 1937. Others say civil liberties, the third great constitutional principle, only came to life after 1937. What's wrong with this picture? Federalism and civil liberties receive the primary treatment in Week 3. Separation of powers gets direct attention in Weeks 4-8. Civil rights will get additional treatment in Weeks 12 & 13.

Assigned Readings:

TEXT, Chapters 4 & 5
Reader, selections from Chapters 3 & 4
M&S, Chapter 2
Barron v. Baltimore
Brown v. Board of Education
Roe v. Wade
PART TWO: INSTITUTIONS

4 Sept 17 & 22. Congress: The First Branch

Although the Constitution provides for three Branches, Article I makes it quite clear (as does The Federalist, especially Hamilton's #51) that the legislature was to be the First Branch, not only in form but in power. And this prevailed for nearly a century and a half. Efforts were made in the 70's to regain congressional equality, but with little success until the late 90's. Have the Bush and Obama administrations had to face a new revived Congress?

Assigned Readings:

Text, Chapter 12
Reader, selections from Chapter 5
M&S, Chapter 4
BG, Chapter 5, pp. 159-172

5-6 Sept 24 & 29. Embattled Presidency

Modern presidents seem to be engaged in a permanent campaign – for re-election during their first four years and, if re-elected, a campaign to avoid disgrace. This is the "plebiscitary presidency," the focus of mass expectations which cannot be met by the president, regardless of how much "presidential power" Congress has granted.

Assigned Readings:

TEXT, Chapter 13
Reader, selections from Chapter 6
BG, Chapter 5, pp. 172-188
U.S. v. Nixon

7 Oct 1 & 6. The Judiciary: An Institution in Search of Itself

The Federalist refers to the judiciary as "the least dangerous branch," and that was a good prediction for all of the 19th Century and into the 20th, during which it rarely confronted the two elective branches or the states. An activist conservative Court briefly blocked the New Deal, and a liberal Court during the 1960's and part of the 70's was quite activist against the states – which earned the Court a nickname, "the imperial judiciary." What's in store for the Supreme Court, with years of 5-4 decisions?

Assigned Readings:

TEXT, Chapter 15
Reader, selections from Chapter 8
Planned Parenthood of Southeastern PA v. Casey
United States v. Lopez

OCT 8. MIDTERM
OCT 13. FALL BREAK

8 Oct 15 & 20. President, Congress, and Judiciary Confront the Fourth Branch: Bureaucracy

Americans cannot live with bureaucracy, yet they cannot live without it. Bureaucracy is nothing more than a pejorative name for the most efficient way of organizing people for production, or service, or control, or to fight a war. The problem of bureaucracy is not
inefficiency but accountability: Is it possible to organize nearly three million public
employees to do the work of government and at the same time to keep all the personnel
and all the agencies in rough consonance with the needs and wishes of each generation of
Americans?

Assigned Readings:

TEXT, Chapter 14
Reader, selections from Chapter 7
BG, pp. 162-172 (review)

PART THREE: POLITICS

9


Public opinion is not measured but is merely estimated by random samples of no more than
1500-2000 respondents. Yet, opinions have become the modern definition of "we the
people." Polls complement and may displace elections. But is "government by opinion" an
acceptable alternative to "government by elections" or "government by parties" or
"government by interest groups?"

Assigned Readings:

TEXT, Chapters 6 & 7
BG, Chapter 2
M&S, Chapter 3, pp. 65-80
Reader, selections from Chapter 8

10

Oct 29 & Nov 3. Interests, Groups and Parties: From Opinion to Participation

Opinions are the most superficial of beliefs. That is why, beginning with Madison, American
politics is based on "interests." Madison called them "factions," in Federalist #10. Today
we've sanitized factions into interest groups. And political parties are a special category of
interest group. What kinds of interests are best in a democracy: interest groups or political
parties?

Assigned Readings:

TEXT, Chapters 8 & 9
BG, Chapter 4
M&S, pp. 80-130
Reader, selections from Chapters 11 & 12

11

Nov 5 & 10. Elections: It's not who won, stupid, but what won!

