

**American Government**  
Spring 2018 Syllabus  
Instructor: Professor Roneka Matheny

<u>Course Number:</u>	<u>Day/Time:</u>	<u>Location:</u>
POLI 101-06	TR 9:25-10:40	414 BELL
POLI 101-07	TR 10:50-12:05	408 BELL

Office Location: 322 Jewish Studies Center  
Office Hours: Wednesdays 10:00am-12:00pm

Office Phone: (843) 953-1203  
Email: [mathenyr@cofc.edu](mailto:mathenyr@cofc.edu)

*Politics: Who Gets What, When, How*

—Harold Lasswell, noted political scientist

*The method of political science is the interpretation of life; its instrument is insight, a nice understanding of subtle, unformulated conditions.*

—Woodrow Wilson, American President

**Course Introduction and Objectives:**

This course is designed to be an introduction to American government, its historical foundations, institutions and political processes. We will examine how our political system was designed, how it has changed over time, and how public opinion, the media and technology have affected our government institutions and public policy. We will discuss the role and scope of government as it was conceived by the Founders and as it is viewed today. Finally, we will examine current policy issues, weigh the costs and benefits of actions and engage in thoughtful discussions of contemporary policies and actions with a view toward how those issues and actions impact the current political scene. To achieve these objectives, I have chosen a textbook that focuses attention on the role of citizens as key actors in the democratic experiment that we call the United States of America.

This course is required for all Political Science majors and minors. It also fulfills a General Education Social Science requirement.

By the end of this semester, students should be able to...

- Identify and explain the central principles, institutions, procedures, and decision-making processes of the American political system;
- Evaluate the basic strengths and weaknesses of the American political system through the application of political concepts and ideas;
- Relate historical events and/or developments to contemporary political issues, debates and outcomes in the United States; and
- Develop an analytical, social scientific disposition toward American politics

**Required Texts:**

- Christine Barbour and Gerald C. Wright, *Keeping the Republic: Power and Citizenship in American Politics* (CQ Press, 8th Edition, 2016)
- Textbook Companion Website: [edge.sagepub.com/barbour8e](http://edge.sagepub.com/barbour8e)

## Course Grading Scheme:

Your grade is based on a total of 100 points. Assignments will be graded as such. For example, your Midterm Exam may be graded as 20/25 points. Extra Credit points will be added to your final point total, but grades will not be allowed to exceed 100 points. For example, a student with a point total of 96 and 5 Extra Credit points will still have a final grade of 100. All assignments must be completed on time. Excused absences are required to make up missed assignments; however, Extra Credit opportunities can not be made up under any circumstances. Detailed information about all assignments can be found at the end of this syllabus.

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Due Date</b>	<b>Point Value</b>
Class Participation	N/A	10 Points
Current Events Journal	Varies	16 Points
Midterm Exam	Feb 22	25 Points
Informed Citizen Video Project	Mar 1, Apr 17	24 Points
Final Exam	Apr 26 or May 1	25 Points
Extra Credit	N/A	10 Extra Points

The grading scale for this class will be as follows:

100-90 (A); 89-86 (B+); 85-80 (B); 79-76 (C+); 75-70 (C); 69-60 (D); 59 and below (F)

## Class Rules:

1. Come to class! It will be IMPOSSIBLE to do well in this course without coming to class. Other students have tried and failed! We will mix lecture with discussion, so if you must miss class, make sure to find out what was discussed. My attendance policy will be discussed in greater detail in the last section of this syllabus.
2. Be on time! We have a lot to cover in only 15 short weeks, so the sooner we can get started the better. Also, Extra Credit quizzes must be taken during the first few minutes of class. If you arrive late, you will have missed an Extra Credit opportunity. Remember, these quizzes can not be made up.
3. Do the reading assignments! Class discussion can not work if you don't know what you're talking about, so review and follow your syllabus each week. My goal for this course is to help you learn as much from current events and your classmates as you will learn from me.
4. Participate! Class discussion also can not work if you don't participate in class. Show me that you have done the readings by engaging in meaningful discussions with your classmates. Since participation counts for 10 points of your grade, this will benefit you as well as everyone else.
5. Respect everyone's opinion! In this course, we will deal with the very sensitive topic of politics. The class will likely be composed of students from diverse ideological, racial, ethnic, religious, and class backgrounds. Each student will thus approach the topic from a unique vantage point. While comments may be made this semester that are difficult for you to hear and/or understand, it is important to respond to them calmly and on intellectual, rather than personal grounds. Remember, the goal is to learn from each other, not to attack each other.
6. Ask questions! There is no such thing as a stupid question. If you are thinking it, then other students are also thinking it; they just don't have the guts to ask it first. Your questions will help me to further organize and streamline the course for future semesters.
7. Talk to me! I have designated time each week to address your needs, so use it. I am always happy to discuss your progress in the course or any anxieties that you may be feeling about the readings and/or the assignments. I encourage you to come to me BEFORE you begin to fall behind in the course. Don't wait until finals time to tell me that you do not understand something. If you let me know earlier, then I can help you earlier.

