American Government  
Fall 2018 Syllabus  
Instructor: Professor Roneka Matheny

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Number:</th>
<th>Day/Time:</th>
<th>Location:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>POLI 101-04</td>
<td>TR 12:15-1:30PM</td>
<td>316 MYBK</td>
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<tr>
<td>POLI 101-05</td>
<td>TR 1:40-2:55PM</td>
<td>316 MYBK</td>
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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:

- Textbook Companion Website: edge.sagepub.com/barbour8e

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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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Point Value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>10 Points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Events Journal</td>
<td>Varies</td>
<td>16 Points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>Oct 4</td>
<td>25 Points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inform &amp; Engage Project</td>
<td>Sep 20, Nov 27</td>
<td>24 Points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>Dec 6 or Dec 11</td>
<td>25 Points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra Credit</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>10 Extra Points</td>
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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 ARE ENCOURAGED TO WAIT TO COMPLETE THE READINGS UNTIL AFTER WE COVER THEM IN CLASS. Any required readings that do not appear in the textbook will either be made available to you in class or on the OAKS website for this course.

**Week 1: Politics: Who Gets What, and How?**
(Tuesday, Aug 21 and Thursday, Aug 23)
- 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, Aug 28 and Thursday, Aug 30)
- Barbour and Wright, *(KTR8)*, Chapter 2

**Week 3: Politics of the American Founding**
(Tuesday, Sep 4 and Thursday, Sep 6 - **1st JOURNAL ENTRY DUE**)
- Barbour and Wright, *(KTR8)*, Chapter 3

**Week 4: Federalism and the U.S. Constitution**
(Tuesday, Sep 11 and Thursday, Sep 13)
- Barbour and Wright, *(KTR8)*, Chapter 4

**Week 5: Fundamental American Liberties**
(Tuesday, Sep 18 and Thursday, Sep 20- **PROJECT LESSON PLANS DUE**)
- Barbour and Wright, *(KTR8)*, Chapter 5

**Week 6: The Struggle for Equal Rights**
(Tuesday, Sep 25 and Thursday, Sep 27 - **2nd JOURNAL ENTRY DUE**


Week 7: MIDTERM WEEK
(Tuesday, Oct 2 – Midterm Review and Thursday, Oct 4 - MIDTERM)

Week 8: Political Parties
(Tuesday, Oct 9 and Thursday, Oct 11)
  • Barbour and Wright, (KTR8), Chapter 12

Week 9: Congress
(Tuesday, Oct 16 and Thursday, Oct 18 - 3rd JOURNAL ENTRY DUE)
  • Barbour and Wright, (KTR8), Chapter 7

Week 10: The Presidency
(Tuesday, Oct 23 and Thursday, Oct 25)
  • Barbour and Wright, (KTR8), Chapter 8

Week 11: Voting, Campaigns, and Elections
(Tuesday, Oct 30 and Thursday, Nov 1)
  • Barbour and Wright, (KTR8), Chapter 14

Week 12: FALL BREAK
(Tuesday, Nov 6 - NO CLASS: Fall Break and Thursday, Nov 8 - 4th JOURNAL ENTRY DUE)

Week 13: Public Opinion
(Tuesday, Nov 13 and Thursday, Nov 15)
  • Barbour and Wright, (KTR8), Chapter 11

Week 14: The American Legal System and the Courts
(Tuesday, Nov 20 and Thursday, Nov 22 - NO CLASS: Thanksgiving)
  • Barbour and Wright, (KTR8), Chapter 10

Week 15: ACTIVISM PROJECT WEEK
(Tuesday, Nov 27 - VIDEO PROJECTS DUE and Thursday, Nov 29 - FINAL EXAM REVIEW)

FINAL EXAM SCHEDULE:
POLI 101-04 (12:15 Class) - TUESDAY, DEC 11th at 12:00 PM
POLI 101-05 (1:40 Class) - THURSDAY, DEC 6th at 4:00 PM

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.

You can find these connections in the news each day. Unfortunately, in today’s society, “news” often contains just as much opinion as factual information (sometimes more). In order to understand how this class relates to the news of the day, you must be able to examine a topic from multiple points of view and identify the factual information. This will be your job in your Currents Events Journal.

Each student will create a 4-part Current Events Journal. For each journal entry, you will choose 2 articles with differing viewpoints on the same topic, and then you will answer the following 3 questions: How does the topic covered in the articles relate to your textbook and/or our class discussions? Why are there differing opinions on the topic? Which viewpoint do you agree with (if any) and why? Each journal entry must be between 500-750 words long and must be submitted to the appropriate OAKS dropbox. Pay attention to grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

Part 1 is due on Thursday, September 6th.
Part 2 is due on Thursday, September 27th.
Part 3 is due on Thursday, October 18th.
Part 4 is due on Thursday, November 8th.

Each entry is worth 4 points. 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, October 4th, 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. Inform and Engage 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 Inform and Engage Project, you will choose one chapter from your textbook, and you will design a lesson plan to teach the information from that chapter to a group of 20 people or more. You will document your process, your teaching event, and responses from your students in an entertaining and educational video (10 minutes or less). The best videos will be posted on my YouTube Channel: www.youtube.com/professorneka so make sure you identify the College of Charleston, this class, your Inform and Engage Project, and the title, authors, and edition of your textbook.
For this project, you may either work alone or in groups. No group will have more than 3 members. This is a very complex project, so in order to make sure that you do not procrastinate, you will submit a detailed Lesson Plan on Thursday, September 20th. It must include the following elements:

1. List of your group members,
2. Identify the chapter you will cover,
3. