

American Government
Fall 2009

College of Charleston
POLS 101.008

American Government
Tuesday-Thursday, 3:05 to 4:20 p.m. Education Center, Room 112

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Office Hours: Tuesday: 9-10 a.m., Friday: 12-1 p.m. and by appointment

“Our strength is democracy, government by consent of the governed, using reason to protect and advance progress for human beings. Our weakness is anarchy, government and politics shredded into fragments, thanks to dreamy public apathy and brainless emotion.” James David Barber, *The Presidential Character*, 4th Edition. As “political knowledge declines, popping from argument to slogan, from commitment to gesture, from accuracy to impression,” so does the strength of our democracy. An introduction to American Government course seeks to bring forth knowledge about key principles threaded through U.S. political practices and institutions and to provide a description of these practices and institutions. One purpose of this course is to help you make sense of politics ----create a clearer picture than the mosaic created by the multiple fragments of information that shower upon us.

Required Texts: Christine Borbour and Gerald C. Wright, *Keeping the Republic*, 2nd (2007) or 3rd (2009) Brief Edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press. (Textbook)

Brooks Jackson and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *un*Spun: finding facts in a world of [disinformation]*. New York: Random House, 2007. (Jackson and Jamieson)

www.publicagenda.org – a non-profit, non-partisan organization “working to strengthen U.S. democracy and its capacity to tackle difficult issues.” Selected issues

New York Times

Monday-Friday subscriptions for the spring semester are available through the CofC bookstore for \$26. You pick up the paper from the bookstore. All residents of a CofC residence hall or house are eligible to pick up a copy of the NYT for free in the lobby of a residence hall. Be sure to have your CofC identification card to verify that you are a residential student. The on-line version (but abridged) of the NYT is available for free at <http://www.nyt.com>. You are also encouraged to peruse Charleston’s *The Post and Courier* or Columbia’s *The State* to get a sense of local and state politics. *The Post and Courier* is available in our residence halls for free.

One of the core values of the College of Charleston is Liberal Arts Education: “Dedication to a liberal arts and science education that encourages intellectual curiosity and fosters each student’s ability to think creatively and analyze, synthesize, apply and communicate knowledge from many sources.” The learning goals of this class are linked to this core value.

COURSE-SPECIFIC LEARNING GOALS

Foundational knowledge – have a mental map of American governmental institutions and political processes; be able to identify the theoretical principles affiliated with “founding” documents, political practices and contemporary daily life in America; and be able to understand the fundamental differences and intersections between the disciplinary approaches of political science, history, communication, economics, and other social sciences.

Integration – Identify the interactions between political science and other realms of knowledge; identify the interactions between normative analysis and positive analysis; be able to break down a subject into its constituent parts and reassemble it in a different manner.

Application – Be able to find information on and analyze political issues from multiple perspectives and using multiple methods. Be able to use the course textbook and other class materials effectively.

Evaluate

Communication -- Be able to monitor own thinking processes and expose implicit assumptions during discussions. Be able to define different types of approaches to writing.

Learning how to learn - learning how to link ideas in an associational network through discussion and preparation for writing assignments. Be familiar with a number of scholarly journals, internet sites and other sources of knowledge about American politics and government. Have a clear sense of what you would like to learn next about government and politics.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND POLICIES

ATTENDANCE POLICY. The success of this course depends heavily on your participation during class discussions and in-class activities. As a result, it is important that you are both prompt and present.

My policy states that you are allowed 3 absences (excused or unexcused) from this course. A fourth absence will result in your final grade being lowered. A fifth absence may result in a grade of WA (withdrawal due to absences – equivalent to an F) being issued through the Registrar’s Office along with a notification letter sent to you.

Absences due to documented family emergencies, documented official events where you are a representative of the College and long-term illnesses are generally excused. To obtain official notification of an absence, contact the Associate Dean of Students at 67 George Street, 953-3390 (corner of George and Glebe). You may contact the Assoc. Dean at absencememo@cofc.edu. Absences that are avoidable are not excused.

Students with perfect attendance will receive 5 points extra credit at the end of the semester. Perfect attendance is defined as no absences, considerable tardies or early departures.

