

Political Science Course Syllabi Collection

AMERICAN GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

edited by

Marjorie R. Hershey
Indiana University

DEVELOPED BY

The American Political Science Association

WITH SUPPORT FROM

**The Fund for the Improvement
of Postsecondary Education**

1991

American Government and Politics

Kenneth Janda, Northwestern University*

This course is offered on a quarterly basis for 10 weeks. The average number of students in the course is 240, of which 25% are majors and 75% non-majors. The course is not required of any students except for journalism students, approximately 15% of the class. There are weekly discussion sections which are led by a teaching assistant. Topics for discussion include assigned readings and lecture materials. The format for the course includes 3 50-minute lectures each week and 1 50-minute discussion section.

Note to Instructors

Pedagogical objectives: My goal is to equip students with a set of important concepts to use in analyzing American government and politics long after they have taken the course. In keeping with the major themes in our textbook, *The Challenge of Democracy*, I stress the inevitable conflicts between the values of freedom and order, on the one hand, and between freedom and equality, on the other. Similarly, I require my students to analyze democratic government in the light of conflicting models of majoritarian and pluralist democracy. To encourage their participation in discussion sections, this year I assigned weekly readings from the book *Taking Sides*, by George McKenna and Stanley Feingold. (In the past, I used books with conflicting interpretations of the U.S. economic system: such as Friedman and Friedman *Free to Choose* and Greenberg's *The American Political System*. But I changed my approach with the collapse of socialism across the world.) I also invite my students to engage in various forms of computer-based political analyses, using *IDEALog* (a program for analyzing the value bases of political ideologies), *CROSSTABS* (a program for analyzing attitudes and behavior of voters and members of Congress), and *Videopaths to American Government* (a computer and laserdisc multimedia presentation on five units: Watergate, political participation, presidential popularity, civil rights, and the Vietnam War). Finally, I insist that students demonstrate their understanding of the subject in a seven-page paper, which can be based on any of the computer assignments or on their critique of a newspaper article about American government and politics published since the course began.

*Kenneth Janda is a Professor who has been teaching for 29 years.

Instructor: Kenneth Janda

Teaching Assistants: Sung Gul Hong, Hoon Jaung, Todd Schaefer, Paul Sum

This course surveys the broad and complex subject of American government and politics. This is difficult to do in one quarter, especially when students entering the course vary greatly in their understanding of national politics. I will try to make the subject clear to those with little preparation while challenging those who already know a good deal about American politics.

In this course, you will analyze politics in the U.S. using five major concepts: freedom, order, equality, majoritarian democracy, and pluralist democracy. These concepts form the core of our main text: *The Challenge of Democracy: Government in America*.

Teaching Methods

I am teaching the course this year with support from Apple Computer to study the effectiveness of information technology in college education. Consequently, you will encounter several different methods of teaching this term. I will lecture on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday to the entire class in Harris Hall 107, using forms of computer augmented instruction in my lectures. Each student will also be expected to participate in one of twelve discussion sections, held on Thursday or Friday, taught by advanced graduate students who will employ alternative techniques of instruction. At the conclusion of the course, we will invite your comments about the effectiveness of each teaching method.

As for the readings: they will be substantial, averaging about 100 pages a week, but not overwhelming. Readings will be mentioned in lectures but they will not be systematically reviewed. It is essential, therefore, that you read the assigned material in advance of the lectures. Those who do not will be wasting their time and tuition money. Both the readings and the lectures will figure prominently in the midterm and final examinations.

Methods of Evaluation

Your grade will be determined according to your performance on the midterm examination (counting 25%), the final (40%), a term paper (20%), and other criteria that your teaching assistant establishes for you in your section meetings, which will account for 15% of your grade. The paper should be no longer than 7 pages, double-spaced. Your teaching assistant will explain the nature of the paper in your discussion sections. It is due at your final section meeting, May 24 or 25.

Textbooks

Some comments are in order about each of our texts:

The Challenge of Democracy is a general textbook about government and politics in the United States. Unlike your other texts, it does not argue any particular ideological position. However, it specifically analyzes politics along two ideological dimensions of value conflicts: between the values of freedom and order on the one hand and between freedom and equality on the other. The book also invites students to evaluate government in terms of two models of democracy: majoritarianism and pluralism. Its aim is to get you to think about the values that government ought to pursue and the ways that government should decide how to pursue those values.

Free to Choose, by Milton and Rose Friedman, advocates a minimum role for government. Milton Friedman, the Nobel prize-winning economist, is known to many people as a "conservative," but he styles himself a "liberal" in the classical 19th century sense. That is, he emphasizes freedom of the individual and opposes state intervention in economics and society. In defending competitive capitalism, Friedman opposes a greater role for government in advancing economic and social equality. For the most part, Ronald Reagan was Friedman's kind of president. Yet, the Friedmans make harsh judgments of American government, and of government in general.

America's Hidden Success, by John E. Schwarz, re-examines the public policy records of Democratic presidents before the "Reagan revolution" from a sympathetic position. Schwarz concludes, in effect, that government has solved more problems than it created. Where the Friedmans see black, Schwarz usually sees white—and vice versa. Your job is to balance these books off against each other and learn about American politics in the process.

Reading Schedule

The lectures for this course are intended to follow the schedule below, but adjustments may be made along the way. My lectures will usually treat the subject of that week's readings, but often in a very different manner. In any event, it will always help to read the material before the class to draw more from the lectures. The examination questions will come more or less equally from both the lectures and the readings. You cannot afford to neglect either.

Required Texts

Kenneth Janda, Jeffrey Berry, and Jerry Goldman, *The Challenge of Democracy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989)
Milton and Rose Friedman, *Free to Choose* (New York: Avon Books, 1980)
John E. Schwarz, *America's Hidden Success (revised)* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1988)

Week 1: The Purposes of Government

- 3/26 ORGANIZATION AND ORIENTATION
 3/27 FREEDOM, ORDER, AND EQUALITY
 3/28 THE CLASH OF IDEOLOGIES

Readings: *The Challenge of Democracy (CoD)*, describes the major purposes of government as maintaining order, providing for public goods, and promoting equality. Of these, the most controversial purpose is promoting equality, which accounts for most of the differences between Schwarz and the Friedmans. The readings for this week total 93 pp. Don't fall down early in your reading.

- Janda et al., 1: "Freedom, Order, or Equality?" (27 pp)
 Friedmans, "Preface and Introduction" (10 pp)
 _____, 1: "The Power of the Market" (29 pp)
 _____, 2: "The Tyranny of Controls" (only pp. 30-31, 55-61, which amounts to 9 pp)
 Schwarz, "Preface," xiii-xiv (2 pp)
 _____, 1: "The Decline of Confidence in Government" (16 pp)

Week 2: Democratic Theory

- 4/2 THE NATURE OF DEMOCRATIC THEORY
 4/3 TWO CONCEPTIONS OF DEMOCRATIC THEORY
 4/4 VARIETIES OF DEMOCRATIC THEORY

Readings: "Democracy" as a term is subject to many different interpretations. You will gain a more rounded understanding of the issues involved by working yourself to relate the concepts discussed. The reading on democracy this week is relatively light (88 pp), but I want you to begin reading on the Constitution, for the next week's readings are heavy.

- Janda et al., 2: "Majoritarian or Pluralist Democracy?" (23 pp)
 _____, Essay A: "Transformation in American Politics" (4pp)
 Friedmans, 5: "Created Equal" (21 pp)
 Janda et al., 3: "The Constitution" (40 pp)

Week 3: Institutionalizing Democracy

- 4/9 THE CONSTITUTION AND LIMITED GOVERNMENT
 4/10 FEDERALISM AND LIMITED GOVERNMENT
 4/11 JUDICIAL REVIEW AND LIMITED GOVERNMENT

Readings: Did the framers of the Constitution want a democratic government? Did they favor freedom over order? How did they stand on equality? After the Constitution was written, who would interpret what it said? These are among the questions that you will confront this week in three chapters (106

plus one on the Constitution from the preceding week.

- Janda et al., 4: "Federalism" (31 pp)
 _____, 13: "The Courts" (37 pp)
 _____, 17: "Order and Civil Liberties" (38pp)

Week 4: The Political Nature of the Masses

- 4/16 CHARACTERISTICS OF PUBLIC OPINION
 4/17 THE MASS MEDIA
 4/18 PARTICIPATION AND ELECTIONS

Readings: In a democracy, governments are supposed to respond to public opinion. However, "public opinion" is often so vague or volatile that "government by public opinion" raises serious questions. Similarly, the low level of popular participation in government raises serious questions about "government by the people." The reading this week is average (116 pp).

- Janda et al., 5: "Public Opinion and Political Socialization" (33 pp)
 _____, 6: "Mass Media" (35 pp)
 _____, 7: "Participation and Voting" (38 pp)
 Schwarz, 5: "Public Opinion and the Public Programs of Government" (10 pp)

Week 5: Elite-Mass Institutional Linkages

- 4/23 MIDTERM EXAMINATION
 4/24 THE NATURE OF AMERICAN PARTIES
 4/25 POLITICAL PARTIES AND DEMOCRACY

Readings: One of the major problems in institutionalizing democracy is to devise mechanisms for linking mass opinions and elite actions. Historically, this was the function of popular elections, and political parties arose to facilitate electoral politics. Nowadays, however, Americans tend to be distrustful of political parties, which is unfortunate from the standpoint of democratic government. The reading for this week is light (50 pp) in recognition of the Midterm Examination on Monday.

