College of Charleston
POLI 101 Section 07: American Government
Fall 2018
MWF: 11:00-11:50
Campus Location: Robert Scott Small (RSS); Room 235

Instructor Information:
Kendall D. Deas, Ph.D
Adjunct Assistant Professor
Department of Political Science
Honors College; (Faculty Fellow)
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Office Hours:
By Appointment

Course Description:
This course focuses on the institutions and processes that shape our American system of government. Students in this class will develop an essential understanding of American government and politics. This semester, we will explore various aspects of the U.S. government including its institutions, the history and constitutional origins of those institutions, the laws and policies which govern our daily lives, and the political behaviors and attitudes of Americans. In addition to developing your knowledge of these important topics, students should gain an interest in contemporary political issues and events. Students will learn that political parties, political action committees (PACS), national polls, televised debates, and key endorsements all help to shape candidates’ political and policy positions as they design what they hope will be winning campaigns. Students will also learn that at the institutional level, U.S. Presidents have a major influence on the national and foreign policy priorities of the nation, represent the interests of the nation abroad, recommend all cabinet level officers for U.S. Senate confirmation, and have the opportunity to appoint members of the U.S. Supreme Court. We will also examine in this course major current debates in the U.S. Congress, the Executive Branch, the Judicial Branch, and the electorate as we consider the following questions: (1.) What is our primary responsibility as citizens to engage these issues? (2.) Are we merely spectators or should we be actively involved
in the processes of making certain that we elect officials who will be accountable to us as citizens in a representative democracy?

In this class, there are four sections. First, we will briefly talk about the discipline of political science focusing on how political scientists study politics and discuss career paths for political science majors. In the second section, we will focus upon the U.S. Constitution, core principles in our political institutions, and briefly discuss U.S. political history. In this section, the goal is to understand the normative and practical reasons for our government’s structures and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of our political system. In the third section, we will review American politics from the individual level. We will identify key elements of American political culture, talk about the formation of political attitudes, and discuss the important act of voting. In the final section, we will focus more narrowly on the specific institutions of government (from parties, the bureaucracy, and interest groups to the legislative, executive, and judicial branches). In this section, students should come away with an understanding of the structure and decisionmaking processes of the various institutions and understand how each “fits” within our larger system of government.

**Required Course Texts:**

- Ginsberg, Benjamin; Lowi, Theodore J.; Weir, Margaret; and Tolbert, Carolyn J; *We The People*, 11th edition (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2017).


- **Note:** Course textbooks are available for purchase or rent at the main campus bookstore (Barnes & Nobles; 160 Calhoun Street). There will also be peer reviewed articles you will be assigned to read periodically and these will be posted in the course Oaks site by the instructor.

**Learning Outcomes:**

*Students who complete this course should be able to accomplish the following:*

1. Identify and explain the central principles, institutions, procedures, and decision-making processes of the American political system
2. Evaluate the basic strengths and weaknesses of the American political system through the application of political concepts and ideas

3. Relate historical events and/or developments to contemporary political issues, debates, and outcomes in the U.S.

4. Develop an analytical, social science disposition toward American politics

5. Students will be able to use appropriate tools and search strategies for identifying particular types of information specific to the discipline; Evaluate the relevance, quality, and appropriateness of different sources of information; Recognize and classify the information contained within a bibliographic citation; Access and use information ethically and legally. This will be assessed with a source identification and source relevance activity that will be part of an embedded librarian session for the course

6. Students will be able to use appropriate critical thinking skills and problem-solving techniques in appropriate disciplinary contexts and make connections across disciplines and/or relevant experiences.

General Education Social Science Learning Outcomes:

Students will earn social science general education credit for completing this course. Students can apply social science concepts, models, or theories to explain human behavior, social interactions, or social institutions. Students will be assessed on this outcome through a required politics memo written assignment

Course Objectives:

This course is an overview of American Government, its political institutions, concepts, and their development. The goal is to familiarize students with the goals and tools of the U.S. government, to present them with possibilities for participation, and to lay the groundwork for more in-depth study. The course is structured in a way that connects debates over the goals and tools of government to contemporary political events, policies, and debates. The goals or objectives of this course are to achieve the following

- Apply social science concepts, models, or theories to explain human behavior, social interactions, or social institutions
- 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 U.S.
• Develop an analytical, social scientific disposition toward American politics

Course Assignments:

*It is preferred that all writing assignments be submitted in the Oaks dropbox for this course. However, if students experience a complication with the system, it will also be acceptable to submit assignments through campus email or submit a hardcopy to the instructor.*

Assignment 1: Discussion Prompts

Students will respond to 6 discussion prompts throughout the course. The discussion prompts will be questions for analysis that extend from the weekly readings and class discussions on the American political process. These written assignments should be about 300-350 words in length (1.5 or double spaced; 11 or 12 point font). They should be completed in a word document and uploaded into an assignment dropbox for the course. If there are complications, they can also be emailed or a hardcopy can be submitted to the instructor. The due dates for these assignments are indicated in the syllabus but can be changed at the discretion of the course instructor; *(100 pts)*.

