

Pan African Studies 161 ONLINE
American Political Institutions: A Black Perspective
California State University, Northridge
Fall 2009

Contact Information

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Course Overview

Welcome to PAS 161! This is a fully online course, taught in asynchronous format. Therefore, there is no set day or time for you to be online. Students must have access to a computer and an email address in order to complete assignments. Students should also make provisions for access to “back-up PCs” in the event that the primary computer is not functioning. For technical concerns or difficulty please contact the Office of Online Instruction at 818 677-6558.

I am available to help you with all class related questions. Please do not hesitate to contact me through the Web CT email system.

Course Description

This course is designed to introduce you to the structures, processes, activities and politics of American government. It is an introductory level course that assumes students know very little about the American political system. This course is also an examination of American political institutions and processes as they relate to African Americans. Therefore, students will participate in a critical and realistic examination of the relationship between race, economics and American democracy. A fundamental goal is to encourage you to think analytically, and to approach the study of American government in a pragmatic manner. Consistent with this goal, we will examine the myths and realities of the American political system through online discussion and various readings.

Course Objectives

- To introduce students to the concepts, goals and objectives of the U.S. government.
- To ensure that students understand how the U.S. Constitution provides a framework for the functions of the political system.
- To identify conventional and unconventional input by individuals and groups into the

government decision-making process

- To analyze attempts by African Americans and other minority groups to use politics to improve their status
- To situate the African American community in its historical and social context, and demonstrate how the past has shaped contemporary conditions.
- Enhance critical thinking skills.

Assessment Tools

- Quizzes that require scholarly, documented responses to key issues.
- Online Discussion Forums on the various readings assigned, using logical, well-constructed arguments based on evidence. In the discussion forums students must use standard grammar and writing mechanics.
- Cumulative Final Exam that will test students' comprehension of course material.

Required Course Materials

Because the focus of this course is American Political Institutions and the African American experience, we will use material from two textbooks. The first is *Essentials of American Government*, 2009 edition, by Karen O'Connor, Larry J. Sabato and Alixandra B. Yanus (New York: Longman/Pearson). The second book is *American Politics and the African American Quest for Universal Freedom*, Hanes Walton, Jr. and Robert C. Smith (New York: Longman/Pearson, 2010).

In addition to the foregoing, you will be assigned material from the website *My Poli Sci Lab*. Information on how to access the *My Poli Sci Lab* can be found in your instructional packet. The books/instructional packets can be purchased at the Matador Bookstore at CSUN.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities must first register with the Center on Disabilities and complete a service agreement each semester. If you are registered with the Center, please notify me prior to the beginning of the class.

Assignments

Modules: There are seven modules that you must complete in this course. Each module contains required chapter readings, power-presentation (s), and a quiz. Some modules will include discussion forums or additional reading assignments.

- **Quizzes:** There are 7 quizzes. The quiz with the lowest score will be dropped from your grade calculation.
- **Discussion Forum:** The Discussion Forums are designed to encourage dialogue among students. You will be given a discussion prompt, for which you have one week to respond. The next week you must post a separate response to **two** classmate's answer to the same prompt. Your responses must be substantive and analytical. One sentence responses are unacceptable, as well as responses without assessment of the statement made by your colleague.
- **Final Examination:** This cumulative exam will test your knowledge and comprehension of information from your reading assignments and class discussions. The exam will comprise of multiple choice and short answer questions.

Final Grade Calculation

Quizzes (6).....	(50 each)--600pts
Discussion Forums.....	(100 each)--200pts
Final examination.....	200pts)

GRADING METHOD

Grades will NOT be curved, but based on a straight scale:

901-1000	= A
801-900	= B
701 -800	= C
601 -700	= D
0 -600	= F

Assignment Schedule

All assignments must be completed within two weeks of the starting date of each Module.

Module 1 August 24-Sept. 4.

- Review Course Outline and Expectations

Subjects:

- Foundations of American Government: The Political Landscape
- Universal Freedom: Declared and Denied
- The Constitution

Readings: O’Conner, Sabato and Yanus, Chapters 1 and 2; Walton/Smith Chapters 1.

Review Power Point Presentations

Quiz 1

Module 2 Sept. 7-18

- Federalism
- Civil Liberties
- California Government

Readings: O’Conner, Sabato and Yanus Chapters 3 and 4; Walton/Smith Chapter 2.

Review the Elections and Political Reform sections of the California Secretary of State’s website at <http://www.sos.ca.gov/>

Review Power Point Presentations

Quiz 2

Discussion Prompt #1 Read and Respond to Discussion Prompt.

Note: You must respond to the discussion prompt the first week, and two prompts by your colleagues by the end of the second week.

Module 3 Sept. 21-October 2.

Subject: Civil Rights

Readings: O’Conner, Sabato and Yanus, Chapter 5; Walton/Smith Chapter 7
Review Power Point Presentations
Quiz 3

Module 4 October 5-October 16.

Subject:

- Congress
- Judiciary

Readings: O’Conner, Sabato and Yanus, Chapters 6 and 9; Walton/Smith Chapters 11 & 13.
Review Power Point Presentations
Quiz 4

Module 5 October 19-October 30.

Subject:

- Presidency
- Executive Branch
- Federal Bureaucracy

Readings: O’Conner, Sabato and Yanus, Chapters 7 & 8; Walton/Smith Chapters 12 & 14.
Review Power Point Presentations
Quiz 5

Discussion Forum #2: Read and Respond to Discussion Prompt

Note: You must respond to the discussion prompt the first week, and two prompts by your colleagues by the end of the second week.

Module 6 November 2-November 13 (November 11, Veteran's Day-Campus Closed).

Subject:

- Political Behavior
- Public Opinion
- The News Media
- Political Socialization and African Americans

Readings: O'Conner, Sabato and Yanus, Chapters 8 & 9; Walton/Smith Chapters 4, 5 & 6.
Review Power Point Presentations
Quiz 6

Module 7 November 16-November 27 (Nov. 26, 27-Thanksgiving Holiday-Campus Closed).

Subject:

- Political Parties and Interest Groups
- Voting, Elections and Campaigns

Readings: O'Conner, Sabato and Yanus, Chapters 11& 12; Walton/Smith Chapters 8, 9, 10.
Review Power Point Presentations
Quiz 7 (You are not required to take this quiz if you are satisfied with your previous grades.
However, you should study the chapters for the comprehensive final exam.

November 30-December 9 *Last Two Weeks of Class*****

- Domestic Policy and Economic Policy

Readings, O'Conner, Sabato and Yanus, Chapter 13; Walton/Smith Chapter 5.
Study Guide: Prepare for Final Exam

E Final will be posted online Monday, December 14, 2009 by noon and removed by Midnight.