

Takoma Park/Silver Spring Campus
Department of Humanities
POLI101-American Government
TEMPLATE

Course Description:

Structure, powers, and processes of the American political system: executive, legislative, and judicial branches; civil liberties, federalism, democratic patterns and backgrounds, public opinion, pressure group politics, political parties, constitutional mechanisms, and administrative establishment; foreign and domestic policy. Emphasis on national level. *Assessment levels: ENGL101/101A, READ120. Three hours each week. Formerly PS101*

Required course material: We the People: An Introduction to American Politics, 11th Edition, Benjamin Ginsberg, Theodore J. Lowi, Margaret Weir.

In addition, students must read or visit the website of at least one of the following media sources on a daily basis:

The Wall Street Journal	The Washington Post
The New York Times	News.bbc.co.uk
The Guardian	www.slate.com
Politico.com	www.cbc.ca/news
english.aljazeera.net (or Al Jazeera America)	TheHill.com
http://www.onlinenewspapers.com/	LinkTV
Fox & Friends	Buzzfeed*

-Additional readings may be assigned by the instructor.

Optional course material

A More Perfect Constitution Why the Constitution Must Be Revised: Ideas To Inspire A New Generation by Larry J. Sabato. ISBN→0-8027-1683-0

We the Students, 4th Edition, by Jamin Raskin ISBN 978-1-4833-1919-3

Course Outcomes:

Upon course completion, a student will be able to:

- Define, describe, and state the significance of the Constitution and the embodied key concepts of separation of power, checks and balances, and federalism.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the institutions of the U.S. government and their general roles and functions in the republic.

- Identify the other major components and their roles in our republic: interest groups, media.
- Demonstrate an understanding of American political culture: the values and the process of elections and lobbying.
- Analyze, interpret, and critically examine current political events.

Teaching procedure:

To achieve these objectives, we will be making use of selective readings, readings, videos, music, film, guest speakers and field trips, in an attempt to create an active learning environment. Government can be a dry and boring subject without input from the learner. Therefore, attendance and participation are essential. Each week we will be focusing on a part of the political system. The three main divisions are the foundations, institutions, policy and politics. One theme throughout the course will be how to repair broken government and/or political institutions.

The amount of time we will spend on each period will vary depending on the amount of important and relevant events that take place in that period, and the amount of knowledge you already have on it. The course will not be a straight lecture of your book, nor consist of memorizing names. Rather, students will take an active role in searching for evidence, examining viewpoints, analyzing cause and effect, making conjecture and understanding the relevance of American government.

Assessment & Grading Policy

Students’ grade for this course will depend on their ability to demonstrate their understanding and measurement of the outcome listed in page 1 of the syllabus.

Grading Policy

The following grading standard will be used:

5 Tests (100 points each; lowest score dropped).....	400 points
Final project: Service Learning Journal and Portfolio or Research Paper.....	300 points
Outside the Bubble Report.....	100 points
Participation.....	200 points
Extra credit...(50 points maximum).....	TBD

Total 1000 points

900-1000 points=A

800-899 points =B

700-799 points=C

600-699 points=D

0-599 points =F

A	Superior work; student demonstrates comprehensive knowledge and understanding of subject matter and course objectives
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B	Good; student demonstrates moderately broad knowledge and understanding of course objectives
C	Average; reasonable knowledge and understanding of course objectives
D	Pass without recommendation; minimum knowledge and understanding of course objectives
F	Failure; unacceptable low level of knowledge and understanding of subject matter. F is also for excessive absences, academic dishonesty or misconduct.

Five Tests (including midterm and final).....400 points

(100 points each; lowest score dropped)

Part of the test will be a test of details and terms using multiple choice or cloze items (fill-in-the-blank). The second part of the test consists of short answers and brief essays. This is your opportunity to analyze events and demonstrate your knowledge and material covered. You should also expect questions on how to improve or repair elements in the American political and/or government structures.

Please note: All tests will be reviewed in class, but students will not be allowed to keep test questions.

Final Project: Service Learning Portfolio or Research Paper...300 points

Service learning is “the process of integrating thoughtfully organized service experiences with guided reflection to enhance student learning of course materials.” In a democratic society that virtually demands participation from citizens, use of civic and governmental knowledge is critical. In order to expand your opportunity to use your knowledge of government, students in this class are expected to complete 15 hours of service learning in the Montgomery County. Service learning completed in the six months prior to this class may be accepted at the discretion of the instructor.

