American Government and Politics  
POL 205-810

Instructor:

- Dr. Michael Ruddy  
- Pronounced “Rudd-dee”  
- Not “Roo-dee”  
- Formal Title: either Doctor or Professor

Course Description:

- This course is an introduction to the American political system, including the Constitutional framework: legislative, executive, and judicial functions; as well as the nature of American political parties, interest groups, public opinion, social movements, the media, and the role each plays in contemporary American life.

Instructional Process:

  Part One  
- Instruction will involve the utilization of multiple tracks or sources. Each track will be linked overall but yet independent from the other tracks.

  Part Two  
The text will constitute only one track. The class lecture (with notes) will be another track. Films and videos will constitute a third track.

  Part Three  
- A fourth track will be comprised of readings from the secondary text *The Lanahan Readings in the American Polity*, by Serow & Ladd.

  Part Four  
- A fifth track will be comprised of the weekly current events articles placed on the Penfield Library “electronic reserves” website.  
- During the second class we’ll discuss how to access those readings

  Part Five  
- The student will be responsible for all of the material of each source whether covered in class or not.
• All sources will be questioned on the tests and ultimately the final exam

Instructional Process:
Part Six
• Should you have any questions regarding the material covered, you are encouraged to e-mail me with your question and I will respond either in class or by e-mail without identifying the student who asked.

What does this mean?
• Whether I cover it in class or not, if the information is found in any source (i.e. tracks) you are responsible to know it.

Office Hours:
Walk-in Times: Wednesday 2:00 PM to 2:50 PM also Monday & Wednesday 4:30 PM to 4:50 PM or by appointment
• Office Location: 212 Mahar Hall

Website
• There will be notes, important messages and links to other important materials related to this course on:

  www.oswego.edu/~ruddy

E-Mail:
• ruddy@oswego.edu
• E-mail will be the primary form of communication.
• If you don’t have an e-mail account it is your obligation to get one and use it. Use your Oswego address!

Telephones:
• Campus: 312-3414 (during office hours only)
• Political Science Dept: 312-2350 (to leave message only)
• Home: 298-3634 (for urgent messages only)

Conventional Mail:
• Campus- Political Science Department, 435 Mahar Hall, SUNY Oswego, Oswego, NY 13126

Text:
• The Struggle for Democracy, Greenberg & Page
• Study guide is optional
• **Suggestion:** Share cost and use with a friend.

**Secondary Text**

• The *Lanahan Readings in the American Polity*, Edited by Ann G. Serow and Everett C. Ladd

• **Note:** On the syllabus readings are assigned in the preceding class for the following class.

**Course Objectives:**

• Students will be able to:

• (These are skills and competencies you will have to demonstrate that you possess)

  **One**
  
  Know the terminology, definitions, and basic functions of the American system of government;

  **Two**
  
  Know the elements of a system approach (scientific) to the study of political science;

  **Three**
  
  Demonstrate research skills necessary for the study of public policy;

  **Four**
  
  Know the major issues facing the American political system;

  **Five**
  
  Know the nature of the American political culture;

  **Six**
  
  Recognize the role of power and citizen participation in the American political system;

  **Seven**
  
  Appraise, on the basis of readings and discussions, the strengths and weaknesses of the American political system;

  **Eight**
  
  Recognize the impact of the media upon American politics; and

  **Nine**
  
  Demonstrate an understanding of the role of political efficacy as a component of solving American social and economic problems.

**Evaluation:**

• Quiz # 1 = 40 pts.
• Quiz # 2 = 40 pts
• Quiz # 3 = 40 pts.
• Quiz # 4 = 40 pts.
• Quiz # 5 = 40 pts.
Subtotal = 200 pts.
• Final Exam = 100 pts.
• Total = 300 pts.
Points to Letter Grades

- 280-300 = A
- 270-279 = A-
- 260-269 = B+
- 250-259 = B
- 240-249 = B-
- 230-239 = C+
- 220-229 = C
- 210-219 = C-
- 200-209 = D
- 190-199 = D
- 180-189 = D-
- 0-179 = E

Quizzes:
- There will be five regular quizzes (forty questions each) covering the preceding lessons, lecture, notes, secondary text readings, current events articles and videos.

Secondary Text Questions
- Each of the five quizzes will contain questions related to readings assigned each week from the secondary text, *The Lanahan Readings in the American Polity*, Serow & Ladd

Current Events Questions
- Each week there will be current events articles placed on the electronic reserves website of the Penfield Library.
- Questions from these articles will be on each quiz.

