

**INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN GOVERNMENT**  
**POLS 101-003**  
**MWF 12:00 NOON**  
**MAYBANK 316**

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There is never an uneventful time in American politics to take this course, but this semester is a particularly interesting time to critically evaluate our democracy. In Washington, DC next week, the first person of African descent will be sworn in as the 44<sup>th</sup> president of the United States. Additionally, the Democratic Party succeeded in increasing their majorities in both the House and the Senate, solidifying the end of the “Republican Revolution” of the 1990’s and 2000’s...almost exactly one decade since the Republican-led Congress impeached Democratic president Bill Clinton. Over the next several months, the new president and newly elected Congress are expected to address the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression, enact sweeping reforms to health care, redeploy troops in the Middle East, and close the military prisons in Guantanamo...all while reorganizing the Congress and appointing thousands of politically-sensitive jobs in the administration. In American politics, these are interesting times indeed. We can expect these events to generate an enormous amount of public attention and discussion throughout the semester.

This course is intended to introduce students to the central processes and institutions of the American federal government with a critical eye and an analytical frame of mind so you can make informed, intelligent judgments about this great public discussion. These skills are essential because, although it may not be immediately apparent, politics affects your lives directly. At this very moment, young women and men your age are deployed around the world to prosecute the global war on terror. Does the GWOT enhance your safety, or does it diminish the nation’s political, economic, and cultural influence in the world and your civil liberties right here in South Carolina? As you read this, the national, state, and local governments accumulate trillions of dollars in debt that you are certain to inherit. Is this irresponsible, or do the immediate benefits outweigh the long-term costs? Because we have (reasonably) free, open, and periodic elections, the nation is constantly debating policies that will determine such personal things as whom you may marry, what foods you eat, what cars you drive, which medical treatments you may receive, and what careers you are allowed to pursue. Politics matters to you. You can also matter to politics.

I have designed this course to provide you with the conceptual tools so you can matter to politics as you choose. To this end I have selected a text with a strong analytical inclination. Additionally, I encourage you to actively learn about politically-relevant current events. Though I am a fan, simply watching *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* and *The Colbert Report* does not count. Read the paper, listen to NPR, watch cable news networks, and read blogs to hone your

skills at critically analyzing American politics. The course WebCT site includes links to many news media outlets and political science resources.

### **COURSE GOALS AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

This course is an introductory survey of the theoretical foundations, empirical observations, and real-world implications of American political behavior. The topics of my lectures and discussions will coincide with the readings, but I will *not* simply regurgitate the material or summarize the text for you. I have designed my lectures with the assumption that you have completed the reading assignments, so I will engage you in discussion as well. So don't fall behind or what I say won't make any sense!

In addition to the critical political analysis skills that you will develop throughout the course, I expect you to be able to:

- Read for comprehension, critically analyze text, and write effectively in all assignments and examinations;
- Comprehend the political positions of others and defend your own views;
- Apply theories and concepts of democratic thought to new and varied settings;
- Appreciate to the methodologies and approaches to the study of politics;
- Understand the scope of political science as an academic discipline;
- Foster the communication, collaboration, and negotiation skills necessary to cooperate and compete with others in the public sphere;
- Develop the expectation of participation in public and community life;
- Cultivate an appreciation for the interaction of ideas in the public forum; and,
- Work, live, and learn comfortably in an increasingly diverse and global world.

### **COURSE MATERIALS**

The following texts have been ordered through the College of Charleston Bookstore. If you choose to purchase these texts from other sources, be sure to buy the correct editions.

1. Janda, Kenneth, Jeffrey M. Berry, and Jerry Goldman. 2008. *The Challenge of Democracy: Government in America*. 9<sup>th</sup> Edition. New York: Houghton Mifflin.  
ISBN: 978-0-618-83393-1
2. Kingdon, John W. 1999. *America the Unusual*. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's.  
ISBN: 0-312-18971-0
3. Frank, Thomas. 2004. *What's the Matter with Kansas? How Conservatives Won the Heart of America*. New York: Metropolitan Books.  
ISBN: 978-0-805-07339-3
4. Bartels, Larry M. 2008. *Unequal Democracy: The Political Economy of the New Gilded Age*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.  
ISBN: 978-0-691-13663-9

Additionally, I will periodically direct you to additional readings that will either be available through WebCT, on electronic reserve at Addlestone Library, or publicly available on the Internet.

## **STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

*Conduct and Honor Code.* I expect you to strictly adhere to the College's conduct and honor codes. When you entered the College, you signed an agreement that you understood and would abide by these codes. I encourage you to re-acquaint yourself with the College's policies, but simply put...don't cheat. Period.

