

Montgomery College – Rockville Campus
Department of History & Political Science
POLI – American Government

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Course Description:

Structure, powers, & processes of the American political system: executive, legislative, & judicial branches; civil liberties, federalism, democratic patterns & backgrounds, public opinion, pressure group politics, political parties, constitutional mechanisms, & administrative establishment; foreign & domestic policy. Emphasis on national level.

PS 101 fulfills a General Education Program Behavioral & Social Sciences Distribution requirement. Montgomery College's General Education Program is designed to ensure that students have the skills, knowledge and attitudes to carry them successfully through their work and personal lives. This course provides multiple opportunities to develop two or more of the following competencies: written and oral communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, technological competency, and information literacy. For more information, please see www.montgomerycollege.edu/gened.

Credits, Hours, Prerequisites:

- A. Three (3) Semester Hours Credit.
- B. Three (3) Class Hours Per Week; Zero (0) Laboratory Hours Per Week.
- C. Prerequisite: EN 101/EN 101A

Student Outcomes:

Upon completion of this course, the student will be able to:

- A. Define, describe, and state the significance of the Constitution and the embodied key concepts of separation of power, checks and balances, and federalism.
- B. Demonstrate an understanding of the institutions of the U.S. government and their general roles and functions in the republic.
- C. Identify the other major components and their roles in our republic: interest groups, media.
- D. Demonstrate an understanding of American political culture: the values and the process of elections and lobbying.
- E. Analyze, interpret, and critically examine current political events.

Student Materials Required:

Textbook: Open Educational Resource

Reserve readings from assorted regional & national publications.

Evaluation:

A student's final grade in this course will be determined as followed:

- 60% - Two (2) examinations based upon textbook, class lectures, & class discussions. Any make-up exams must be completed within two weeks of the missed exam & **will not be eligible for any bonus opportunities**. Each exam will have a take home component & the final will not be cumulative.

40% - There will be three **Miscellaneous Assignments** which will count collectively as 40% of your overall final grade. Each of these assignments will include a written component, but will also involve critical thinking, the text, & outside sources. While there may be some alteration to this schedule, please expect these assignments to include **some potential for extra credit possibilities** as well.

A student's **final grade** in this course will be based upon the following scale:

90-99:	A or superior work
80-89:	B or very strong work
70-79:	C or average work
60-69:	D or below average work
59 or below:	F or failing work

Student Behavior Standards: Students are expected to be familiar with and to abide by the student behavior standards as noted in the current Montgomery College Catalog and Student Handbook.

Attendance Policy: Class attendance is essential to building fundamental understanding, especially in light of the scope of the subject matter. Therefore, I expect you to attend class regularly & to realize that failure to do so will definitely affect your grade. You are allowed three unexcused absences this semester. In addition, you are expected to be in the classroom ready to work at the appointed hour. It is your responsibility to be on time, ready, & attentive.

Important Student Information Link: In addition to course requirements and objectives that are in this syllabus, Montgomery College has information on its web site (see link below) to assist you in having a successful experience both inside and outside of the classroom. It is important that you read and understand this information. The link below provides information and other resources to areas that pertain to the following: student behavior (student code of conduct), student e-mail, the tobacco free policy, withdraw and refund dates, disability support services, veteran services, how to access information on delayed openings and closings, how to register for the Montgomery College alert System, and finally, how closings and delays can impact your classes. If you have any questions please bring them to your professor. As rules and regulations change they will be updated and you will be able to access them through the link. If any student would like a written copy of these policies and procedures, the professor would be happy to provide them. By registering for this class and staying in this class, you are indicating that you acknowledge and accept these policies.

<http://cms.montgomerycollege.edu/mcsyllabus/>

Best Practices

1. Use the book! I know it is free, but it is important to use for take home quizzes.
2. Take thorough notes during lectures – you will need them to succeed on exams. Use all the materials I provide on MyMC.
3. **Make sure you watch the videos.** I am beginning to phase the textbook out in favor of using videos. If you do not study the videos, it will really cost you on exams.
4. **There will be some off-campus activities during the semester.** In previous semesters, we have completed court simulations in downtown Rockville, toured Congress, completed scavenger hunts in the Supreme Court, & worked with simulations at the State Department. Please make a point to attend these activities.
5. Make-up & late assignments will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. You will have two weeks to make-up an exam, but taking the full time usually results in a lower grade. Late assignments will be penalized a letter grade per day. All written assignments must be submitted before exam week.
6. At the end of the semester, I typically need a break too. Do not be late with end of semester assignments & final exams. **Please do not miss the due dates for the take home quizzes.**

7. If you have a legitimate reason for not completing assignments by the end of the semester, I will no longer give "incompletes." I will give you an "F" & then change the grade when the work has been completed. This is an easier way to do the paperwork.
8. Neither cheating nor plagiarism will be tolerated in any form. The penalty for having committed either one of these violations is a **failing grade** for the course. **NO EXCEPTIONS!**
9. Beepers, cell phones, & other disruptive devices must be silenced before you enter the classroom. Accidents happen (to me as well), but please do not make it a regular occurrence.
10. Discussions will become heated sometimes depending on the issues. Please treat the instructor & each other with respect at all times.
11. Student email using Blackboard server is an official means of communication for the College. It is expected that you check your student email regularly, as you are responsible for information and announcements that will be sent to you from the College.
12. I am not a mind reader, so please contact me via email, telephone, or in person if you find yourself struggling with assignments, course content, or exams. It is advisable to contact me prior to exams. Please contact me as soon as possible with questions after an exam as well.
13. I maintain an open door policy & I take this very seriously. If there is any sort of issue, please contact me. I cannot attempt to address something if I do not know it exists. I also cannot successfully address an issue if I hear it from a third party – meaning from someone other than you.
14. If you have a DSS accommodation, please let me know if there problem with the accommodation before you take the exam. I will ALWAYS make the necessary changes to provide you with the appropriate accommodations if you tell me before taking an exam. It is your responsibility to notify the testing center & me if an accommodation has not been met. If you do not do this, you have taken the exam without the accommodation by conscious choice.
15. Enjoy yourself. This is a challenging course that will open your eyes if you prepare & participate. Good Luck!

Schedule, Readings, & Assignments

Citizenship in Our Changing Democracy

Course Reserves

Catholic School Teacher's Pregnancy Sparks Lawsuit
School suspends boy for drawing
A case of implicit bias
Ladies' Night
Tubman: Is it "politically correct" to put her on the \$20?

The Constitution: The Foundation of Citizens' Rights

Course Reserves

Newest source of Teen Ire: Webcams in their Cars
Assault on separate powers
Sending the US to war is not the president's call
Child porn law upheld
Stopping revenge porn
Fired for beauty
The court endorses a land grab
Social media & free speech
Tweet charge

*Deportation case hinges on attorney's bad advice
I feel betrayed*

Federalism: Citizenship & the Dispersal of Power

Course Reserves

*Confederate statutes: What do they stand for?
Abortion: First, please view the fetus
Immigration: The crackdown in Arizona
Stop & Frisk: Have cops unfairly targeted black men?
Stop & frisk update*

Ideology

Reading Assignments & Course Reserves

America's past vs. its future

Civil Rights: Toward a More Equal Citizenry

Course Reserves

*Is NBA dress code racist?
Misc. Civil Rights
Why men resist "pink-collar" jobs
Surgeon General: Is she too fat?
The origins of affirmative action
How the Senate's age is catching up with business in Washington?
Can we talk about the gender pay gap?*

Exam #1

Congress: Doing the People's Business

Course Reserves

*Male politicians rue the ex factor
Protecting our kids or jeopardizing everyone's freedom
Child Porn: Defining a "real" pedophile
Insulting blacks
Calif. Screaming no spanking
Women in Congress
Rigging elections, the legal way
How impeachment works
Stop worrying & love the filibuster
The battle over voter ID*

The Presidency: Power & Paradox

Course Reserves

Is Cruz, born in Canada, eligible for presidency?
Birthers': A Movement that won't go away
The president's absolute power
Pardons: Trump's get-out-of-jail-free card
New York City: Trump Sued
Executive orders are great – until the next executive
Bergdahl: Was it a mistake to buy his freedom?
A profitable presidency
The state of our union? Dull.

The Courts: Judicial Power in a Democratic Setting**Course Reserves**

School suspends boy for drawing
Cell-phone photos spur legal query
Cellphone privacy upheld
The keepers of the Constitution
Locked up for being poor
Justices return

Civil Liberties: Expanding Citizens' Rights**Course Reserves**

Washington school bus driver not a fan of bus
Only lesson from this game is disrespect
Free Speech: the ultimate test
Church & state: giving the devil his due
Cursing: Not on TV, you don't
Political Dissent: When protestors pack heat

Final Exam –