

# American Politics & Government

Self and Society 261 (Fall 2008)

5th & 6th Hours      Moench A202

Professor **TERRENCE CASEY**

Office: Moench A205

PHONE: 877-8281

E-Mail: [casey1@rose-hulman.edu](mailto:casey1@rose-hulman.edu)

RHIT Mailbox: # 93

Office Hours: MTRF, 4th & 7th hours or drop-in any time.

Homepage (with link to course page): <http://www.rose-hulman.edu/~casey1>



This course offers a broad survey of American national politics and government. We will begin by exploring the constitutional foundations of the American political system and then move on to examine the key institutions of the American state and how they influence political outcomes. Finally, we will explore the cultural foundations of American politics, issues of individual citizen participation and the way in which organized interests seek to influence the government. Finally, we will examine issues of civil rights and civil liberties. Throughout the term we will be discussing the important political choices facing the country today, with a special emphasis on the upcoming presidential elections. By the end of this course you should have a better understanding of the core principles, processes, and institutions of American politics and government.

**Required Reading:** The following are required and are available for purchase (as a single package) in the Rose-Hulman Bookstore.

Samuel Kernell and Gary C. Jacobson, *The Logic of American Politics*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition

Gregory Giroux, *Winning in 2008: A CQ Press Primer to the Candidates and Issues*

Samuel Kernell and Gary C. Jacobson, *The Logic of Politics under Divided Government*

You are also expected to follow current events, particularly the presidential campaign. Read the newspaper or watch the nightly news **EVERY DAY**.

**I. ASSIGNMENTS:** Your grade in the course will be based on the following:

**(A) Three Examinations (20% each; 60% total), tentatively scheduled for Friday, September 26, Friday, October 24, and Friday, November 14.** The exams will consist of a mix of objective (i.e., multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank) and analytical (i.e., short answer, essay) questions drawn from the readings and the lectures. There will not be a cumulative final exam, although some concepts and terms may be asked on more than one exam.

**(B) Issue Papers (10% each; 20% total):** You will be writing TWO papers based on the key issues of current American politics. You may choose any two topics listed in the syllabus below under “Issues for the Election” on which to write or, if you are interested in some other key issue (i.e., gay marriage, abortion), you may write on that *with my prior approval* (but the topic you pick must be significant in the upcoming election). Your papers may be turned in at any time, but your **first paper is due no later than Monday, September 29 (at the start of class)** and your **second paper is due no later than Monday, October 13 (at the start of class)**. Anyone missing either the paper due dates will receive a zero for that paper. Additionally, your papers can be revised and resubmitted for

regrading. You must, however, include the original paper with my comments and you will only receive a higher grade if the revised version shows a **very substantial improvement** over the original. Complete details of the assignment will be handed out separately.

**(C) Presidential Election Project (20%; 10% on activity, 10% on written assignment):** To get a better sense of the issues of the presidential campaign we will hold a series of mock debates in class. Those not directly participating in the debates will undertake related projects: playing the media, creating political ads, polling on campus, etc. Specific assignments will be made in Week 2. The debates will be held during the regular class period in the Kahn Room of the Hulman Union (except for October 21<sup>st</sup>) and are scheduled for:

Debate #1: Economic Policy	Tuesday, October 7
Debate #2: Social Policy	Tuesday, October 14
Debate # 3: Foreign and Defense Policy	Tuesday, October 21 (location TBD)
Debate #4: Open Forum Debate	Tuesday, October 28
<b>ELECTION DAY</b>	<b>Tuesday, November 4</b>

Your grade for this project will be based both on your participation in the debates/activities and a written group paper. Like a real campaign, this is a group assignment, so you sink or swim together. However, you will be evaluated by your peers and if you “free ride” your grade will be reduced accordingly.

**II. COURSE POLICIES:** The following policies apply unless otherwise stated.

**Grading:** Your final grade will be based on a cumulative percentage of points on the various assignments (weighted as outlined above). These will be translated into letter grades as follows:

90-100% = A	80-87% = B	70-77% = C	60-67% = D
88-89% = B+	78-79% = C+	68-69% = D+	59% or less = F

**Attendance and Participation:** Regular attendance and active participation in class discussion is expected. In order to do this effectively, you need to keep up with the reading and stay informed about current events. You are also responsible for all material presented in class and much of the exams will be based on material that will only be presented in lecture. *If you desire a good grade in the course, come to class, pay attention, and take notes!*

**Academic Misconduct:** All cases of academic misconduct, including plagiarism (taking another’s words or ideas and presenting them as your own) or cheating (making use of assistance on an assignment beyond that authorized by the professor) will be punished appropriately. Penalties for academic misconduct are at the discretion of the professor and can range from the loss of all credit on an assignment to a formal hearing before the Institute’s Rules and Discipline Committee. It is incumbent upon you to know what constitutes academic misconduct and make sure to avoid it. If you are in any way unsure about what constitutes a violation, please ask me. ***Claiming ignorance after the fact is not a valid excuse. Think rationally; the risks outweigh the gains.***

**Late Assignments:** Extensions for exams or assignments will only be given if you have a ***legitimate excuse and you contact me in advance. All late assignments will receive a letter grade reduction for each day (including weekend days) that they are late.*** You can reach me via e-mail, voicemail, or by dropping a note in either my campus or HSS mailbox. Short of being in a coma, you should be able to reach me if there is a problem. I am very accommodating to those who alert me to a problem in advance; I will be far less friendly if you approach me after the fact.

