

**Takoma Park/Silver Spring Campus**  
**Department of Humanities**  
**POLI101-American Government**  
**Spring 2015**

POLI101-001/CRN-31059  
Tue/Thur 12:30-1:45  
Room: CM116

Professor Karl T. Smith  
Office Phone: 240-567-1353  
E-mail:  
[Karl.Smith@Montgomerycollege.edu](mailto:Karl.Smith@Montgomerycollege.edu)  
Office: North Pavilion 223

Office hours:  
Mondays: 4:00-5:30  
Thursdays: 4:00-5:30  
(Or by appointment)

**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, 9<sup>th</sup> Edition, Benjamin Ginsberg, Theodore J. Lowi, Margaret Weir.

Optional: 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

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 New York Times  
The Guardian  
Politic.com

english.aljazeera.net (or Al Jazeera America)  
[www.csmonitor.com](http://www.csmonitor.com)

The Washington Post  
News.bbc.co.uk  
[www.slate.com](http://www.slate.com)  
[www.cbc.ca/news](http://www.cbc.ca/news)

The Daily Show with Jon Stewart

-Additional readings may be assigned by the instructor.

## **Instructional Objectives:**

Upon successful completion of this course students will be able to:

1. define key concepts in political science and American government;
2. summarize the theoretical foundations of American political and economic philosophies;
3. analyze current events in the US political system including foreign, economic policy and electoral campaigns;
4. explain how to navigate the political system in order to access government services and state political opinions to governmental officials.
5. demonstrate an understanding of political systems and/or governmental action through practical experience.

## **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
Critical Analysis Essay Question.....	100 points
Service Learning Journal and Portfolio (or research paper).....	300 points
5 on-line chapter diagnostic quizzes (20 points each).....	100 points
Participation.....	100 points
Extra credit...(60 points maximum).....	<u>TBD</u>

**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
---	---

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.*

**Critical Analysis Essay Question.....100 points**

You will be required to write **an essay** to answer a question related to a topic covered in the first half of class. This paper is NOT a research paper and can be written in the first person. However, you should always cite sources and you may need to do research on the question and therefore give attribution.

The paper should be at least 3-5 pages long. The essay will be graded according to:

- relevance to class material and response to the question using original thought and wording
- clarity of argument
- quality and clarity of writing
- proper citation and listing of reference sources

The essay assignments must be handed in at the beginning of class on the day they are due. This assignment **must** be typed, double-spaced with standard font and printed out. Hand written papers, e-mails, or diskettes will NOT be accepted.

In addition, they must be stapled with name, date and assignment name in the upper left hand corner. When necessary, any citations should be in the APA or MLA standard system.

**Service Learning Journal and 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 12 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 6-8 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.

**5 On-line chapter diagnostic quizzes.....100**

Each chapter of your textbook has on-line chapter quizzes. These review questions are designed to make you focus on main ideas and details of the reading. They are available at [www.norton.com/we-the-people](http://www.norton.com/we-the-people). Once you get to the site, look for the chapter diagnostic quiz. To get credit for your work (20 points per chapter) you must send your score to the on-line grade book or print out your quiz results. Please see course schedule for on-line quiz due dates. *Please note:* 70% is the minimum for getting 20 points.

**Participation.....100 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.**

**Fact Check (3 extra credit points each).**

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 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. You don't have to write a paper; just bring a page with the citation or send it by e-mail to get participation points.

## **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 participation score of more than 70% (C).**

**Students with no more than 3 *total* absences will automatically get 10 points added to their participation 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 you attendance score; consider it a personal day. There is no need to present doctor's notes, doctor appointments, etc. for missing a class and getting an excused absence. 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 dies 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 two 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 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. Any papers must be printed. E-mails and/or attachments will not be accepted.

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.*

## **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 you may have life or learning experiences that will broaden our understanding of U.S. history. I will expect to hear reasoned and thoughtful 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.

**Cancellation of Classes:** Please call **(240) 567-5000** or go to [www.montgomerycollege.edu](http://www.montgomerycollege.edu) when there is bad weather to learn if the college has cancelled classes. Please note: Montgomery College is not part of the Montgomery County Public Schools and therefore follows a different schedule. In the event that your instructor has a last-minute emergency or illness and cannot come to class, please consult MyMC course bulletin board or your MC email for instructions and assignments.

### **Academic Support/Learning Disabilities**

A student who may need an accommodation due to a disability should make an appointment to see me after class or during office hours. A letter from Disability support Services (Room ST120) authorizing your accommodation will be needed. Any student who may need assistance in the event of an emergency evacuation must identify themselves to the Disability Support Service Office; guidelines for emergency evacuations for individuals with disabilities are found at:

[www.montgomerycollege.edu/dss/evacprocedures.htm](http://www.montgomerycollege.edu/dss/evacprocedures.htm).

- Please be aware that the Reading/ Writing/Language Center has many tutors available to you to help with writing problems.
- The Social Science Lab can assist you with doing a paper and/or doing research.