

**Political Science 110
American Government
Summer, 2009**

**Dr. Frank McKenna Jr.
118 Williams Hall
H: 352-2326**

The purpose of this class is to provide an introduction to the basic foundations, behavior, institutions, and policies of American government and politics. Students will experience the dynamics of American government while acquiring basic skills and knowledge that will serve as foundations for further study in social science in general and political science in particular. Since this is a web based course, I have included some flexibility in the overall schedule. However, since there is no classroom it is imperative that the student stay in contact with the instructor via the Blackboard Discussion Boards (preferred method since most students tend to raise the same questions) or email (given denial of service viruses do not assume the each email you send will reach the instructor in a timely manner ... that is why I suggest the Discussion Boards as the primary method of communications ... I check them at least twice a day during the week and at least once a day over the weekends if at all possible). We will work out any remaining details as we go along, but for the most part all you need to successfully complete the course will be found on Blackboard.

Course Book:

Fiorina, Morris P., Paul E. Peterson, Bertram Johnson and William G. Mayer. *The New American Democracy*. 6th New York: Pearson Longman, 2009 (*with the publisher's internet access card*).

Course Requirements:

Think of this course as one based on acquiring the necessary points for the grade you desire. In other words, you are not required to complete each assignment found on Blackboard for this course; all you need is enough points for the grade that you want. I'm using a 10,000 point grade scale as explained in my previous email, where: 9,000 to 10,000 = A; 8,000 to 8,999 = B; 7,000 to 7,999 = C; 6,000 to 6,999 = D; and anything less than 6,000 constitutes an F. Simply accumulate the number of points for the grade you desire and you're golden. A couple of grading matters to keep in mind; I don't employ a curve and I am not responsible for either your PC or internet connection. Since this is a web based course make sure your PC is in working order and that you have no outstanding ISP issues.

Pedagogy & Work:

A very big difference between this on-line version and a regular introductory class is the lack of lectures and immediate follow-on objective (multiple choice, true-false, etc) quizzes and exams per course part or section. I'm essentially using an "Open University" model of pedagogy for this course whereby the student simply follows the format provided for the material and works independently toward completing the assignments. I will not be standing over you in a sense and telling you when to submit your work in a traditional manner. If you work well independently than you should do well in this class; however, if

you need firm deadlines and someone pushing you to complete the assigned tasks I suggest you find another course. In short, I set the framework and you follow; much discretion is granted the student under this approach. You will, for example, have to read the relevant chapters in the main text without the “threat” of a “pop” quiz or the inevitability of a normally scheduled exam (but after all, you are paying for this course; you are the so-called “customer”...so why would you not??). There are many self-help resources contained in this course; however, the use of these items is not linked to your final grade (just the items noted below are). They are simply included as additional educational resources; consider them as extensions to the chapter study guides.

I strongly encourage that you make use of all the course resources ... and there are many ... but remember that most of your points are earned via the “Chapter” tab: Simulation, Debate, Comparative, Timeline, and Visual Literacy exercises. Your remaining exercises are found within the “Multimedia” tab: ABC, Debate, and Roundtable videos as well as the weekly PoliSci News Review quizzes that are incorporated into your participation grade as explained in my previous email.

The on-line Discussion Board is the closest item available for this class that simulates some of the give and take in classroom banter between the instructor and the students. The last time that I used this format, my traditional POLS 110 class posted nearly two thousand messages, though this was expected because a presidential campaign was underway! However, I prefer if the students take the initiative in this respect. I don’t want to dominate the “Board” so plan to be assertive. If you post at least two substantive as opposed to perfunctory responses or questions per week, preferably with accompanying web links or attachments, you should earn the points available for this assignment.

Course Outline:

For the most part, you get to work at your own pace in this class ... many students simply have unique schedules, work-habits, personal concerns, families, etc. so I will not adhere to a formal framework. When the university requires a grade report at the end of the session, you will receive a grade ranging from an “A” to an “F”; I have no intention of automatically assigning “Incomplete” grades but instead will simply use the “F” grade. “Incomplete” grades will only be assigned in response to unusual circumstances, with short deadlines, and what I will deem to be sufficient written documentation. In short, plan to complete your work by 5:00pm on Friday June 26th – the official deadline for completing this class. This web page goes off-line at that time and date.

If you do the work in the proscribed manner, I believe that you will find that this course is not all that difficult. Though I’m a bit specific in this syllabus, my intention is simply to provide answers in anticipation of questions that have been consistently raised over the years. If I have not addressed a particular concern, please raise such questions on-line and most of all if you run into problems be sure that you consult with me sooner rather than later.