

Policy Studies Organization

From the Selected Works of David Mena Alemán

Fall 2013

U.S. Society and Government

David Mena Alemán, *Policy Studies Organization*



Available at: https://works.bepress.com/david_mena/9/

Syllabus of *U.S. Society and Government* Autumn 2013, Professor David Mena

Room C232 Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday 16-18 hrs david.mena@iberor.mx

Rules of the Game

1. Wi Fi off in classroom
2. You may read your messages but on no account answer them in the classroom
3. Do not insist in getting in the classroom after 11:10
4. All students must follow IR Department's Chicago Style Guide
http://www.iberori.org/doctos/manual_chicago.pdf Native English speakers must request English version
5. Always bring syllabus and reading booklet to the class
6. Plagiarism carries the penalty of failing with zero the activity in which said malpractice is incurred.
7. All written work must be delivered to me via email.

Evaluation: 1 Assignment (20%) 2 essays each amounting to 40 percent of the final mark

Deadlines: Assignment Tuesday February 5th, 1st essay Thursday March 8th and 2nd essay April 11th

N.B. Students that either fail with 5 or barely pass their 2nd Essay will be allowed to give a class presentation on *Current Issues* which may receive 1 point if good or 2 if excellent. Students with 8 in their 2nd essay can volunteer for giving the commentary on the feature or film of *Juicy Slices of Americana*, see topics available at the end of the Schedule.

Schedule:

Tuesday January 15th

The Federal Presidential Constitutional Design

Division of powers, horizontal and vertical

Vetoes and limited government

Constitutional entrenchment of rights

Thursday January 17th

The Least Gentle and Kind of all Advanced Democracies I

Alfred Stepan and Juan J. Linz. "Comparative Perspectives on Inequality and the Quality of Democracy in the United States," *Perspectives on Politics* 9, (December 2011), 841-7.

Tuesday January 22nd

The Least Gentle and Kind of all Advanced Democracies II

Alfred Stepan and Juan J. Linz. "Comparative Perspectives on Inequality and the Quality of Democracy in the United States," 848-54.

Thursday January 24th

Film Day

"So unequal a confederation": Grisham's view of power asymmetries in contemporary American society. *The Rainmaker* – Film directed by Coppola.

Tuesday January 29th

Madisonian Values and Institutional Design

James Madison, "The Federalist 10," available at <http://www.constitution.org/fed/federa10.htm>

Assignment for February 5th

General Question: What evidence is there to hold that under the Madisonian institutional design some minorities would be guaranteed advantages of status, power, and wealth that a majority would be unable to suppress?

Answer the general question by answering the following specific questions:

What particular designs guarantee those advantages?

What principles are used to justify those advantages?

How have those minorities been able to control majorities?

SPECIFICATIONS: 3 PAGES, DOUBLE-SPACED, FONT 12, CHICAGO REFERENCING STYLE.

Thursday January 31st

Writing Skills 01

Charles Lipson, *Doing Honest Work in College: How to Prepare Citations, Avoid Plagiarism and Achieve Real Academic Success*, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 32-48.

Tuesday February 5th

Class Discussion on the General and Specific Questions of the Assignment

Thursday February 7th

The Libertarian Legacy I

Craig Duncan and Tibor Machan, *Libertarianism: For and Against*, (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers), 2005, 3-44.

Tuesday February 12th (Assignment grades)

The Libertarian Legacy II

Duncan and Machan, *Libertarianism: For and Against*, 45-75.

Thursday February 14th (Class cancelled)

Tuesday February 19th

Madison's Revisionism

Robert A. Dahl, *How Democratic is the American Constitution?* (New Haven and London: 2002), 7-39.

Thursday February 21st

The Supreme Court: Not Always a Friend of Equality

Robert A. Dahl, *Democracy and its Critics*, (New Haven CT and London: Yale University Press, 1989), 187-92 and n.8. in 359.

Essay for March 7th

ESSAY TOPIC: Show how the different aspects in which Madison's preference for, and design of, a countermajoritarian democracy are consistent with Libertarian values and principles and show what aspects he would have designed differently if he had been influenced by Liberal Egalitarianism.

SPECIFICATIONS: 7 PAGES, DOUBLE-SPACED, FONT 12, CHICAGO REFERENCING STYLE.

Tuesday February 26th

Key Features of the American Political System

Robert A. Dahl, *How Democratic is the American Constitution?* 41-72.

Thursday February 28th

Writing Skills 02

Kate L. Turabian, *Student's Guide to Writing College Papers*, 4th Edition, (Chicago Ill: University of Chicago Press), 89-98.

Thursday March 7th

Class discussion on the Film's Question

Tuesday March 12th

On the Electoral College

Dahl, *How Democratic is the American Constitution?* 73-89.

Thursday March 14th

On the Constitution

Dahl, *How Democratic is the American Constitution?* 91-119.

Tuesday March 19th (1st Essay Grades)

U.S. Politics Today

Thad Kousser and Austin Ranney, "Politics in the United States," Eds. J. Bingham Powell Jr. et. al., *Comparative Politics Today*, 10th edition, (New York: Longman, 2011), 664-77.

Thursday March 21st (Hand out of 2nd Essay for April 11th)

Kousser and Ranney, "Politics in the United States," 677-80.

Tuesday March 26th (Easter Holiday)

Thursday March 28th (Easter Holiday)

Tuesday April 2nd

Kousser and Ranney, "Politics in the United States," 680-89.

Thursday April 4th

Kousser and Ranney, "Politics in the United States," 689-707.

Tuesday April 9th

Writing skills 03

Turabian, *Student's Guide to Writing College Papers*, 115-28.

Thursday April 11th (Deadline for the 2nd Essay)

Class discussion on essay topic

Tuesday April 16th (2nd Essay Grades)

Student Presentation (Current Political Issues I)

Obama's Campaign Promises. Is he an Egalitarian or a Libertarian?

Thursday April 18th

Student Presentation (Current Political Issues II)

Romney's Campaign Promises. Is he an Egalitarian or a Libertarian?

Tuesday April 23rd

Student Presentation (Juicy Slices of Americana Part I)

Comments on TV Feature of Scorsese's ***Gangs of New York*** and first 30 minutes of Altman's ***Kansas City***.

Thursday April 25th

Student Presentation (Current Political Issues III)

How did Citizens Vote in the 2012 Election? How can you show that there is Polarization?

Tuesday April 30th

Student Presentation (Juicy Slices of Americana Part II)

Last 90 minutes of Altman's **Kansas City** and Comments.

Thursday May 2nd (Class cancelled)

Tuesday May 7th

Student Presentation (Current Political Issues IV)

How did the Electoral College Vote in the 2012 Election? Is There Evidence of Political Inequality in the Way it Voted?