

**MONTGOMERY COLLEGE**

**Department of Humanities / Political Science  
Takoma Park/Silver Spring Campus**

**POLI: 101 – AMERICAN GOVERNMENT – CRN: 36867**

***Mon / Wed / Fri – 3.00 PM - 4.50 PM - Room: Commons 113***

**Syllabus - Spring 2015**

**Professor :** Dr. Syed A. Wasif

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**Office hrs :** Academic Success Center, Commons Building – By appointment

**Required course material:** We the People: An Introduction to American Politics, 9<sup>th</sup> Edition, Benjamin Ginsberg, Theodore J. Lowi, Margaret Weir.

-In addition, students must read or visit the website of one of the following media sources on a weekly basis:

The Wall Street Journal

The Washington Post

The New York Times

The Washington Times

Fox / CNN

**Course Description:**

The American political system: executive, legislative, and judicial branches; structure, powers, and processes, civil liberties, federalism, democratic patterns and backgrounds, public opinion, pressure group politics, political parties, constitutional mechanisms, and administrative establishment; foreign and domestic policy.

**Course Objectives:**

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

1. Define key concepts in political science and American government;
2. Explain the theoretical foundations of American political and economic philosophies;
3. Interpret and analyze current events in the US political system including foreign, economic policy and electoral campaigns;
4. Navigate the political system in order to access government services, state political opinions and governmental officials.

### **Weekly Course Schedule:**

#### **Week 1:**

##### **Part I: Foundations**

Chapter 1: American Political Culture

Chapter 2: The Founding and the Constitution

Chapter 3: Federalism

#### **Week 2:**

Chapter 4: Civil Liberties

Chapter 5: Civil Rights

#### **Week 3:**

##### **Part II: Politics**

Chapter 6: Public Opinion

Chapter 7: The Media

Chapter 8: Political Participation and Voting

#### **Week 4:**

Chapter 9: Political Parties

Chapter 10: Campaigns and Elections

Chapter 11: Groups and Interests

#### **Week 5:**

##### **Part III: Institutions**

Chapter 12: Congress

Chapter 13: The Presidency

Chapter 14: Bureaucracy in a Democracy

Chapter 15: The Federal Court

#### **Week 6:**

##### **Part IV: Policy**

Chapter 16: Government and the Economy

Chapter 17: Social Policy

Chapter 18: Foreign Policy and Democracy

### **Instructional Objectives:**

The class will follow the following format. Learning objectives will be identified and described at the beginning of each class (written on board). I usually note the day and week that we are in for the semester. Keeping track of the number of weeks and days left in the course helps us to focus our efforts and redefine priorities.

Class discussion will center on those learning objectives stimulated by reactions to discussion questions, problems posed, or small group activity. This requires that students read assignments in advance to make the most efficient use of class time.

- The Political Science Perspective: Students shall be able to identify the questions, which have driven the development of theory in political science. What are the questions that this discipline specializes in? How is political science the same as other social sciences? How is it different? .
- Doing Political Science: The Scientific Study of Political Behavior, institutions, and *movements*: Students shall be able to identify the nature of the scientific research process and endeavor as it applies to the study of the problems and structure of the political world. Students shall be able to discuss the major methods and problems with doing research.
- Basic Political Science Paradigms/Concepts: Students shall be able to understand the construction, reproduction, and change of a) what motivates the individual in politics; b) group interests and special interests and c) political parties and government institutions as tools in the social construction of power in society, We will emphasize the exercise of power as it effects race ethnicity, gender, and class in the social stratification of society.
- Macro/micro connections: Students shall be able to demonstrate an understanding of how these tools and theories help them to connect their own biography to the current events around them.

### **Grades:**

Students will demonstrate in examinations the ability to analyze the systems and processes of government and describe how they work. A total of 4 exams will be used to determine final grade - the lowest grade will be dropped to calculate average. An additional 1-10 points may be added to the average, at the discretion of the instructor, for contributions to class discussions and learning and homework preparation.

**Grading Standard / Scale:**

The following grading standard will be used:

Midterm assignment / paper	200 points
Test on Political Terminology	100 points
Final exam- critical analysis paper	300 points
10 Chapter Quizzes	300 points
Class Participation	100 points

Total 1000 points

**SCALE**

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.

### **Student Code of Conduct:**

The Montgomery College Student Code of Conduct that outlines the policies, regulations, and procedures of the College regarding academic honesty and student behavior, including penalties and appeals, governs this class. It applies to all students at the College. The complete code can be found in Web Links, the student handbook and at [www.montgomerycollege.edu/verified/pnp/42001.doc](http://www.montgomerycollege.edu/verified/pnp/42001.doc).

Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of intellectual honesty and are prohibited from "cheating on assignments or examinations; submitting materials that are not the student's own; taking examinations in the place of another student; plagiarizing from written, video, or internet resources, assisting others in committing academic dishonesty, failing to use quotation marks for directly quoted material unless using block quotes or other accepted formats, and, copying from another student during examinations."

In addition, students have "the responsibility to treat the instructor and classmates with civility, respect and courtesy." "No student has the right to interfere with the freedom of the faculty to teach or the right of other students to learn."

Students who violate the guidelines of acceptable standards as described above or in the code, will receive a warning & a copy of which will be sent to the Dean of Student Development. If the student refuses to exhibit the stated behaviors, the matter will be referred in writing to the Dean of Student Development for action under the Student Code of Conduct.