To get credit for the service learning a student **must complete a service learning portfolio** which must include a timesheet signed by the supervisor at the site(s), material indicating the purpose and mission of the site(s) and a journal reflecting on the service learning you completed detailing your experiences, what you learned, challenges, and the contrast between the ideal principles of government and the actual reality of governing. Photos are recommended.

Only complete portfolios will be graded. Your grade for the journal will be based partially on the thoroughness and thoughtfulness of your journal.

For students who choose not to do service learning, the alternative assignment is a **research paper**. This paper must be at least 7-8 pages double-spaced, typewritten pages in 12-point font. Essentially the topic will be related to reform and revision of the American governmental and/or political system. More specific information on allowed topics will be provided by the instructor.

Outside the Bubble Report.....100

I would like all students in this class to spend some time with someone “on the other side of the aisle.” Spending some time means in conversation or going to a campaign event. If you choose to have a conversation you will have to ask some questions about candidates, favorite policies, etc. You may already have a sense of where you are politically, if you do not, you will by the time we are done with Unit 2 on political campaigns and political parties. To get credit for this exercise you must turn in a brief essay (1-3 pages) describing the person you met or the event you went to. This essay can be written in the first person.

Active Learning.....200 points

Attendance and participation is a critically important aspect of the class. Even if talking is difficult, asking questions and participating in group work is expected.

Completion of in-class assignments is counted toward the participation grade. The in-class assignments could be debates, interviewing a guest speaker, film review, reading summary, or a summary of a field trip. **On the final day of class there will be a college-wide comprehensive course assessment. Your score will be included in your participation score.**

Please note: The Outside the Bubble Report and the Service Learning Portfolio must be printed. Other papers must be sent through Blackboard.

Attendance policy

Good attendance is essential. Students who accumulate more than two consecutive absences may be dropped from the course at the instructor's discretion.

Anyone more than 15 minutes late is considered absent.

Students with 9 or more *total* absences cannot get a active learning score of more than 70% (C).

Students with no more than 3 *total* absences will automatically get 10 points added to their active learning score.

Attendance is a necessary part of this course because much of the test material comes from the class lectures, in addition to the participation assignments.

There will be 30 class meetings for this course. If you think you will have problems to attend at least 24 of the 30 sessions, you should seriously consider dropping.

Please note: missing one class will have only a minor impact on your attendance score; consider it a personal day. There is no need to present doctor's notes, doctor appointments, etc. for missing a class. There are no excused absences. Missing class is a part of adult life. It is the measure of your resolve to figure out how to make up for missing class: do you have a classmate that you can get notes from? If you missed a participation exercise, do you have a plan for doing extra credit to makeup the missing points? If your car breaks down and you have already missed two classes, what's your 'plan B'? And if you miss a test, there are no make-up exams. **However, as mentioned above, if you see yourself missing six or more classes, you should consider withdrawing.

Make-up policy

If you have a situation where you can't come to class on a scheduled test date, please inform me at least one week beforehand so I can arrange for alternative time to take the test at the Assessment Center. There are no make-up tests.

Late work- Assignments, papers, etc. are due at the beginning of class on the respective due date. Reviewing late work slows down the grading process and is not fair to students who turned assignments in on time. *Therefore, in order to be fair to other students, I will not take papers once grading has begun, usually no more than 24 hours after the due date.*

Academic Integrity

***College guidelines for academic integrity are strictly enforced. Copying materials or otherwise using the words, thoughts, audio/video/graphic files of others is plagiarism, which could result in various penalties ranging from project failure to course failure. Please refer to the Student Code of Conduct in the Student Handbook.*

Important 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/>

Classroom Behavior & Policies

Please follow these guidelines:

- ❖ Come to class on time and prepared.
- ❖ Do not invite outside guests without the professor's prior knowledge.
- ❖ Keep the classroom clean and orderly. Food and drinks are not permitted in the classroom.
- ❖ We are in a democratic and diverse culture- that means in this classroom you may read, see or hear ideas that will broaden and/or challenge your understanding of U.S. history and government. I expect to hear reasoned and thoughtful observations and insights from you that can contribute to the course. *So people can feel comfortable expressing their opinion, it is important to be respectful of other people's ideas, values and beliefs.*
- ❖ Speaking up is encouraged. The only stupid question is the unasked one!
- ❖ Out of respect for all the students, please switch off cell phones during class. If you are an emergency contact, please let me know at the beginning of class, switch your phone to vibrate, excuse yourself if you have to take a call, and take the call outside. Repeated cell phone use in class will result in an absence.
- ❖ The Academic Success Center can assist you with doing a paper and/or doing research.