**Ideological Perspectives:** I have no intention of trying to indoctrinate you with my beliefs. The issues we will be exploring are often contentious and there are often not right or wrong answers per se. That being said, *there are good and bad arguments.* You may hold any opinion you wish, but ***your arguments must be logically sound and supported by the available evidence.***

Overall, I can only facilitate the learning process; I cannot force knowledge into your heads. You are all adults and fully capable of being responsible students and active learners. If you do not understand something then *you* need to take the initiative to find out the answer -- raise your hand, talk to me after class, come to my office. I cannot read minds, so it is up to you to seek clarity when it is lacking.

## Schedule of Lectures, Readings, and Assignments

The following schedule is tentative and subject to change, particularly in response to political events, although we will cover these topics in this order unless otherwise noted. All reading should be done **prior** to the matching lecture or discussion. When “Student Sources” are listed in the reading assignments, this means that our discussion will be based on articles and information that you have gathered on the subject and bring to class. See the Student Sources Worksheet (which can be downloaded from the course website) for details. Copies of your articles and the Student Sources Worksheet will be collected after each discussion.

### PART I: Constitutional Principles (Week 1-2)

#### WEEK 1: September 4-12

Date	LECTURE or DISCUSSION	READING
Thursday	Introductory Session	<i>Winning in 2008</i> , pp. 1-28
Friday	Discussion -- Who will win in 2008? <i>and</i> The ‘Logic’ of American Politics I	<i>Logic</i> , Chapter 1
Monday	The ‘Logic’ of American Politics II	<i>Logic</i> , Chapter 1
Tuesday	America’s Constitutional Order I	<i>Logic</i> , Chapter 2 and review Declaration of Independence and Constitution (Appendix 2-3 in <i>Logic</i> )
Thursday	America’s Constitutional Order II	READ <i>Federalist</i> 10 and <i>Federalist</i> 51 (Appendix 4-5 in <i>Logic</i> )
Friday	Issues for the Election: National Security	Student Sources

### PART II: Policy-Making Institutions (Week 2-4)

#### WEEK 2: September 15-19

Monday	Federalism	<i>Logic</i> , Chapter 3
Tuesday	Congress I	<i>Logic</i> , Chapter 6, <i>The Logic of Politics under Divided Government</i> (all)
Thursday	Congress II	<i>Logic</i> , Chapter 6, <i>The Logic of Politics under Divided Government</i> (all)
Friday	Issues for the Election: The Economy	Student Sources

**WEEK 3: September 22-26**

Monday	The Presidency I	<i>Logic</i> , Chapter 7
Tuesday	The Presidency II	<i>Logic</i> , Chapter 7
Thursday	The Bureaucracy	<i>Logic</i> , Chapter 8
Friday	<b>FIRST EXAM</b>	<b>Friday, September 26</b>

**WEEK 4: September 29-October 3**

Monday	The Judiciary I	<i>Logic</i> , Chapter 9
Tuesday	Issues for the Election: Immigration	Student Sources
Thursday	The Judiciary II	<i>Logic</i> , Chapter 9
Friday	Issues for the Election: Energy & Climate Change	Student Sources

**First Issue Paper Due on Monday, September 29**

### PART III: The Political Process (Weeks 5-8)

**WEEK 5: October 6-10**

Monday	In-class preparation for presidential debates	
Tuesday	Presidential Debate: Economic Policy	MEET IN HULMAN UNION
Thursday	Political Culture and Public Opinion	<i>Logic</i> , Chapter 10
Friday	Issues for the Election: Government Reform	Student Sources

**WEEK 6: October 13-14**

Monday	Voting and Elections I	<i>Logic</i> , Chapter 11; <i>Winning in 2008</i> , pp. 30-50
Tuesday	Presidential Debate: Social Policy	MEET IN HULMAN UNION
Thursday	<b>FALL BREAK</b>	
Friday	<b>FALL BREAK</b>	

**Second Issue Paper Due on Monday, October 13**

**WEEK 7: October 20-24**

Monday	Voting and Elections II	<i>Logic</i> , Chapter 11
Tuesday	Presidential Debate: Defense and Foreign Policy	LOCATION TBD
Thursday	Political Parties I	<i>Logic</i> , Chapter 12
Friday	<b>Second Exam</b>	<b>Friday, October 24</b>

**WEEK 8: October 27-31**

Monday	Political Parties II	<i>Logic</i> , Chapter 12
Tuesday	Presidential Debate: Defense and Foreign Policy	MEET IN HULMAN UNION
Thursday	Interest Groups	<i>Logic</i> , Chapter 13
Friday	The News Media	<i>Logic</i> , Chapter 14

**PART IV: Rights and Liberties (Weeks 9-10)****WEEK 9: November 3-7**

Monday	Civil Rights & Civil Liberties I	<i>Logic</i> , Chapter 4
Tuesday	Election Day Discussion	
Thursday	Election Results Review	
Friday	Civil Rights & Civil Liberties II	<i>Logic</i> , Chapter 5

**Election Day – Tuesday, November 4****WEEK 10: November 10-14**

Monday	The Dilemmas of Institutional Reform I	<i>Logic</i> , Chapter 15
Tuesday	The Dilemmas of Institutional Reform II	<i>Logic</i> , Chapter 15
Thursday	TBA	
Friday	<b>THIRD EXAM</b>	<b>Friday, November 10</b>