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 that students know very little about American Government. This course is also an examination of American political institutions and processes as they relate to African Americans. Therefore, this course will provide you with a critical and realistic examination of the relationship between race, capitalism and American democracy.

The overarching goal of this course will be 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 class discussion and various reading.

TEXTBOOKS


ATTENDANCE

Attendance is required. An excused absence is granted only in cases where you have a legitimate reason i.e., illness or a death. Excuses other than these will be judged on a case-by-case basis. Since there will be times when you legitimately cannot attend, please take a moment in your first meeting to get the name and phone number of a classmate with whom you can share notes.

CLASS PARTICIPATION

Through participation in classroom discussions students are expected to demonstrate that they have read assignments prior to class. Students may also be
required to discuss readings in-group format. Groups will present their findings to the class.

**QUizzes**

There will be 6 quizzes of which the best 5 will be counted. In order to encourage you to complete the reading assignments pop quizzes may also be given throughout the semester. Pop quizzes will constitute a portion of your “class attendance” grade.

**Examinations**

Examinations will test your knowledge and comprehension of information from your class lectures and reading assignments. There will be one cumulative examination for this class. The Exam will comprise of short answer and essay questions. The final will be given in class on December 9, 2003.

**Missed Quizzes and Exams**

If you are absent for a quiz or exam you have the responsibility of contacting me and arranging a make-up. Do not send an email regarding absences. Make-ups must be completed within one week of missing an exam or quiz. Make-up exams will not be given without a valid, written excuse, i.e. notice from physician. Make-up exams will be in essay format.

**Opinion Article/OP.ED.**

Students are required to submit a 500-700-word opinion article on a current event in California. An Op Ed requires that you take a position on an issue and present facts and other arguments that support your thesis. For instance, you can discuss the Recall Election in California, or you can discuss a particular issue of importance to a candidate or a community. I strongly suggest that you review the Los Angeles Times or another major newspaper for formatting your op Ed article. For additional information on how to write an op Ed piece, see Class-Syllabus-American Poli Institutions-Black Perspectiv2.pdf
RESEARCH PAPERS

Please note that your paper assignment for the semester is a "research" paper. The length of your paper should range from 5-7 pages. Each paper will examine a problem or issue in American government and politics. Please refer to your research paper guide for additional information on the format and content of the assignment.

ORAL PRESENTATIONS

Oral Presentations of Research Topics are optional. Student presenters will receive extra-credit of 3 additional points. I must receive notice of your intent to present by October 30, 2003.

POLICY ON TARDINESS

Class will begin promptly at 11:00 p.m. Tardiness is disruptive and will be frowned upon. After a student has been late two (2) times, they will no longer receive credit for attendance after 11:10 p.m.

POLICY ON CELLULAR PHONES AND PAGERS

Cellular phones and pagers are disruptive. UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD STUDENTS RECEIVE CALLS OR PAGES DURING CLASS. If a student must bring cellular phones or pagers to class they must be inaudible.

POLICY ON EATING IN CLASS

WITHOUT EXCEPTION, STUDENTS ARE NOT ALLOWED TO EAT IN CLASS. This includes snacks of any kind, donuts, sandwiches, French fries, etc.

FINAL GRADE CALCULATION

Quizzes--25%
Op Ed—10%
Research paper—25%
Final examination—30%
Class Participation—10%
Optional Oral Presentation—3%
DATES TO COMMIT TO MEMORY

Short Essay Due  September 25, 2003
Paper Topics Due  October 30, 2003
Paper Due  December 4, 2003
Final Exam  December 9, 2003

GRADING METHOD

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

100-90 = A
89 -80 = B
79 -70 = C
69 -60 = D
59 -below = F

ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE

Please note that in the following schedule the assignments are to be discussed on the days indicated.

Week 1: August 26/ 28 : Introduction - Course Outline and Expectations

Week 2: September 2/4: Topic: Overview of American Democracy
The American Governmental Process
Dilemmas of Democracy
Conceptual Frameworks for Analyzing Government
American Values and Ideology
Majoritarian vs. Pluralist vs. Elitist Notions of Government

Assignment: Janda, Chapter 1
Week 3: September 9/11: Topic: Constitutional Government And Federalism
The Constitution: History
The Framer's Vision
Constitutional Change
Evaluating the Constitution
The Slavery Issue
The Bill of Rights
Representations of American Federalism (The Federalist Papers)
Contemporary Federalism and Dilemmas of Democracy

Assignment: Janda, Chapter 2 and 3
Optional: Parenti, Chapters 4-8

Week 4: September 16/18: Public Opinion, Political Socialization and The Media
Political Socialization
Social Groups and Political Values
The Process of Forming Political Opinions
The Media and the Government
Evaluating the Media in Government

Assignment: Janda, Chapter 4

Week 5: September 23/25 Participation and Voting
Democracy and Political Participation
Conventional Participation
Unconventional Participation
Who Participates Why and How
Participation, Freedom, Equality and Order

Assignment: Janda, Chapter 5
Optional: Parenti, pages 192-202

Week 6: September 30/Oct.2 Political Parties, Campaigns and Elections
U.S. Party Politics
The Functions of Political Parties
Party Ideology and Organization
Candidates and Elections
Voter Choice
African Americans and the Two Party System

Assignment: Janda, Chapter 6
Optional: Parenti pages: 179-192

Week: 7: October 7/9  Factions and Interest Groups
Interest groups and the American political tradition
How Interest Groups Form
Interest Group Resources
Lobbying and PACS
Is the System Biased?
Leading African American Interest Groups
Federalist Paper #10, - AG, Appendix, A-12

Assignment: Janda, Chapter 7
Parenti Chapter 5-7, 12

Week: 8: October 14/16  Congress
The Origins and Powers of Congress
ELECTING LEGISLATORS
Congressional Rules
The Congressional Agenda
The Legislative Environment
Leaders and Followers in Congress
The Dilemma of Representation
Representing Black Interests

Assignment: Janda, Chapter 8
Chapter 13- Parenti

Week 9: October 21/23  The Presidency
The Constitutional Basis of Presidential Power
The Expansion of Presidential Power
ELECTING THE PRESIDENT
The Executive Branch
The Role of the President in the U.S. and in the World

Assignment: Janda, Chapter 9
Chapter 14 - Parenti
Week 10: October 28/30  The Bureaucracy
The Development of the Bureaucratic State
Bureaus and Bureaucrats
Administrative Policymaking: The Formal and Informal Process
Reforming American Bureaucracy

Assignment: Janda, Chapter 10
Chapter 15 - Parenti

Week 11: November 4/6  The Courts
The Role of the Courts
Organization of the American Court System
The Supreme Court
Judicial Recruitment
The Consequences of Judicial Decisions

Assignment: Janda, Chapter 11
Chapter 16 - Parenti

Week 12: November 11/13  Order and Civil Liberties
The Bill of Rights
Freedom of Expression
Freedom of Religion
The Right to Bear Arms
Applying the Bill of Rights to the States
The Ninth Amendment and Personal Autonomy

Assignment: Janda, Chapter 12

Week 13: November 18/20  Equality and Civil Rights
Two Conceptions of Equality
The Civil War Amendments
The Dismantling of School Segregation
The Civil Rights Movement
Civil Rights for Other Minorities
Gender and Equal Rights: The Women’s Movement
Affirmative Action
Assignment: Janda, Chapter 13

Week 14: November 25 Thanksgiving Week
Oral Presentations

Week 15: December 2/4
Oral Presentations
Research Papers Due
Final Exam Review