Please note: You are responsible for obtaining class notes from your classmates if you are absent. If you will be absent on the due date of an assignment, you are responsible for getting it to me either prior to class or via a classmate during the class.

TARDINESS AND LEAVING EARLY. Punctuality and courtesy to your professor and classmates are traits that will enhance your success in college. With this in mind, please arrive on time and do not ask to depart early. Tardy arrivals and/or early departures may, at the discretion of the professor, be treated as an absence. Generally, three tardies, three early departures, or a combination of tardies and early departures will be equal to one absence.

PARTICIPATION. Your appropriate participation is vital to your success in this class. Prerequisite to your participation is completion of assigned readings, exercises, and activities. Inappropriate participation in a class can actually work against a student. We are all expected to be courteous and treat all class-related comments with openness and respect. Each student can expect to be called upon at least three times to discuss with the class topics they are reading about in the *NYT*, the textbook, through publicagenda.org and Jackson and Jamieson. Students are encouraged to volunteer.

REQUEST FOR COURTESY. Regarding cell phones, I-pods, etc.: please turn off so as not to disrupt or distract from the learning environment. Anyone receiving a text/call that can be heard (this includes “vibrate” notification) in class will be warned. Another incident may trip a request from the instructor and/or class that the student leave. This will count as an absence.

HONOR CODE. Information about the honor system and honor code can be found at http://www.cofc.edu/studentaffairs/general_info/honor_system/. Lying, cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism are violations of our Honor Code that, when identified, are investigated. Each incident will be examined to determine the degree of deception involved.

Incidents where the instructor determines the student’s actions are clearly related more to a misunderstanding will handled by the instructor. A written intervention designed to help prevent the student from repeating the error will be given to the student. The intervention, submitted by form and signed by both the instructor and the student will be forwarded to the Dean of Students and placed in the student’s file.

Cases of suspected academic dishonesty will be reported directly by the instructor and/or others having knowledge of the incident to the Office of Student Affairs. A student found responsible by the Honor Board for academic dishonesty will receive a XF in the course, indicating failure of the course due to academic dishonesty. This grade will appear on the student’s transcript for two years after which the student may petition for the X to be expunged. The student may also be placed on disciplinary probation, suspended (temporary removal) or expelled (permanent removal) from the College by the Honor Board.

Students should be aware that unauthorized collaboration--working together without permission--is a form of cheating. Unless the instructor specifies that students can work together on an assignment and/or test, no collaboration is permitted. Other forms of cheating include possessing or using an unauthorized study aid (such as a cell phone), copying from others’ exams, fabricating data, and giving unauthorized assistance.

Research conducted and/or papers written for other classes cannot be used in whole or in part for any assignment in this class without obtaining prior permission from the instructor.

ACCOMMODATIONS. If there is a student in this class who has a documented disability and has been approved to receive accommodations through SNAP, please feel free to come and discuss this with me during my office hours. Any student eligible for and needing academic adjustments or accommodations because of a disability is requested to speak with me during my office hours. The College of Charleston abides by section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 that stipulates no student shall be denied the benefits of an education “solely by reason of a handicap.” Disabilities covered by law include, but are not limited to, learning disabilities and hearing, sight, or mobility impairments. If you have a documented disability that may have some impact on your work in this class and for which you may require accommodations, please contact the Center for Disability Services (953-1431) or see me so that such accommodation may be arranged.

GRADING - Grading for the individual assignments will follow the grading criteria provided for each assignment.

The grading scale for the overall course is as follows:

93-100	A	75-77	C+	56-58	D-
90-92	A-	74-71	C	00-55	F
86-89	B+	67-70	C-		
82-85	B	63-66	D+		
78-81	B-	59-62	D		

Assignment	Due Date	Value
Institutional Compare and Contrast Paper	Sept. 10	10%
In-class test	Sept. 15	20%
Process-analysis Paper	Oct. 22	15%
Short Research Paper		
Draft one	Nov. 12	10%
Final draft	Dec. 1	15%
Final	Dec. 12	20%
Participation/Attendance	On-going	10%

ASSIGNMENTS

Institutional Compare and Contrast Paper – each student will write a 4-5 page typed paper comparing and contrasting one of the following American institutions with its counterpart from another country: executive branch, legislative branch, judiciary, intergovernmental relations (federalism). The other countries will be randomly assigned to students in class. A grading rubric will be distributed.