Week 1

Topic: Introductions, syllabus review, government origins and democracy development

January 24-Laying the groundwork for an informed citizen: Fighting fake news

Reading Assignment for NEXT Tuesday: Chapter 1 and 2 of Ginsberg

Week 2

Government origins and democracy development

The founding and the constitution

Reading Assignment for NEXT Tuesday: Chapters 3 of Ginsberg

Week 3

Federalism **Review for Test #1**

Test #1

Reading Assignment for NEXT Tuesday: Chapter 4 and 5

Week 4

Weekly Topic: civil liberties

Week 5

Weekly Topic: civil rights

Week 6

Review for Test #2

Test #2

Reading Assignment for NEXT Tuesday: Chapter 9

Part II Politics

Week 7

Topic: political participation and quantitative analysis

Topic: political parties

Reading Assignment for NEXT Tuesday: Chapter 10

Week 8

Weekly Topics: campaign and elections

Outside the Bubble Paper Due

Week 9

Weekly Topic: campaigns and elections

review for Test #3

Test #3

Reading Assignment for NEXT Tuesday: Chapters 12

Part III Institutions

Week 10

Weekly Topic: Congress

Reading Assignment for NEXT Tuesday: Chapter 13

Week 11

Check with MyMC Class schedule for YOUR specific deadlines to drop with W

Weekly Topic: The Presidency

Week 12

Review for Test #4

Test #4

Reading Assignment for NEXT Tuesday: Chapter 16-17

Part IV Policy

Week 13

Topic: Economic Policy

Economic Policy

Week 14

Weekly Topic: Social policy

Social Policy

Comprehensive Course Assessment Quiz

**Service Learning Portfolio and Research papers
due**

All extra credit assignments due

Week 15

Final Exam (Test #5)

Extra credit.....TBD

Generally speaking, extra credit can boost your final point score by up to 50 points.

For example:

775 points (C)
+40 extra credit points with two extra credit assignments.
=815 (815 points = B)

You may do more than one extra credit assignment, but there is a 50 point maximum.

Extra credit Assignment Instructions

Instructions: You may choose to do one of the assignments listed below for extra credit.

-This assignment must be typed, double-spaced using standard font. Hand written papers will not be accepted.

-Length should be 2-4 pages, but remember: the better you address the question, the better the score.

-Use MLA or APA Standard documentation for any references.

- **Option 1 Fact Check (3 extra credit points)** Often during class discussion, someone will make an interesting point about a person or an event. Sometimes the point has basis in well-known fact; sometimes it is a mere assertion or it is has achieved urban legend status; the assertion has been repeated so often in so many places that people assume that it is true. If I call for a fact check on an item that comes up in class, then any student can do a fact check. A fact check must confirm the information from at least two reliable scholarly databases or a paper of record. Fact checks must be posted on the discussion board for the class with a link.
- ❖ **Option 2** Write to your county, state or federal representative about an issue you feel is important. Turn in a copy of the letter to me along with the rationale, background and any relevant historical information.
- ❖ **Option 3** Attend a political rally, lecture, panel discussion, candidate forum or a debate. Write a summary of the views the main speaker. In addition, you should write about what you thought of the speaker and how it relates to topics in American Government.
- ❖ **Option 4** In each chapter of your book there are one or two critical analysis questions related to the topic of that chapter. Write an answer to any of these critical analysis questions. You must identify the chapter, page and question you will be answering at the top of the first page.
- ❖ **Option 5** For extra credit, you can write an essay that analyzes a story about an event reported in **an overseas media outlet**. Try to find a story that is about American government, American government foreign policy, or will effect American activities overseas. Your essay should provide a small summary and relate it to material covered in class or the text. Your paper must include details on the publication, date and author.

**Each extra credit assignment will be graded using
the following criterion:**

0= evidence of plagiarism.

1-15= “F” unacceptable lack of effort, poorly written, lack of depth, no sources, questionable sources, off-topic or factual errors.

15-17.4= “D” minimal effort, incomplete, and/or poorly written.

17.5-19= “C” average, reasonable effort with no major factual errors and few major writing errors.

20-22.4= “B” Good effort, comprehensive paper, good length, more thoughtful and use of references and resources, almost no major writing or factual errors.

22.5-25= “A” superior work, broad use of resources, close examination, and well-written and well-developed, no major factual or writing errors.