Assignment 2: Political/Policy Issue Memo

Students will research and identify a political or domestic policy issue or problem of concern relevant to discussions in the current political environment and write a 5 page policy memo that 1.) identifies the issue of concern and provides some brief historical overview, 2.) explains why it is a significant policy issue of concern, and 3.) provides some type of policy prescription or plan to solve the policy problem. The memos should be (1.5 or double-spaced; 11 or 12 point font). The due date for this assignment is indicated in the syllabus but can be changed at the discretion of the course instructor; *(100 pts)*.

Assignment 3: Political Topics Presentation

Each student will be responsible for presenting some research on a relevant political or policy topic of concern to them. These presentations may be done individually or in small groups of 2 to 3 students. These will be brief presentations (10 minutes in length) and can be delivered by using powerpoint, Prezi, or distributing a class outline and delivered orally. Each student will be asked to identify a topic of interest and submit to the instructor by email by the end of week 2 of the course. We will have student presentations throughout the course of the fall semester; *(100 pts)*.
Assignment 4: Final Exam

The final exam will be 2 written essay responses. Students will be given 4 essay questions of which they are to select only 2 to answer worth 50 points each. It will be a cumulative final exam. There will be a short review session for the final exam; **(100 pts)**.

Attendance and Participation:

Attendance will be taken for this course. All students are expected to attend class with due diligence. Students who miss more than 4 classes will be dropped from this course. Absences will only be excused with a medical note or personal/family emergencies, a formal discussion with the instructor, and documenting the absence. Students with a legitimate, documentable reason may require an absence memo by bringing documentation to the Office of the Associate Dean of Students at 67 George Street, where the student may fill out a brief form with a schedule of missed class/classes, dates missed and the names of the appropriate professors and advisor. There is a class participation grade and missing classes will negatively impact this area of assessment for the course. No texting or use of social media in class and excessive use will result in points deducted from the final grade.

Honor System:

All students are expected to comply with the honor code of the College of Charleston. Violation of the honor code, in particular plagiarism will result in a grade of XF for the course.

Americans with Disabilities (ADA):

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), all qualified students enrolled in this course are entitled to reasonable accommodations. Please notify the instructor during the first week of any accommodations needed for the course. We are here to work with you and invite you to inform us of any accommodations you need. You can also contact the Office of Disability Services at (843)-953-1431.

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<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion Prompts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Issue Memo</td>
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Political Topic Presentation 100 (max. 100%)

Final Exam 100 (max. 100%)

Class Participation 100 (max. 100%)

**Total Points-(600 pts)**

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**Course Reading and Assignment Schedule:** (Note: Specific course reading will be assigned daily in class)

**Week 1-August 22nd and 24th**

- Course introductions
- What is political science?
- What are career paths for political scientists?
- **Part 1: Foundations**
• Chapter 1: American Political Culture (We The People)

Week 2-August 27th, 29th, and 31st
• Chapter 1: American Political Culture (We The People)
• Discussion Prompt 1 Due: September 5th (midnight)

Week 3 September 5th and 7th
• Chapter 2: The Foundation of the Constitution (We The People)

Week 4 September 10th, 12th, and 14th
• Chapter 2: The Foundations of the Constitution (We The People)
• Mann and Ornstein (Part 1: The Problem)
• Discussion Prompt 2 Due: September 16th (midnight)

Week 5 September 17th, 19th, and 21st
• Chapter 3: Federalism (We The People)

Week 6 September 24th, 26th, and 28th
• Chapter 3: Federalism (We The People)
• Mann and Ornstein (Part 2: What to do About It)
• Discussion Prompt 3 Due: September 30th (midnight)

Week 7 October 1st, 3rd, and 5th
• Chapter 4: Civil Liberties (We The People)

Week 8 October 8th, 10th, and 12th
• Chapter 4: Civil Liberties (We The People)

Week 9 October 15th, 17th, and 19th
• Chapter 5: Civil Rights (We The People)
- Discussion Prompt 4 Due: October 19th (midnight)

Week 10 October 22nd, 24th, and 26th
- Part II: Institutions
  - Chapter 12: Congress (We The People)

Week 11 October 29th, 31st, and November 2nd
Chapter 13: The Presidency (We The People)
- Discussion Prompt 5 Due: November 2nd (midnight)

Week 12 November 5th, 7th, and 9th
- Chapter 14: Bureaucracy (We The People)

Week 13 November 12th, 14th, and 16th
- Chapter 15: The Federal Courts (We The People)
  - Issue Memo/Paper Due: November 16th (midnight)

Week 14 November 19th
- Part III: Policy
  - Chapter 17: Social Policy (We The People)
  - Thanksgiving Break; (November 21st and 23rd; no classes)

Week 15 November 26th, 28th, and 30th
- Chapter 18: Foreign Policy and Domestic
- Discussion Prompt 6 Due: December 2nd (midnight)
Week 16 December 3rd, 5th, and 7th

- Part IV: Politics
- Chapter 6: Public Opinion; Chapter 8: Political Participants and Voting; Chapter 9: Political Parties; Chapter 11: Groups and Interests (We The People)

Final Examination (To Be Determined)