United States Politics
Political Science 201, Summer, 2006

Distance Education/Web-Based Independent Study

Syllabus 3.0

Professor: John Davidson
Office Hours: Wed 1-5 P.M & by appointment at 829 PLC
Phone: 346-4540
e-mail: davidson@uoregon.edu

SSIL -- Social Sciences Instructional Lab -- Contact Information:
(These are the folks who will administer the midterm and final exam.)
e-mail: de@ssil.uoregon.edu
Phone: 346-4642

Important Notice: It is essential for the purposes of this course that you check your UO e-mail account regularly or set it to forward to the account that you regularly use.

Course Description: The course will deepen your understanding of the theory and practice of American politics. Our text and online activities will expose you to a variety of viewpoints on some of the most important aspects of political theory, political institutions, political actors and political processes in the United States.


Your grade for the class will be based on the following (more details on each below):

• Chapter Quizzes – 16 quizzes at 2 points each, for a total of 32% of your course grade. You will take these quizzes through the class Blackboard page.

• Interactive Activity Quizzes – 15 at 1 point each. The online version of the book has a variety of interactive features for each chapter, which you will access through the “atomicdog” web site. (These will be graded on a credit/no credit basis after passing post-interactive-activity assessment quizzes.)

• A midterm (24%) and final (24%) examination, taken at the Social Sciences Instructional Laboratory (SSIL) if you are in or near Eugene, or at an approved, proctored location outside of Eugene (see instructions below).

Technological Requirements

In order to use the online textbook, access course materials, do the interactive exercises, and complete the Blackboard assignments, you will need regular access to a fairly competent computer with web access, with at least 56K dial-up (although faster connections will obviously be better). Lack of such access is not an excuse to request alternative assignments or extensions on deadlines – it is a reason not to take this class. For example, if you lose your connection or crash while you are taking a quiz you will not get a second chance to take it!

Warning:

This is an online course. It has no face-to-face meetings. Contrary to what many anticipate, this makes it harder, not easier. This independent study version of PS 201 is designed for self-motivated students who wish to proceed through the subject material at their own pace. Keep in mind that independent study is not the best option for every student. The
lack of lectures or discussion sections means you have fewer opportunities to learn challenging material. To succeed in this course, you must be motivated and well organized, and your reading, studying, and analytical skills should be strong. Historically, the range of grades in this class has been very large – there have been large numbers of both A-pluses and Fs. Because so much of the course grade is based on the multiple choice quizzes and examinations, please give careful consideration to whether that is a format that will work for you. *The quizzes and exams are not easy. Marginal students just taking this class to avoid attending lectures and section meetings, or because they think it will be easy, are strongly encouraged to drop now and enroll in the traditional version of this class – you will learn more and your grade will be higher.* Note that PS 201 cannot be repeated for credit – the traditional lecture course PS 201 and the independent study/distance education course PS 201 are treated as the same course by the Registrar’s office.

**Important Notes:**

- *No incompletes or extensions can be given for this course due to the closure of the SSIL lab at the end of the term. All exams and postings must be completed by the dates listed below.*
- *All examinations must be taken in the SSIL lab or in a proctored environment approved in advance by SSIL Director, Cathleen Leue.*
- *No extra credit work or make-up assignments can be given.*

**Web Sites**

Various elements of this class are accessible through several web sites:

- **Distance Education.** You can access the examination-related components of the course through the UO Distance Education Web page at [http://distanceeducation.uoregon.edu/](http://distanceeducation.uoregon.edu/). It has all information necessary for signing up for taking the examinations.

- **Text Book Web Site.** Once you have purchased the book (see instructions below), you will be able to access the e-book and supplemental materials online by logging in at [http://www.atomicdog.com](http://www.atomicdog.com). The online version of the book includes special features such as interactive tables and charts, practice quizzes, study materials, and the ability for you to highlight and add marginal notes.

- **Blackboard.** Other course materials, including the syllabus, and “lecture” power points, are at the class blackboard site at [https://blackboard.uoregon.edu/webapps/login/](https://blackboard.uoregon.edu/webapps/login/). This is also where you will take the chapter quizzes (the quizzes on the book web page are for practice) and participate in optional discussion board threads. It also hosts grades, announcements, and links to the text web page, which includes outlines, exercises, links and practice tests.

**E-mail Access**

Important class announcements will periodically be sent out via e-mail to your UO account. It is therefore imperative that all students either use their UO email account, and check it several times a week, or set it to forward to the account you really use. **Please take steps immediately to make sure that this is taken care of, and also make sure that e-mails I send out to the class via Blackboard will make it past your spam filter.** This is your responsibility. All UO students are now automatically assigned UO e-mail accounts which are automatically used as your e-mail address in all UO directories. If you do not know how to access your UO email account, contact the Computing Center at 346-4412 to find out. **You may also need to set up a Blackboard account.**

**Texts and Required Materials.**

The required materials for this class are:


  The text is only available for purchase directly online.
Chapter Quizzes (32% total; 2 points for each chapter quiz)

For each of our book’s sixteen chapters you will take a short multiple choice quiz through the course Blackboard page. These are not to be confused with the practice quizzes available at the atomicdog web site. The practice quizzes do not count toward your grade; these do. These quizzes are not proctored, but they are closed book. In order to take them you will need to promise that you are not looking things up in the book, sharing questions or answers with classmates, printing out the quiz, or using a quiz or quiz answers provided by a classmate. If you engage in any of these activities even once, your grade for all the quizzes will be a zero, which will make it essentially impossible to pass the class.