Missing Quizzes
- Absence from a test requires either permission prior to the absence or an excuse from a medical professional, written on medical script.
- Tests missed must be made up during office hours within one week.

Final Exam
- The Final Exam will be administered during the time set forth in the exam schedule.
- The test will divided into two sections:
  - 60 review questions-1 point each
  - 20 overview questions 2 points ea.
Class Participation:
• Each student will be expected to take notes and to contribute to the discussions of the class in a constructive manner (see “Conduct” below). This means reading the required material before class and participating in any discussions, debates, or teacher inquiries.

Attendance:
• Attendance will be taken at every class. Each student is expected to attend every class. Students will be allowed two absences before five points for each absence will be deducted from the final point grade total.
• Students experiencing attendance problems must consult with the instructor.

When You’re Absent
• Acquiring information or fulfilling work missed by the student due to absences is the responsibility of the student.
• Any assistance from the instructor regarding such materials, information, or exercises (including quizzes) will be dealt with during office hours.

Tardiness:
• Students are expected to be on time for class. Students arriving after attendance has been taken will be charged as one-half an unauthorized absence. Students who have used their two allotted absences will be charged five points from their total grade for each tardiness.
• Students missing more than half the class will be charged proportionately at the instructor’s discretion.
• If you have a class immediately before this one which routinely runs long consider dropping either that class or this one.

Tardiness
(Practical Applications)
• All announcements regarding class issues will take place during the first five minutes of class.
• I will not repeat announcements for those who were late.
• If you wish to know announcements, ask when the class has ended

Early Departure:
• Any student who departs class without permission after having signed in, and before the instruction has concluded, will be required for the remainder of the semester to sign in at the end of class in the presence of the instructor to be counted as having attended the class.

Conduct:
• Despite the recent tendency on television and radio to foster confrontational and rude behavior during discussions and debates, our class discussions will require that all students will be treated with the respect and courteous conduct essential to the practice of democracy.
Cheating:
• No form of cheating will be tolerated. Students involved as either the initiator or the accomplice will receive no credit for the quiz or exam.
• Any student found cheating will be required to take all remaining exams and quizzes in a more closely-monitored setting, that is, my office.

Debating Conduct
• The nature of political debate is that it is often emotional.
• You may be encountering political opinions with which you do not agree with or do not respect.
• With the exception of very bigoted or other slanderous opinions-- Mutual respect will exhibited to all views.

Television Debate Etiquette
• Political shows like Crossfire, Hannity and Colms, The O'Reilly Factor, and even Hardball promote a form of political interaction in which participants rarely finish a sentence without being interrupted.
• Just as the professional hockey’s toleration of fighting is antithetical to good sports etiquette- so too are these political debate practices.

Study Habits
• Pace yourself.......Don’t get behind.
• Don’t let tasks go until the last minute
• Set aside a portion of your free time.
• Read in small segments -- Take breaks
• No TV or vocal music in background
• No alcohol consumption beforehand.

Take Notes!!
• When listening to lectures, or discussions in class, and while reading, write down what you think is being said (or written about).
• Even though notes are provided, you should be writing to keep your mind engaged.
• Use the web-based notes as a guide.

Reasons for Note Taking
• Studies have shown the more different ways you engage your mind to any task the more you comprehend and retain.
• When more you are engaged in the process you can ask better questions to clarify the subject matter.
Teacher’s Role

• Structure the process
• Assist the learner (facilitate)
• Maintain Standards
• Impart Skills
• Build upon & Clarify the content
• Resolve Problems
• Advise & Guide
• Evaluate the learner

Why Study Political Science?

• Helps us understand politics/democracy
• Offers insights into contemporary philosophies, affairs and politics.
• Explains the constitutional background for current political events and practices.
• Teaches our heritage
• Develops critical thinking skills

Another Reason

• Our democratic institutions are what make America unique in the world.
• They are the source of our strength
• Knowing how those institutions is essential
• Knowing the Constitutional basis for all is critical

The Scientific Method

The application of a scientific method (protocols) to political research and the objective expression of those findings.

Scientific Method Applied

• The use of scientific methodology to establish data regarding aggregate information.
• The employment of critical analysis in the development of data and theories.
• Avoidance of anecdotal observations
• Reliance on scientific research

Disabilities:

• Any student diagnosed during elementary or secondary school as having a learning disability, or if you have not been diagnosed but you believe you are experiencing considerable difficulty, you should refer to the Disability Services website on the college’s web page.

Disability Services

• Disability Services Office : 210 Swetman Hall
• Phone: 312-3358
• Email: dss@oswego.edu