POIX392
American Politics
SP3 OUA 2016
Dept of Modern History, Politics & International Relations

Contents

General Information 2
Learning Outcomes 2
Assessment Tasks 3
Delivery and Resources 5
Unit Schedule 10
Policies and Procedures 11
Graduate Capabilities 14

Disclaimer
Macquarie University has taken all reasonable measures to ensure the information in this publication is accurate and up-to-date. However, the information may change or become out-dated as a result of change in University policies, procedures or rules. The University reserves the right to make changes to any information in this publication without notice. Users of this publication are advised to check the website version of this publication [or the relevant faculty or department] before acting on any information in this publication.
**General Information**

Unit convenor and teaching staff
Conor Keane  
conor.keane@mq.edu.au

Lorna Barrow  
lorna.barrow@mq.edu.au

Prerequisites

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description
This unit examines the theory, structure and operation of the American political system. It also considers selected contemporary problems in American politics. There is an emphasis on current political issues and events in the United States, though the early part of the unit will also examine some key episodes in US political history. All enrolment queries should be directed to Open Universities Australia (OUA): see www.open.edu.au

**Important Academic Dates**

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at https://www.open.edu.au/student-admin-and-support/key-dates/

**Learning Outcomes**

1. By the end of this unit you will be able to find, analyse and interpret primary and secondary US political sources and present the information in a written form.

2. You will be able to distinguish between competing interpretations of key US political issues, and succinctly express the strengths and weaknesses of these interpretations in written and oral form.

3. You will be able to explain the main features of US political institutions such as the Constitution, Federalism, Congress and the Presidency.

4. You will be able to articulate your knowledge of US politics in forum discussions.
**Assessment Tasks**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
<th>Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Essay</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>26 September (11:55pm)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Essay</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>31 October (11:55pm)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exam</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>27 November (11:55pm)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Participation**

Due: **Ongoing**
Weighting: **10%**

This task requires students to regularly contribute to the discussion board on the unit website. Contributions will typically be between 100 and 250 words long. At the conclusion of the unit, students will be assessed on the quality and regularity of their contributions, with the emphasis being on engagement, clarity and political insight.

*Students must contribute to at least THREE weeks' discussions to pass the course.*

*Students must contribute to at least EIGHT weeks' discussions to pass the assessment task.*

*All contributions must be made by 5pm Friday of Week 13.*

The course cannot be passed unless this requirement it met, even if high marks have been achieved in other components.

Further details of how to go about this assessment are provided under Assessment 1 in Section 14 of the course.

This assessment is **not optional**. Students who expect to have difficulties meeting this assessment’s requirements because of disability or location should contact the tutor at the beginning of the course to discuss alternative arrangements.

This Assessment Task relates to the following Learning Outcomes:

1. By the end of this unit you will be able to find, analyse and interpret primary and secondary US political sources and present the information in a written form.
2. You will be able to distinguish between competing interpretations of key US political issues, and succinctly express the strengths and weaknesses of these interpretations in written and oral form.
3. You will be able to explain the main features of US political institutions such as the...
Constitution, Federalism, Congress and the Presidency

- 4. You will be able to articulate your knowledge of US politics in forum discussions

**First Essay**

**Due:** 26 September (11:55pm)

**Weighting:** 20%

The minor essay is 1000 words. The questions will be released in Section 14 in the first week of semester. Students will be asked to discuss one of the main institutions of US government that we encounter in the first 5 weeks of the unit.

The questions are:

1. In what ways does this US Constitution reflect its historical origins?
2. Discuss the tension in the US Constitution between liberty and effective government.
3. Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of federalism, as expressed in the US Constitution.
4. Discuss the relationship between the Legislature and the Executive as reflected in the Constitution, and comment on the ways in which this relationship has changed since 1787.

Remember: you must fully reference your essay, and provide a complete Bibliography.

This Assessment Task relates to the following Learning Outcomes:

- 1. By the end of this unit you will be able to find, analyse and interpret primary and secondary US political sources and present the information in a written form.
- 3. You will be able to explain the main features of US political institutions such as the Constitution, Federalism, Congress and the Presidency

**Major Essay**

**Due:** 31 October (11:55pm)

**Weighting:** 30%

Write 2000 words on one of the following topics:

1. Some commentators have suggested that the 2008 and 2012 election results signal a major realignment of U.S. politics. Discuss this claim in relation to both the Republican Party and the Democratic Party, and the Congressional election of 2010
2. Discuss the role and influence of money in U.S. electoral politics.
3. Outline the key elements of President Obama’s health care reform package, and discuss the ways in which it illuminates the relationship between Congress and Executive Government?
4. It is often said that lobby groups play a key role in determining political outcomes. Discuss this observation in respect of one lobby group with which you have an interest.
5. Discuss the influence of the Christian Right on the modern Republican Party, from President

https://unitguides.mq.edu.au/unit_offerings/62983/unit_guide/print
Reagan to President George W. Bush.