Deadlines: You must complete the quizzes for chapters 1-4 by no later than the Friday of Week 2, July 7, at 4:00 PM. Quizzes for chapters 5-8 are due the Friday of Week 4, July 21 at 4:00 PM. Chapter quizzes 9-12 are due Friday of Week 6, August 4, and, finally, quizzes 13-16 are due Wednesday of Week 8, August 16, also at 4:00 PM. Access to the quizzes will be password-protected after those dates/times, and will only be available to students with approved extensions.

Interactive Activities (15% total for completion of activities in chapters 1-15, and passing short quizzes on them.)

A big part of what makes this class truly an interactive experience are the interactive activities available for each chapter in the online version of the text book. You will access these directly through the atomicdog web site. After completing these activities for each chapter, except chapter 16, you will take a brief multiple choice/true-false quiz in Blackboard to demonstrate that you did them. You will thus take a total of 15 of these quizzes in addition to the regular chapter quizzes.

Due Dates: Interactive activity quizzes for each chapter are due on the same date and at the same time as the chapter quizzes. A list of due dates is included in the table below. It is recommended that you do the activities and take the quiz for them prior to taking the chapter quiz, and that you do not put them off until right before the deadline and then try to race through them. Grading on the activities is credit/no credit (you just need to pass the quiz), and include questions that should be easy if you read through each part of each activity carefully.

Exams (53% divided into a midterm (26%) and final (27%) examination)

You will take two proctored examinations based on the assigned readings in the Text – a midterm and final exam each worth 26% and 27% of your grade respectively. See below for detailed instructions for taking these exams. Exams are made up of multiple choice and/or true/false questions. The midterm will cover Parts 1-3 of the Text (chapters 1-8) and the final will cover Parts 4-5 (chapter 9-16). The final examination is not cumulative. Tests are closed-book and cannot be taken more than once. Both exams will be in the system at all times, so take extra care when logging in that you are logging in for the correct exam! If you take the wrong exam there is literally nothing anyone can do to “fix” it.

The exams cover a wide range of material and require knowledge of broad concepts and specific factual details. The main factor that will distinguish the types of questions on the exams from those on the quizzes is that the quiz questions will tend to be more detail-oriented and the exam questions will tend to be more concept-oriented.

The deadline for taking the midterm is Monday of Week 4, July 24. The deadline for taking the Final exam is Friday of Week 8, August 18.

Quiz (including post-interactive activity quizzes), and exam deadlines:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text Section</th>
<th>Text Chapter</th>
<th>Quiz Deadline</th>
<th>Exam Deadline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: Why Should We Care About Democracy?</td>
<td>Chapters 1-2</td>
<td>July 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: Citizenship and Democracy</td>
<td>Appendices A-F (Text) and The Articles of Confederation (web site)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: Connections Between Citizens and Government</td>
<td>Chapters 3-4</td>
<td>July 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: Institutions of Democracy</td>
<td>Chapters 5-8</td>
<td>July 21</td>
<td>Midterm July 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5: What Government Does and How Well it Works</td>
<td>Chapters 9-12</td>
<td>August 4</td>
<td>Final August 18</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapters 13-16</td>
<td>August 16</td>
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Discussion Board Postings

You will have the opportunity to post to several Blackboard discussion threads during the course of the term. The first discussion thread offers each of you the chance to introduce yourself. Topical discussion boards for each section of the course, with threads for each chapter will also be available on an optional basis. There is no length requirement other than that you must have something substantive to say. You may of course respond on more than one topic or respond more than once on each discussion board if you like. Remember to use proper netiquette – internet courtesy. Challenging a person’s ideas is acceptable; but insulting the person who voiced the ideas discourages the cooperative learning process.

All discussion board participation is voluntary. At the end of the course, if someone’s scores are borderline between one grade and the next and that person has engaged in significant discussion board participation, I will bump the grade up to the next level.

Examination Policies and Procedures:

Exam testing policies can be viewed on-line at http://distanceeducation.uoregon.edu/info.oncampus and http://distanceeducation.uoregon.edu/info.offcampus. It is each student’s responsibility to understand and follow the policies outlined in this document. If you have any further questions, please contact me.

Test Scheduling and Deadlines: You may schedule an exam at any available time (available test times will be determined by SSIL or your approved remote proctor), up to the deadlines – Monday, July 24 (week 5) at 4:00 PM for the midterm and Friday, August 18 (week 8) for the final, up until SSIL’s last time slot that day. It is your responsibility to make sure that you take the exam before the deadline. I strongly recommend making an appointment as early as you can, and taking the exams at least a day or two before the deadlines in case something comes up at the last minute. You will take the chapter quizzes on your own through Blackboard – you do not need to make appointments for them, but please recall that quiz deadlines have been scheduled several days earlier than the exam deadlines.