In-class test – this test will be an open-book, essay test based primarily on the Jackson and Jamieson text and reading of the *New York Times*. You will be able to bring NYT articles to class to use. Please purchase a “green book” and bring it to class.

Process-analysis Paper – students will be assigned a subject randomly. Students will be asked to explain in detail in a written format how some action affiliated with American government and politics is performed. A grading rubric will be distributed. Examples include ballot access for candidates, federal election commission decision-making and how U.S. House of Representatives and Senate members are assigned to various committees and subcommittees.

Short Research Paper – students will be given a list of topics to review. Each student will select a topic to elucidate the positions of scholars and practitioners on at least two sides of a contemporary American political institutional controversy. A grading rubric will be distributed.

Final examination – this exam will be in-class, cumulative and will be a blend of short answer and essay questions. A study guide will be distributed the last day of class. You use material from Public Agenda, newspaper articles and class notes.

In-class Participation – each student can expect to be called upon at least once to discuss with the class topics they are reading about in the *NYT* and through Publicagenda.org. Students may also volunteer.

Class communication – a majority of the discussion and description of class expectations will take in place in class. I will use e-mail to disseminate some class materials, e.g., grading rubrics, paper topics, and discussion topics. These e-mails will be sent to your Edisto.cofc.edu addresses.

Additional readings and assignments may be given. The course calendar, requirements and policies can be adjusted at any time to meet the students' and/or professor's needs at the professor's sole discretion.

COURSE CALENDAR

Aug. 25	Class introduction: Teaching Philosophy, Class Format and Themes. Assignment – doing political research
Aug. 27	Where do you stand now? Read: Textbook, Chap. 1, Publicagenda.org
Aug. 31	<i>Last day for drop/add</i>
Sept. 1	Talking about and watching the debate about health care reform Read: Textbook, Appendix 3, The Constitution of the U.S; Chap. 2, 3 and Appendix 2, Declaration of Independence
Sept. 3	NO CLASS

Sept. 8	Guest Presentation
Sept. 10	Civil Liberties Read: Textbook, Chap. 4 and 5 and Brooks and Jamieson, entire text Paper due: Sept. 10
Sept. 15	Congress Read: Textbook, Chap. 6, and Appendix 1, Articles of Confederation In-class test on Brooks and Jamieson and <i>NYT</i> : Sept. 15
Sept. 17	CONSTITUTION DAY – MANDATORY ATTENDANCE AT PRESENTATION
Sept. 22-24	The Presidency Read: Textbook, Chap. 7 and Appendix 5, Federalist Paper #51
Sept. 29-Oct. 1	The Bureaucracy Read: Textbook, Chap. 8, <i>NYT</i> – focus on Health Care Reform Debate
<i>Oct. 6</i>	<i>Last day to withdraw with a W</i>
Oct. 6-8	The American Legal System Read: Textbook, Chap. 9
Oct. 15	The American Legal System Continued
Oct. 20-22	Public Opinion Read: Textbook, Chap. 10 Paper due: Oct. 22, Process –Analysis paper
Oct. 27-29	Parties and Interest Groups Read: Textbook, Chap. 11
Nov. 3-5	Campaigns, Elections and Voting Read: Textbook, Chap. 12
Nov. 10-12	American Media and American Politics Read: Textbook, Chap. 13 Paper due: Nov. 12, Draft one of Short Research paper
Nov. 17-19	Domestic Policy Read: Textbook, Chap. 14, Publicagenda.org

Nov. 24-Dec. 1	Foreign Policy Paper due: Dec. 1, Final draft of Short Research paper
Dec. 3	Foreign Policy Continued In-class discussion about final exam
Final	Saturday, Dec. 12, 12:00 - 3:00 p.m.