*Attendance, Preparation, and Quizzes.* I require regular class attendance, on-time arrival, and careful preparation for each class. Though I have no hard definition of regular, on-time class attendance, a reasonable guide is a total of six excused or unexcused absences. Unless you have documentation from the College that you are experiencing extreme hardship, I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences. I count two late arrivals as one absence even though you are physically present. Though I may not always take formal attendance, I will know if you are chronically late or absent and will hold you accountable for your choices, so make them wisely. I will occasionally administer unannounced quizzes in class to evaluate your comprehension of the assigned readings.

*Assignments.* All reading and written assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date listed on the schedule. I have purposely scheduled assignment due dates to coincide with assignments in other courses or sections, so late assignments interfere with my ability to evaluate other students. Because that is unfair to students who do produce assignments on time, I will reduce every assignment by one +/- unit for every business day late regardless of the reason. The details of the term project will be discussed in a later class.

*Classroom Technology Policy.* All devices other than a laptop computer should be turned off during class. Laptops may only be used for purposes immediately related to the class such as taking notes. I will ask you to leave the room if you disrupt the class by texting, receiving a phone call, browsing the Internet, or any other reason. If I ask you to leave, I will count it as an absence. Doing so is rude, and I have no qualms about embarrassing you in front of your peers.

*Special Circumstances.* Please inform me immediately of any of special circumstances such as a diagnosed (or undiagnosed) disability, learning challenges, or team and club membership that requires travel during the semester. I am happy to accommodate you if we can agree on how to best meet your needs in the first week of class. If you are a SNAP student eligible for accommodations, you must provide me with a copy of the notification letter you have been given by the SNAP office well before the need for any accommodation arises.

## **GRADING POLICY**

Attendance / Participation	10%
Reading Quizzes	10%
Term Paper / Volunteer Project	30%
Mid-term Exam	25%
Final Exam	25%

## SCHEDULE

Week	Day	Date	Part	Reading	Term Project Due
1	Monday	12-Jan	Introduction & Syllabus		
	Wednesday	14-Jan	Theories of Democracy	JBG 1 & 2	
	Friday	16-Jan	Theories of Democracy		
2	Monday	19-Jan	NO CLASS - MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY		
	Wednesday	21-Jan	American Political Culture	Kingdon 1-2	
	Friday	23-Jan	American Political Culture	Kingdon 3-5	
3	Monday	26-Jan	Constitution	JBG 3	
	Wednesday	28-Jan	Constitution		
	Friday	30-Jan	Constitution		
4	Monday	2-Feb	Federalism	JBG 4	
	Wednesday	4-Feb	Federalism		
	Friday	6-Feb	Federalism		Topic / Placement
5	Monday	9-Feb	Civil Liberties	JBG 15	
	Wednesday	11-Feb	Civil Liberties		
	Friday	13-Feb	Civil Liberties		
6	Monday	16-Feb	Civil Rights	JBG 16	
	Wednesday	18-Feb	Civil Rights		
	Friday	20-Feb	Civil Rights		
7	Monday	23-Feb	The Politics of Race & Gender	TBD	
	Wednesday	25-Feb	The Politics of Race & Gender		
	Friday	27-Feb	<b>MID-TERM EXAM</b>		
8	Monday	2-Mar	NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK		
	Wednesday	4-Mar	NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK		
	Friday	6-Mar	NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK		
9	Monday	9-Mar	Congress	JBG 11	
	Wednesday	11-Mar	Congress		

	Friday	13-Mar	Congress		
10	Monday	16-Mar	Presidency & Executive Branch	JBG 12	
	Wednesday	18-Mar	Presidency & Executive Branch	Frank 1-4	
	Friday	20-Mar	Presidency & Executive Branch	Frank 5-8	First Draft / Confirmation
11	Monday	23-Mar	Courts & Judiciary	JBG 14	
	Wednesday	25-Mar	Courts & Judiciary	Frank 9-12	
	Friday	27-Mar	Courts & Judiciary	Bartels 1-3	
12	Monday	30-Mar	Political Parties & Elections	JBG 8 & 9	
	Wednesday	1-Apr	Political Parties & Elections	Bartels 4-6	
	Friday	3-Apr	Political Parties & Elections	Bartels 7-10	
13	Monday	6-Apr	What's the Matter with <i>What's the Matter...?</i>		
	Wednesday	8-Apr	What's the Matter with <i>What's the Matter...?</i>		
	Friday	10-Apr	What's the Matter with <i>What's the Matter...?</i>		Final Draft / Reflection
14	Monday	13-Apr	Interest Groups & Social Movements	JBG 10	
	Wednesday	15-Apr	Interest Groups & Social Movements		
	Friday	17-Apr	Interest Groups & Social Movements		
15	Monday	20-Apr	Public Opinion & Media Politics	JBG 5 & 6	
	Wednesday	22-Apr	Public Opinion & Media Politics		
	Friday	24-Apr	Political Participation & Civic Engagement	JBG 7	
16	Monday	27-Apr	Political Participation & Civic Engagement		
	Wednesday	6-May		<b>FINAL EXAM 12:00-3:00am</b>	