- Janda et al., 8: "Political Parties, Campaigning, and Elections" (46 pp)
 _____, Essay C: "Transformation of Party Politics" (4pp)

Week 6: Group-Government Linkages

- 4/30 THE NATURE OF INTEREST GROUPS
 5/1 THE IMPACT OF INTEREST GROUPS
 5/2 THE MASS MEDIA AS INTEREST GROUPS

Readings: According to the pluralist conception of democracy,

interest groups serve a valuable governmental function. According to the majoritarian conception, interest groups often frustrate democratic government. Although pluralism equates democratic government with the free interplay of interest groups, Schwarz contends that the interests of the poor fare badly in this competition. The readings this week total to 116 pp.

- Janda et al., 9: "Interest Groups" (34 pp)
 _____, 18: "Equality and Civil Rights" (32 pp)
 Schwarz, 2: "Politics and Performance from 1960 to 1980" (50 pp)

Week 7: Congress and the Presidency

- 5/7 THE CONGRESS AS RULE-MAKER
 5/8 THE OPERATION OF CONGRESS
 5/9 REPRESENTATION AND PUBLIC OPINION

Readings: The U.S. Congress is better suited to pluralist than majoritarian democracy -- as you will see in your readings. In my lectures, I compare the U.S. Congress to legislative bodies in other countries to show how a legislature might operate in a more majoritarian manner. The presidency, on the other hand, is better equipped to advance majoritarian interests -- although it often does not. This week's readings total 116 pages.

- Janda et al., 10: "Congress" (42 pp)
 _____, 11: "The Presidency" (42 pp)
 _____, 12: "The Bureaucracy" (32 pp)

Week 8: The Presidency and the Bureaucracy

- 5/14 THE OFFICE AND THE PERSON
 5/15 THE PRESIDENT AND RULE-MAKING
 5/16 PRESIDENTIAL CONTROL OF THE BUREAUCRACY

Readings: A distinction must be drawn between the *presidency* (the office) and the *president* (the person). Presidential popularity is certainly important in policy making, but even very popular presidents cannot always get their way. One reason why the presidency does not always advance the interests of the majority lies in the difficulty that the president has in controlling the vast federal bureaucracy, which is ostensibly under his power. The readings this week amount to 131 pages.

- Janda et al., 14: "The Washington Community" (28 pp)
 _____, 15: "The Economics of Public Policy" (37 pp)
 Friedmans, 4: "Cradle to Grave" (36 pp)
 Schwarz, 3: "The Political Legacy of the 1960s and 1970s: Run-away Government and a Stagnant Economy?" (30 pp)

Week 9: Making Public Policy

- 5/21 THE BUDGETARY PROCESS
 5/22 POLICIES OF TAXING AND SPENDING
 5/23 FOREIGN POLICY AND ANTI-COMMUNISM

Readings: "What does government do?" We will approach the question from the standpoint of budgeting and expenditures in various policy areas. At 125 pp, the readings are longer than I wanted at this stage of the course, but I could think of no other way to package the material.

- Janda et al., 16: "Domestic Policy" (40 pp)
 _____, Essay D "Transformation of Public Policy" (4pp)
 _____, 19: "Foreign and Defense Policy" (42 pp)
 Schwarz, 6: "The Present and the Past" (39 pp)

Week 10: Policies, Freedom, and Democracy

- 5/29 RESOLVING THE DILEMMAS OF GOVERNMENT
 5/30 FREEDOM, ORDER, OR EQUALITY?
 MAJORITARIAN OR PLURALIST DEMOCRACY?

Readings: If you haven't done so already, this is the time for you to collect your thoughts about American government and to start thinking seriously about your own political philosophy. Schwarz and the Friedmans see different solutions to most political problems. Unfortunately, their prescriptions are diametrically opposed. *CoD* sees more complexity in the political landscape and views the choices that confront government in terms of dilemmas rather than solutions. Ultimately, you must arrive at your own position. In doing so, you should understand the positions of your various authors. Not only will that knowledge help you fashion a political philosophy of your own, but it will help you answer the questions on the *Final Examination*. I regret having assignments over reading week, but they total to only 56 pp. Moreover, the course will soon be over. Then you will be free to act like most other citizens. That means you will probably stop thinking about American government.

- Schwarz, "Epilogue: Looking Back to the Future" (18 pp)
 _____, "Appendix," (5 pp)
 Friedmans, 10: "The Tide Is Turning" (28 pp)
 Janda et al., "Epilogue" (6pp)

FINAL EXAMINATION:

9:00 on Wednesday, June 6