Majority rule is the key to democracy, and majority rule means elections -- counting heads
or hands. When people vote, they are participating in the choice of who rules, but they also
are giving their consent to be governed. For that very reason, the important question to ask
of any election is not who won but what won? Recent presidential elections will serve as
case studies.
Assigned Readings:

TEXT, Chapter 10  
Reader, selections from Chapter 10  
BG, Chapter 3  
M&S, Chapter 5, pp. 80-130 (review)

PART FOUR: CONTROL

12  
In America, "government" – not politics – is the area of greatest citizen ignorance. Many Americans actually believe there was a time when citizens were free of government. Nothing could be further from the truth. There have always been government services and controls through laws – which in our day are called public policies. The question is not whether we should have public policies but which ones are essential and which are inessential or obsolescent. We'll take an especially close look at the relation of capitalism to government.

Assigned Readings:

TEXT, Chapter 16  
BG, Chapter 4 (review)  
M&S, Chapter 4  
Reader, selections from Chapters 13 & 14

13  
Civil rights is a category of public policy that virtually did not exist until after 1954 and Brown v. Board. Though virtually everyone agrees with the proposition that policies are needed to protect the rights of individuals, can laws treat individuals in groups or races or classes? These issues hit a raw nerve of politics in the 1990's, and they remain hot, so hot that they have realigned our elections, our parties and our Constitution.

Assigned Readings:

TEXT, Chapters 17 & 5 (in that order)  
Reader, selections from Chapter 15, and #37 on "The Court in American Life"  
M&S, Chapter 6 & Chapter 5 (review)  
Brown v. Board of Education

14  
Dec 1 & 3. America and the World: Globalism v. Localism
The Cold War is over and we won. So why do we feel so bad? The U.S. is the only superpower. But what's the power good for? How are we adjusting to this "new world disorder?" How are domestic political institutions adjusting to a new world driven not only by economic but ideological forces? Is terrorism going to be the way the rest of the world adjusts to America's "new world order?"

Assigned Readings:

TEXT, Chapter 18  
Reader, selections from Chapter 16
How to Enroll in a Blackboard Site

In order to view all the sections of your Blackboard site, you must be enrolled in the site. This enrollment is unrelated to being registered to take the course. In some cases, your instructor will enroll you in the course site. If not, follow these directions to enroll yourself.

Your Net ID is the user name that you'll use to access all Blackboard sites. This will simplify access for you and will reduce the number of passwords you need to remember. Note that if you've ever used Blackboard, your Blackboard account will still exist. If you have questions, please ask your TA for help.

Part A: Do you already have a Blackboard Account?

1. If you already have a Blackboard account, skip to Part C.

2. If you don't have an account, go on to Part B, and then to Part C.

Part B: Create a new Blackboard Account

1. Go to http://blackboard.cornell.edu/ and click on the "Get Blackboard Account" button.

2. It will prompt you to enter your Net ID and then will ask your for your Net ID and password.

3. You will then be prompted to enter your first name and last name.

4. Blackboard will create the account within two days and send a confirmation e-mail and an e-mail when the account has been created.

Part C: Enroll in the Blackboard site

1. Go to your course web site. The Government 1111 URL is:

http://blackboard.cornell.edu/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp?tab=courses&url=/bin/common/course.pl?course_id=_16308

If your instructor didn't give you the URL, return to the main Blackboard site at http://blackboard.cornell.edu/ and click on the "Course search" button. Enter Govt 1111 Lowi. This will direct you to a link of the course website.

2. When you get to the site, you should see a button labeled "Enroll" on the right hand side. Click on this button.

3. You'll see a screen indicating that you've been added to the course. Click on the "Login" button, and you're done. You will be returned to the main page of the course, and you'll no longer see the "Enroll in This Course" button, because you're already enrolled.

4. To double-check, click on the "My Blackboard" button near the bottom of the left-hand column of buttons. Under "My Courses," the site in which you just enrolled should be listed. Click on it to return to the course. (It's a link, even though it may not be underlined.)

Note: If you see old courses in your "My Courses" list you may want to remove them, but it's not something you can do yourself. Contact the instructors of those courses and ask them to remove you from their Blackboard sites; this will then remove the old courses from your list.