8. Take advantage of all opportunities for learning! Keep up with the news and pay attention to current events. Don't let the opportunity pass you by to get involved. Apply the knowledge that you are gaining through the readings and class discussions to the world around you. What will you understand better by the end of this course? What have you been taking for granted for years that no longer makes sense?
9. Turn off your cell phone! We all forget sometimes (even me), but please try to minimize ringtones, notifications, and other distractions during class time.
10. Have fun! I will try to make the course as exciting as possible, so try to stay awake!

### **College Policies:**

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: *Scholastic dishonesty will not be tolerated and will be prosecuted to the fullest extent. You are expected to have read and understood the current issue of the student handbook (published by Student Services) regarding student responsibilities and rights, and the intellectual property policy, for information about procedures and about what constitutes acceptable on-campus behavior.*  
Basically, Don't cheat, don't plagiarize, and you will be fine.

ADA STATEMENT: *Students with medical, psychological, learning or other disabilities desiring academic adjustments, accommodations or auxiliary aids will need to contact the SNAP Disability Resource Center, as the center determines eligibility for and authorizes the provision of services.*  
If you do have a disability, please let me know on or before the first day of class so that I can make the appropriate accommodations for you.

### **Reading Schedule and Course Outline:**

The readings for this course are organized by week in order to give us more flexibility and time for discussion. Students should strive to complete the readings by the BEGINNING of the week, so that comments and class discussions will be informed and enlightened AND so that you will be prepared for quizzes. Any required readings that do not appear in the textbook will be made available in class.

Week 1: Politics: Who Gets What, and How?

(Tuesday, Jan 9 and Thursday, Jan 11)

- Barbour and Wright, *Keeping the Republic: Power and Citizenship in American Politics, 8th Edition (KTR8)*, Chapter 1

Week 2: American Citizens and Political Culture

(Tuesday, Jan 16 and Thursday, Jan 18)

- Barbour and Wright, *(KTR8)*, Chapter 2

Week 3: Politics of the American Founding

(Tuesday, Jan 23 and Thursday, Jan 25 - **1st JOURNAL ENTRY DUE, VIDEO PROJECT SELECTIONS MADE IN CLASS**)

- Barbour and Wright, *(KTR8)*, Chapter 3

Week 4: Federalism and the U.S. Constitution

(Tuesday, Jan 30 and Thursday, Feb 1)

- Barbour and Wright, *(KTR8)*, Chapter 4

Week 5: Fundamental American Liberties

(Tuesday, Feb 6 and Thursday, Feb 8)

- Barbour and Wright, *(KTR8)*, Chapter 5

Week 6: The Struggle for Equal Rights

(Tuesday, Feb 13 and Thursday, Feb 15 - **2nd JOURNAL ENTRY DUE**)

- Barbour and Wright, (*KTR8*), Chapter 6

Week 7: MIDTERM WEEK

(Tuesday, Feb 20 – **Midterm Review** and Thursday, Feb 22 - **MIDTERM**)

Week 8: Political Parties

(Tuesday, Feb 27 and Thursday, Mar 1 - **VIDEO PROJECT PROPOSALS DUE**)

- Barbour and Wright, (*KTR8*), Chapter 12

Week 9: Congress

(Tuesday, Mar 6 and Thursday, Mar 8 - **3rd JOURNAL ENTRY DUE**)

- Barbour and Wright, (*KTR8*), Chapter 7

Week 10: The Presidency

(Tuesday, Mar 13 and Thursday, Mar 15)

- Barbour and Wright, (*KTR8*), Chapter 8

Week 11: SPRING BREAK

(Tuesday, Mar 20 - **NO CLASS: Spring Break** and Thursday, Mar 22 - **NO CLASS: Spring Break**)

Week 12: Voting, Campaigns, and Elections

(Tuesday, Mar 27 and Thursday, Mar 29 - **4th JOURNAL ENTRY DUE**)

- Barbour and Wright, (*KTR8*), Chapter 14

Week 13: Public Opinion

(Tuesday, Apr 3 and Thursday, Apr 5)

- Barbour and Wright, (*KTR8*), Chapter 11

Week 14: The American Legal System and the Courts

(Tuesday, Apr 10 and Thursday, Apr 12)

- Barbour and Wright, (*KTR8*), Chapter 10

Week 15: ACTIVISM PROJECT WEEK

(Tuesday, Apr 17 - **VIDEO PROJECTS DUE** and Thursday, Apr 19 - **FINAL EXAM REVIEW**)

### **FINAL EXAM SCHEDULE:**

**POLI 101-06 (9:25 Class) - THURSDAY, APRIL 26th at 9:00AM**

**POLI 101-07 (10:50 Class) - TUESDAY, MAY 1st at 9:00AM**

### **Assignment Details:**

There are six essential requirements for the successful completion of this American Government course:

#### **1. Class Participation**

Class participation accounts for 10 points of your final grade. All students should attend class regularly because attendance will be factored into your class participation points. However, as the phrase suggests, class *participation* will measure more than just coming to class. Your engagement in class discussions and the amount of preparation that is apparent from your commentary in class will also be considered.

