Introduction to the American Political Process

The Role of Government: Institutions and Politics
Central Questions

- What is the purpose of government?
- What should we ask government to do?
- How should we evaluate government?
What should government do?

- Different governments have different standards
- At different times in American history, we have had different answers
  - New Deal
  - Civil Rights
The Duties of Government

- Government needs means of coercion and means of collecting revenue
- But we expect more
  - Public goods
  - Property rights
  - Assure democracy
  - Protect individual liberties
  - Resolve disputes
  - Define and guarantee justice and fairness
- Controversies and tradeoffs
Politics and The Control of Government

Politics: The battle over the right to make decisions concerning the scope and rule of government.”

“the struggle over who gets what, when, and how”

This course deals with Government and Politics
Strategizing About Campaign 2000

One candidate wins the popular vote, the other wins the electoral vote. What happens?

**Winner of Electoral Vote:** “Then we win. You play by the rules in force at the time.”

Vs.

**Losers of Electoral Vote** “The one thing we don't do is roll over. We fight.”

**Strategy:** In league with the campaign - which is preparing talking points about the Electoral College's essential unfairness - a massive talk-radio operation is encouraged.
The American System

The Backdrop of the Constitution: Articles of Confederation
- The Confederation (1781-1787)
- Power with States
- In sum: *A big mess*

Constitutional Convention
- Compromise
Structure of Government

- Federal System
- Presidential/Congressional system
- SOP/Checks and Balances
- Republicanism
- Textual Government
- Cabinet
- Independent Judiciary
- Bill of Rights
Structure of Government (cont.)

- Flawed by design
- Interaction of Government and Politics