(6) In what ways does ‘Race’ continue to impact U.S. politics?

Remember: your essay must be fully references and have a complete Bibliography.

Submission: please submit your Examination through the Turnitin link provided. Bear in mind that Turnitin is a plagiarism detection program. Make sure your referencing is complete before submitting.

This Assessment Task relates to the following Learning Outcomes:

• 1. By the end of this unit you will be able to find, analyse and interpret primary and secondary US political sources and present the information in a written form.

• 2. You will be able to distinguish between competing interpretations of key US political issues, and succinctly express the strengths and weaknesses of these interpretations in written and oral form

• 3. You will be able to explain the main features of US political institutions such as the Constitution, Federalism, Congress and the Presidency

Exam

Due: 27 November (11:55pm)

Weighting: 40%

Students will have from Wednesday 23rd November until Sunday 27 November to complete this examination. You will write four short essays. Two of the essays will be based on material from the first half of the course and the other two will be based on material from the section half of the course. More details about the exam will be provided by your tutor via announcements.

This Assessment Task relates to the following Learning Outcomes:

• 1. By the end of this unit you will be able to find, analyse and interpret primary and secondary US political sources and present the information in a written form.

• 2. You will be able to distinguish between competing interpretations of key US political issues, and succinctly express the strengths and weaknesses of these interpretations in written and oral form

Delivery and Resources

This unit examines the theory, structure and operation of the American political system. It also considers aspects of US foreign policy and selected contemporary problems in American Politics. There is an emphasis on current political issues and events in the United States.
Required Readings by Week

Each week has a list of readings. Readings which are not from the set text book are available through the Macquarie Library Multisearch/Unit Readings facility. A link to this facility is provided in the course or access can be directly through the Macquarie Library home-page. Some readings are also available via the internet.

Tips for using Unit Readings:

Course readings are now provided via the Library's Multisearch platform. A link is provided in the course which will take you directly to the Unit Readings for this course. They will come up in author order (author name is after title). If you go directly via the Library's Multisearch facility, you will need to enter the course code. Unfortunately the readings will not come up in any useful order. Here are some tips:

- If you only want one reading, enter the title of the article into the search box. You can do this directly from the Library homepage, without going into Unit Readings, but it is safer to go into Unit Readings first.
- If you want more than one reading, change the 'sorted by' criterion from Relevance to Author. This will bring up all the readings in alphabetic order by author.
- To set more than 10 records per page in the result list, you need to go to 'Sign in' (right top corner) on the Library home page. After signing in using your student number and password, click 'MyLibrary' (right top corner), then 'Personal Settings' (last option on the left), then go to the drop down menu for 'Number of results per page' (on the right), select the number you want (maximum of 50), and then 'Save'.

Sometimes readings drop out of the lists because of copyright problems or because the Library has put the wrong expiry date on the listing (all readings are required to have an expiry date. On campus readings expire at the end of each semester. OUA readings expire 31st December but are rolled over straight away. This should be seamless, but sometimes things go wrong). Please let your tutor know if you cannot find a reading that should be in Unit Readings.

Tip for referencing: if you follow the style presented in this list, you will meet course requirement, but see Referencing Guide in Section 14 for information about specific items.

Week 1: US Political Culture, beliefs and values

Required Reading from set text:


**Week 2: The American Constitution**

**Required Reading from set text:**


**Select Reading available via Macquarie Library Multisearch/Unit Readings:**


---

**Week 3: Political Parties**

**Required Reading from set text:**


**Select Reading available via Macquarie Library Multisearch/Unit Readings:**


---

**Week 4: Political Participation and Elections**

**Required Reading from set text:**


**Select Reading available via Macquarie Library Multisearch/Unit Readings:**


---

**Week 5: Congress**

**Required Reading from set text:**


**Required Reading available via Macquarie Library Multisearch/Unit Readings:**


**Week 6: The Presidency**

**Required Reading from set text:**


**Week 7: The Supreme Court**

**Required Reading from set text:**


**Week 8: Interest Groups**

**Required Reading from set text:**


**Select Reading available via Macquarie Library Multisearch/Unit Readings:**


**Week 9: Religion and Politics**

**Required Reading from set text:**


**Select Reading available via Macquarie Library Multisearch/Unit Readings:**


**Week 10: Race and Politics**

Select Reading available via Macquarie Library Multisearch/Unit Readings:


**Week 11: Social Policy and Welfare**

Required Reading from set text:


Select Reading available via Macquarie Library Multisearch/Unit Readings:


**Week 12: The Economy and Politics**

Required Reading from set text:


Select Reading available via Macquarie Library Multisearch/Unit Readings:

Sprague, Jeb 2009, 'Transnational Capitalist Class in the Global Financial Crisis: A Discussion
Ivanova, Maria N. 2011, 'Housing and hegemony: The US experience,' Capital and Class 35(3): 391-414

Unit Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>Lecture: Introduction: US political culture, beliefs and values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discussion: American exceptionalism, liberalism, capitalism, religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Lecture: The American Constitution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discussion: Republicanism, Federalism, Branches of Government, Separation of Church and State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Lecture: Political Parties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discussion: Democratic and Republican Party: Why no Labor Party?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Lecture: Political Participation and Elections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discussion: Democracy, electoral system for Congress and the Presidency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 5</td>
<td>Lecture: Congress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discussion: Congress as legislator and Policy maker; divided government?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 6</td>
<td>Lecture: The Presidency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discussion: Constitutional versus actual powers; relations with congress; the ‘imperial presidency’?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 7</td>
<td>Lecture: The Supreme Court</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discussion: Judicial Politics Judicial activism; Roe Vs Wade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 8</td>
<td>Lecture: Interest Groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discussion: Domestic and foreign policy lobbies; political action committees; campaign financing; Gun Lobby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 9</td>
<td>Lecture: Religion and Politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discussion: A Protestant nation? The religious right; regulating public morality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Late Submission - applies unless otherwise stated elsewhere in the unit guide

Unless a Special Consideration request has been submitted and approved, (a) a penalty for lateness will apply – two (2) marks out of 100 will be deducted per day for assignments submitted after the due date – and (b) no assignment will be accepted more than seven (7) days (incl. weekends) after the original submission deadline. No late submissions will be accepted for timed assessments – e.g. quizzes, online tests.

Extension Request

Special Consideration Policy and Procedure

The University recognises that students may experience events or conditions that adversely affect their academic performance. If you experience serious and unavoidable difficulties at exam time or when assessment tasks are due, you can consider applying for Special Consideration.

You need to show that the circumstances:

1. were serious, unexpected and unavoidable
2. were beyond your control
3. caused substantial disruption to your academic work
4. substantially interfered with your otherwise satisfactory fulfilment of the unit

https://staff.mq.edu.au/work стратегия, планирование и управление/университетские-политики-и-процедуры/политики/специальный-сочувствие
requirements

5. lasted at least three consecutive days or a total of 5 days within the teaching period and prevented completion of an assessment task scheduled for a specific date.

If you feel that your studies have been impacted submit an application as follows:

1. Visit Ask MQ and use your OneID to log in
2. Fill in your relevant details
3. Attach supporting documents by clicking 'Add a reply', click 'Browse' and navigating to the files you want to attach, then click 'Submit Form' to send your notification and supporting documents
4. Please keep copies of your original documents, as they may be requested in the future as part of the assessment process

Outcome

Once your submission is assessed, an appropriate outcome will be organised.

OUA Specific Policies and Procedures

Withdrawal from a unit after the census date

You can withdraw from your subjects prior to the census date (last day to withdraw). If you successfully withdraw before the census date, you won’t need to apply for Special Circumstances. If you find yourself unable to withdraw from your subjects before the census date - you might be able to apply for Special Circumstances. If you’re eligible, we can refund your fees and overturn your fail grade.

If you’re studying Single Subjects using FEE-HELP or paying up front, you can apply online.

If you’re studying a degree using HECS-HELP, you’ll need to apply directly to Macquarie University.

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from Policy Central. Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

Academic Honesty Policy  http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/academic_honesty/policy.html


12


In addition, a number of other policies can be found in the Learning and Teaching Category of Policy Central.

**Student Code of Conduct**

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: [https://students.mq.edu.au/support/student_conduct/](https://students.mq.edu.au/support/student_conduct/)

**Results**

Results shown in iLearn, or released directly by your Unit Convenor, are not confirmed as they are subject to final approval by the University. Once approved, final results will be sent to your student email address and will be made available in eStudent. For more information visit ask.mq.edu.au.

**Student Support**

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit [http://students.mq.edu.au/support/](http://students.mq.edu.au/support/)

**Learning Skills**

Learning Skills ([mq.edu.au/learningskills](http://mq.edu.au/learningskills)) provides academic writing resources and study strategies to improve your marks and take control of your study.

- Workshops
- StudyWise
- Academic Integrity Module for Students
- Ask a Learning Adviser

**Student Enquiry Service**

For all student enquiries, visit Student Connect at ask.mq.edu.au

**Equity Support**

Students with a disability are encouraged to contact the Disability Service who can provide appropriate help with any issues that arise during their studies.