### **Classroom Learning Tips:**

#### **1. TYPICAL CLASS DAY**

- Learning objectives are usually reviewed orally and placed on the board daily.
- We usually begin each "new chapter" by reviewing the chapter organization, summary~ and discussion questions (if any).
- Students are responsible for any questions, learning objectives, or material not covered during class. This means that if students are not prepared for class that we spend more time reviewing material you should have read at home and that we have "less time" to answer your questions. This also means you must cover the material on your own

#### **2. NOTE TAKING**

Don't feel you must write every word down (and miss big picture). Write down key points (main ideas) with supporting evidence (examples to support main idea). Listen and

look for the big picture. If you have gaps, compare your notes with a study buddy.... Fill in gaps from textbook or readings... See instructor during office hours.

3. LISTEN... BE AN ACTIVE NOT A PASSIVE LEARNER. Sit at front of class or in a seat where the instructor can easily see your hand. Read material thoroughly and identify questions or areas you would like to have instructor go over in advance.

4. ORGANIZING YOUR LEARNING SURVEY the chapter you are reading first. What are the topics covered? What is the key vocabulary highlighted or in boldface. Are there review questions or summary at end to clue you in to KEY IDEAS? a READ the material. Stop at the end of every topic and make sure you understand what it said before going on to new section. \* REVIEW: Having surveyed the chapter, go through review questions. Review questions will increase comprehension and allow you to identify gaps.

KEY IDEAS AND KEY WORDS. Make sure you understand each idea, its definition and an example of it. For key words, be sure to understand the word, how it is used and its origin.

### **Classroom Expectations & Policies: Teaching & Learning:**

1. Student Handbook: Students should refer to the Student Handbook for the official wording or all academic, classroom, and college wide policies. The policies contained in this syllabus are not intended to override or contradict those of the college or the Student Handbook.

2. Critical Thinking: Political Science is a learning process that requires the ability to think conceptually and analytically. This skill like all other skills, requires practice that is constant and at different levels of difficulty. The most learning takes place when you apply your new way of thinking to real life problems and situations of your own.

3. Classroom participation and homework: Learning requires your active participation. Plan on spending an additional 2-3 hours per week outside of class doing your reading and preparing for class. There will be some "independent study" days when students can work alone or in groups on readings and assignments. These will be announced in class. Your homework is to read the material thoroughly, digest what you have read, and come prepared to present your questions and learning. Ask your question no matter how uncertain - there are no right" wrong or dumb questions. Every question and inquiry is important if it helps you and others in the class.

4. Classroom Relationships: I encourage you to find a study buddy or two from class. The telephone tree is to help you contact classmates for support on assignments and/or readings as required. Forming the tree on your own gives you the discretion to choose with whom you will share your home telephone number. You are not required to share

your telephone with anyone you do not want to. Select your study buddy carefully so you can be a real help to each other. Let me know if this is not working for you.

5. Attendance: will be taken daily. Students are expected to attend all class sessions. You are allowed three unexcused absences during the semester. After three you will be dropped from the class. Financial aid policy requires that your attendance be monitored. If you anticipate a long absence (death in family, illness or other), please insure that we discuss your situation personally before the event or as soon as you learn that it will impact your attendance.

6. Classroom Etiquette (arriving late/leaving early): Class begins promptly at 11:00 a.m. Students entering the class more than 15 minutes after scheduled time will be counted as late / tardy, If you are tardy 3 times - it will count as one of you unexcused absences. If you must leave class early for some reason, please discuss it with me before class begins so that we can determine whether you should attend that session or not. You are rude to me and to your classmates when you leave us without explanation or disrupt our normal routine.

7. Talking: students talking disruptively in class will be asked to leave.

8. Make up Exams and assignments: Make up exams are usually not granted. They are available at the discretion of the instructor and requests must be substantiated by medical note or other good extenuating reasons. Students are allowed to drop one of their lowest test scores so a test "absence" will count toward this low score (in lieu of a makeup exam). In the event a make-up exam is granted, the instructor (not the student's calendar) will specify time, date, and location of make-up. Do not schedule vacations, dental appointments, etc. on test days. Assume that a test cancelled due to inclement weather (a "snow" day, etc.) will be held on the following class session.

9. Diversity in Learning Style: I am committed to meeting reasonable requests to accommodate individual needs and learning styles of students. If you have a disability that will require accommodation, please contact the Disability Support Services office to obtain a letter authorizing your accommodations.

10. Extensions/delays in submitting! work: work shall be submitted on a timely basis. Requests for extensions to submit work must be secured from the instructor a week in advance -- not the day the assignment is due. Do not assume your absence from class excuses you from meeting the deadline to submit work

11. Plagiarism: The writing in this course may require you to use the ideas and words of other writers in your papers. You must become familiar with using the MLA or APA style to credit those writers and avoid any possibility of plagiarism. Plagiarism is copying ideas from someone without acknowledging the sources of those ideas. Plagiarism is not tolerated and student may be subject to dismissal or other disciplinary action.

12. Disability:

*Any student who may need an accommodation due to a disability, please make an appointment to see me during my office hour. In order to receive accommodations, a letter from Disability Support Services(R-CB122; G-SA175; or TP/SS-ST120) will be needed. Any student who may need assistance in the event of an emergency evacuation must identify to the Disability Support Services Office; guidelines for emergency evacuations are at: [www.montgomerycollege.edu/dss/evacprocedures.htm](http://www.montgomerycollege.edu/dss/evacprocedures.htm).*