On-Campus Students: If you are taking this course on-campus, you will take all your tests at the Social Science Instructional Lab (SSIL) located in McKenzie Hall 445. All on-campus tests are given and scheduled by appointment only. Before you can schedule an exam, you must complete the On-Line Introduction to Test taking by going to: http://distanceeducation.uoregon.edu/ and clicking anywhere on the paragraph that begins “be sure to get your Test Taker ID.” After you complete the introduction, you will be given a Test Taker ID Number and Password. With these, you can log into your Test Taker Home Page from the above distance education web page. From your Test Taker Home Page you can make appointments to take tests, cancel appointments, see your test scores, e-mail your professor, change your test taker password, and more. You should go through the On-Line introduction the first week of class. Take the time to read the information under the link, “On Campus Students.” If you have further questions about testing, contact: de@ssil.uoregon.edu.

It is strongly recommended that students make appointments in SSIL for taking tests early. You cannot, however, make appointments more than two weeks in advance of your intended test date (not the test deadline). If you want to take tests early you may do so.

Be sure to schedule yourself enough time to finish a test. Budget extra time for possible software complications: Thirty minutes is the average time needed to complete the exams, and appointments are for one hour. Budget extra time for possible software complications. The lab fee for this class also entitles you to use the computers in SSIL for word processing, web browsing, etc. Absolutely no food or drink allowed is in the lab. For more information, check the SSIL Web page at: http://ssil.uoregon.edu/.

To ensure that SSIL test times are available for all student schedules, a wide variety of test-taking times are available. They will be posted at http://distanceeducation.uoregon.edu/. If your schedule is inflexible it is your responsibility to sign up far enough in advance to get a space in a time slot that fits your schedule. It is not SSIL’s or the instructor’s responsibility to make an additional exam time for you. More slots are likely to be added during the term as the level of demand becomes clear.

Remote Site Testing (other than Eugene) – Off-Campus Students: If you are taking this course off-campus, go to the web site: http://distanceeducation.uoregon.edu/ and click on the “Off Campus Students” tab at the top of the page. Read all the information on the page. Before you can take a test, you must obtain a proctor and have the proctor approved by SSIL. You must do this before the end of the second week of classes. The web page describes how to do this. Once
you have found a proctor, fill out the remote site request form on the web page. SSIL will notify you if the proctor you have chosen is approved. If you have further questions, contact de@ssil.uoregon.edu.

All visits to the proctored test sites must be scheduled in advance. You can get all necessary information about your testing site by contacting the testing site proctor or the Continuation Center's Distance Education Program. All Beaverton test-takers should go to http://de.uoregon.edu/proctoring/exam-ps.php#Portland for specific instructions.

- The deadlines discussed above apply to off-campus students as well as on-campus.
- It is imperative that you get your proctor approved well in advance of the test date.
- No matter how trustworthy she is, your Mom cannot proctor your exams.
- No matter how trustworthy you are, you can’t proctor your own exams.

**Testing Center Security:**

For security reasons, the following class policies will be strictly enforced at both the Eugene Campus SSIL testing center and the remote site testing centers. Students at the remote sites should be aware that each remote site may have additional policies.

- Bring a picture ID with you to the lab. You will not be allowed to take a test without it.
- When using the lab to take a test, leave any bags, books, papers or computer diskettes with the person administering the quiz.
- While taking a test, you will not be allowed to use any information resources such as books, notes, or computer files.

Do not hesitate to ask the person administering the test for help with the testing software. If you experience any problems with the software, notify the person administering the test immediately. The person administering the test will help you restart the software and contact the professor about the problem.

**Whom Should You Contact?**

For questions concerning administration and scheduling of exams, contact the SSIL lab first; for questions regarding quiz or exam content, activities, blackboard postings, essays or grading, contact Professor Davidson.

**Final Grade Calculation**

Final grades are calculated based on your percentages on the 16 chapter quizzes at 2% each, completion of the 15 interactive activity quizzes at 1% each (credit/no credit), and the midterm and final exams at 26 and 27% respectively. The grades in the class Blackboard page will be updated only twice – after the midterm and then again after the final. After the midterm, I will also post an item on the grade sheet showing your average so far.

If necessary, I reserve the right to apply a curve at a level which I deem appropriate. While a curve is a possibility, you should not count on it; rather, you should assume that your grade will be based on your raw scores and the cutoffs below. If I do use a curve, no one will receive a grade below where the raw scores would have placed you; but depending where you are in relation to the cutoffs, it is possible that some students’ letter grades would increase while others would not, or that some students’ letter grades would increase more than others.

Cutoffs for letter grades are as follows:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Minus</th>
<th>Plain</th>
<th>Plus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>90-93.33</td>
<td>93.34-96.66</td>
<td>96.67 +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>80-83.33</td>
<td>83.34-86.66</td>
<td>86.67-89.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70-73.33</td>
<td>73.34-76.66</td>
<td>76.67-79.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60-63.33</td>
<td>63.34-66.66</td>
<td>66.67-69.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0-59.99</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>