**IT Help**

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit [http://www.mq.edu.au/about_us/offices_and_units/information_technology/help/](http://www.mq.edu.au/about_us/offices_and_units/information_technology/help/).
When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the Acceptable Use of IT Resources Policy. The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.

**Graduate Capabilities**

**Problem Solving and Research Capability**

Our graduates should be capable of researching; of analysing, and interpreting and assessing data and information in various forms; of drawing connections across fields of knowledge; and they should be able to relate their knowledge to complex situations at work or in the world, in order to diagnose and solve problems. We want them to have the confidence to take the initiative in doing so, within an awareness of their own limitations.

This graduate capability is supported by:

**Learning outcomes**

- 1. By the end of this unit you will be able to find, analyse and interpret primary and secondary US political sources and present the information in a written form.
- 2. You will be able to distinguish between competing interpretations of key US political issues, and succinctly express the strengths and weaknesses of these interpretations in written and oral form
- 3. You will be able to explain the main features of US political institutions such as the Constitution, Federalism, Congress and the Presidency
- 4. You will be able to articulate your knowledge of US politics in forum discussions

**Assessment tasks**

- Participation
- First Essay
- Major Essay
- Exam

**Effective Communication**

We want to develop in our students the ability to communicate and convey their views in forms effective with different audiences. We want our graduates to take with them the capability to read, listen, question, gather and evaluate information resources in a variety of formats, assess, write clearly, speak effectively, and to use visual communication and communication technologies as appropriate.

This graduate capability is supported by:

**Learning outcomes**

- 1. By the end of this unit you will be able to find, analyse and interpret primary and secondary US political sources and present the information in a written form.
3. You will be able to explain the main features of US political institutions such as the Constitution, Federalism, Congress and the Presidency

4. You will be able to articulate your knowledge of US politics in forum discussions

Assessment tasks

- Participation
- First Essay
- Major Essay
- Exam

Discipline Specific Knowledge and Skills

Our graduates will take with them the intellectual development, depth and breadth of knowledge, scholarly understanding, and specific subject content in their chosen fields to make them competent and confident in their subject or profession. They will be able to demonstrate, where relevant, professional technical competence and meet professional standards. They will be able to articulate the structure of knowledge of their discipline, be able to adapt discipline-specific knowledge to novel situations, and be able to contribute from their discipline to inter-disciplinary solutions to problems.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

1. By the end of this unit you will be able to find, analyse and interpret primary and secondary US political sources and present the information in a written form.

2. You will be able to distinguish between competing interpretations of key US political issues, and succinctly express the strengths and weaknesses of these interpretations in written and oral form.

3. You will be able to explain the main features of US political institutions such as the Constitution, Federalism, Congress and the Presidency.

4. You will be able to articulate your knowledge of US politics in forum discussions.

Assessment tasks

- Participation
- First Essay
- Major Essay
- Exam

Critical, Analytical and Integrative Thinking

We want our graduates to be capable of reasoning, questioning and analysing, and to integrate and synthesise learning and knowledge from a range of sources and environments; to be able to
critique constraints, assumptions and limitations; to be able to think independently and systemically in relation to scholarly activity, in the workplace, and in the world. We want them to have a level of scientific and information technology literacy.

This graduate capability is supported by:

**Learning outcomes**

1. By the end of this unit you will be able to find, analyse and interpret primary and secondary US political sources and present the information in a written form.
2. You will be able to distinguish between competing interpretations of key US political issues, and succinctly express the strengths and weaknesses of these interpretations in written and oral form.
3. You will be able to explain the main features of US political institutions such as the Constitution, Federalism, Congress and the Presidency.
4. You will be able to articulate your knowledge of US politics in forum discussions.

**Assessment tasks**

- Participation
- First Essay
- Major Essay
- Exam

**Creative and Innovative**

Our graduates will also be capable of creative thinking and of creating knowledge. They will be imaginative and open to experience and capable of innovation at work and in the community. We want them to be engaged in applying their critical, creative thinking.

This graduate capability is supported by:

**Learning outcomes**

1. By the end of this unit you will be able to find, analyse and interpret primary and secondary US political sources and present the information in a written form.
4. You will be able to articulate your knowledge of US politics in forum discussions.

**Assessment tasks**

- Participation
- First Essay
- Major Essay

**Commitment to Continuous Learning**

Our graduates will have enquiring minds and a literate curiosity which will lead them to pursue
knowledge for its own sake. They will continue to pursue learning in their careers and as they participate in the world. They will be capable of reflecting on their experiences and relationships with others and the environment, learning from them, and growing - personally, professionally and socially.

This graduate capability is supported by:

**Assessment task**

- Participation