

AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

Course Description

There are two stories to tell about American government: how it was designed to work and how it has actually come to operate. The answers lie not merely in the provisions of the Constitution that outline the structure of government but also in the theoretical arguments that animated the founding over two centuries ago and that continue to animate our political system today. Moreover, answers—and questions—are to be found in corners of the political system that lay outside the explicit Constitutional order but that have attained quasi-Constitutional status, such as political parties, interest groups and public opinion. This course will explore these issues through primary and secondary sources on the American regime.

Course Goals

Students will gain a basic understanding of the theoretical foundations and contemporary operation of the American political system. In particular, students will understand what *The Federalist* contributes to our understanding of the political system; how each of the three branches of government was designed to operate and actually operates; and how political parties, interest groups and public opinion influence the political process.

Required Readings

Nichols and Nichols, *Readings in American Government*
Ceaser, Bessette, O'Toole and Thurow, *American Government: Origins, Institutions and Public Policy* (Fifth Edition)

Course Readings

As our schedule permits, we will read the following. All readings other than the Ceaser text come from Nichols and Nichols (the document number is indicated) unless otherwise specified.

- A. Theoretical Foundations
 - Declaration of Independence (1)
 - The Revolution of Sober Expectations (4)
 - Selections from the Records of the Federal Convention (6)
 - Constitution of the United States (Appendix)
 - Ceaser: Chapter 2

- B. Republicanism
 - The Small-Republic Argument (5)
 - Federalist 10 (8)

- C. Separation of Powers
Federalist 51 (9)

- D. Federalism
Federalist 39 (16)
Purposes Served by Local Self-Government (18)
Ceaser: Chapter 4

- E. Public Opinion
Ceaser: Chapter 5

- F. Political Parties
Ceaser: Chapter 6

- G. Interest Groups
Ceaser: Chapter 7
Lowi, “The Public Philosophy: Interest-Group Liberalism” (JSTOR)

- H. Congress
On Congress (28)
The Need for Cabinet Government (29)
Ceaser: Chapter 10
War Powers Resolution (34)

- I. The Presidency
On the Presidency (36)
Ceaser: Chapters 11 and 14
Political Parties and the Bureaucracy (26)
Campaign Speech on the Presidency (39)

- J. The Judiciary and Rights
The Role of the Supreme Court (46)
Ceaser: Chapter 13
Constitutional Interpretation (53)
Testimony Before the Senate Judiciary Committee (54)