## **2. Current Events Journal**

This semester, we will spend a lot of time learning about the history of the American political system and about its basic structure and functions. This can often seem detached from the political events happening in the real world every day. However, that couldn't be further from the truth. There are deep and important connections between what you will learn in class this semester and events unfolding in Washington, D.C., state capitals, and cities across the country. Your job in your Currents Events Journal is to identify these connections.

Each student will create a 4-part Current Events Journal. For each journal entry, you will choose 1 or 2 articles from recognized, professional news sources. You will summarize the article(s), and then you will answer the following questions: Have we discussed this or a related topic in class? What perspectives from the textbook and class discussions may have been missing from the article? Did you react to the article any differently than you would have before taking this class? If the article presents a viewpoint, do you agree or disagree with it? Why or why not? Each journal entry must be between 700-1,000 words long and must be submitted to the appropriate OAKS dropbox. Pay attention to grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Each entry is worth 4 points.

Part 1 is due on Thursday, January 25th.

Part 2 is due on Thursday, February 15th.

Part 3 is due on Thursday, March 8th.

Part 4 is due on Thursday, March 29th.

The entire journal is worth 16 points of your final grade.

## **3. Midterm Exam**

All students must take the Midterm Examination. It will be offered on Thursday, February 22nd, during our scheduled class time. You must notify me in advance if you will not be in class on this date. All make-up exams must be taken before the scheduled test date, and will be an alternative version of the test.

The Midterm will be comprehensive, covering the totality of information presented from readings, lectures, discussions, etc., up to the point of the exam. It will combine true/false, multiple choice, and short answer questions. The midterm accounts for 25 points of your final grade.

## **4. Informed Citizen Video Project**

If I do my job correctly this semester, you will leave this class with a thorough understanding of the history, structure, and functions of our government. This will put you well on your way to becoming an informed and engaged citizen. But what about your family, your friends, your co-workers, and everyone else that you regularly come into contact with? Have they taken a semester of Political Science as well? If not, how do we expect for THEM to become informed and engaged citizens?

For your Informed Citizen Video Project, your group will choose one chapter from your textbook, then you will DESIGN and CREATE an entertaining and educational video (10 minutes or less) to share the information from that chapter with the general public. The best videos will be posted on my YouTube Channel: [www.youtube.com/professorneka](http://www.youtube.com/professorneka). The format of your video is up to you, but it must contain at least 50% of the keywords listed in the chapter, it must cover at least half of the content in the chapter, and it must identify the College of Charleston, this class, your Informed Citizen Video Project, and the title, authors, and edition of your textbook.

For this project, you will work in groups. Your groups and the chapter you will cover will be chosen in class on Thursday, January 25th. After that, they can not be changed. If you are not in class this day, you will be assigned to a group.

In order to make sure that you do not procrastinate, you will submit a detailed Proposal for your video on Thursday, March 1st. It must include a list of your group members, an explanation of your division of labor, a timeline of your meetings to plan, film, and edit your video, and a detailed storyboard showing the content and organization of your video. It should also identify the method you will use to film and edit your video, as well as any software or websites you will be using for video editing. This part of the project is worth 8 points.

Your final video is due at the beginning of class on Tuesday, April 17th. You MUST either submit your video file on a flash drive OR you can upload your video to a personal Youtube page and post a link in the appropriate OAKS dropbox. No other websites or submission methods are acceptable. We will watch all of the videos in class. This part of the project is worth 16 points.

The entire project is worth 24 points of your final grade. It will be graded on professionalism, creativity, and organization. Please see me if you need any additional explanations of this grading criteria.

### **5. Final Exam**

All students must take the Final Examination. (See the “Reading Schedule and Course Outline” section of this syllabus for your specific exam date and time.) You must notify me *in advance* if you will not be able to take the exam on your exam date. All make-up exams must be taken *before* the scheduled test date, and will be an alternative version of the test.

The Final will be comprehensive, covering information presented from readings, lectures, discussions, etc., *throughout the entire course*. It will combine true/false, multiple choice, and short answer. The Final Exam accounts for 25 points of your final grade.

### **6. Extra Credit**

There will be ample opportunities to earn Extra Credit points this semester. These opportunities will include 500-word reaction papers to films you watch and events you attend that are related to the content of this course. Each one of these opportunities will add up to 1 point to your final grade point total. You can earn up to 5 Extra Credit Points this way.

You can also earn up to 5 Extra Credit Points by scoring 100% on the Chapter Quizzes from your textbook’s companion website. Many of the quiz questions will also appear on the Midterm and Final Exams, so it is a good idea to add them to your exam reviews. The quizzes must be taken online and the results must be submitted to the appropriate OAKS dropbox.

All Extra Credit must be submitted to the appropriate OAKS dropbox by the last day of class Thursday, April 19th.