

**DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE  
PSC 111 AMERICAN POLITICS  
Spring 2008**

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**Office Hours: Tue, Thu 9-10  
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Most of you will have had some introduction to the American Political System in high school. This course will place greater emphasis on how to think politically – not just in government, but in everyday life – strategies for getting jobs and managing relationships at work. It will be an argument for total realism when it comes to politics. Some of what you will read and some of what I shall say may upset you, particularly when we examine the challenges for American foreign policy. But I believe that the university is meant to prepare you for the adult world.

The course is divided into three relatively equal parts: principles of political action; how political institutions work; and the principles underlying American foreign policy after 9-11-01. We will spend approximately equal time for each of the sections. Classes will be devoted to examining the arguments made in each chapter of each of the books. But the lectures will not be a repeat of what is in the books. Instead I shall discuss, based on my experiences in politics, what may not be evident in the chapters. While I will lecture, it is my hope that some of you will pose questions or even challenge me to provide greater evidence for my interpretation.

You are responsible for reading, studying, and preparing for exams. Some students in previous classes asked for study guides. I do not believe in them, since I believe that if you are going to succeed in the work world, you will have to take personal responsibility for understanding the work assignment and develop a strategy for accomplishing it. That said, I will answer all questions you might have in preparing your strategy for studying for the exams, but if you are unable to organize your studying on your own, I suggest you find another class to attend.

Your grade will depend on your performance on three exams, one covering each of the books. The exams will be comprised of short-answer questions mixed with true/false and multiple-choice questions. There will be no make-up exams. If you do not do well on the first exam, please come to see me immediately and I shall try to work with you to prepare for the next two.

### **Course Outline**

#### **I. Learning to Think Politically (5 Weeks)**

Chris Matthews: Hardball

Matthews is the host of a daily program called Hardball, on MSNBC. The readings and class discussion will focus on you grasping the political principles that Matthews uses as his chapter titles. We will consider stories he uses to illustrate these principles and try to suggest how you might use them in settings of your own.

#### **II. Politics as it Operates within Government Institutions (5 weeks)**

Gary Wasserman: Politics in Action

This book contains a series of case studies that are designed to expose readers to the challenges that face Americans in having the kind of government we do. As you read each series of studies, I shall provide, in lectures, descriptions of the structures in which the actions are taking place.

### **III. American Foreign Policy after September 11, 2001 (5 Weeks)**

Robert D. Kaplan: The Coming Anarchy

The final book will examine the challenges to American foreign policy in the Post Cold War era and especially the challenge following the destruction of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. It will bring together some of the political principles found in Matthews with some of the institutional challenges found in Wasserman.

#### **CLASS SCHEDULE**

#### **PART I: LEARNING TO THINK POLITICALLY**

Matthews: *Hardball*, Jan. 15-Feb 14(one chapter per class)

#### **EXAM ON MATTHEW: FEB. 19**

#### **PART II: POLITICS AS IT OPERATES WITHIN GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS**

(Feb. 21-Mar. 27)

- 2/21 Declaration of Independence and the Constitution (On Electronic Reserve)
- 2/26 Federalism  
“Federalism” (On Electronic Reserve)  
Wasserman, Ch. 2 “Federalism in Education”
- 2/28 Public Opinion  
Wasserman, Ch. 5 “Abortion and Public Opinion”
- 3/4 Political Parties and Elections  
Wasserman, Chs. 7 and 6. “Parties and Technology” and “Redistricting Reelection”
- 3/6 Congress and Interest Groups  
Wasserman, Chs. 10 and 8: “Networking Congress” and “Harry & Louise vs. Bill & Hillary”
- 3/18 Presidency and the Media  
Wasserman, Chs. 11 and 9. “9/11” and “Media and the Lewinsky Scandal”
- 3/20 The Bureaucracy  
Wasserman, Ch. 12 “The Columbia and Challenger Disasters”
- 3/25 The Judiciary  
Wasserman, Ch 13. “Watergate, *US v. Nixon* and the US Supreme Ct.”
- 3/27 Civil Liberties and Civil Rights  
Wasserman, Chs. 4 and 3 “Freedom of Speech and Campus Codes” and “Affirmative Action at the University of Michigan”

#### **EXAM ON WASSERMAN: APR. 1**

#### **PART III: AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY AFTER SEPTEMBER 11, 2001 (Apr. 3-May 1**

Kaplan: *The Coming Anarchy*: (Chapters 1-7, Ch. 9)

#### **FINAL EXAM WILL BE ONLY ON KAPLAN/**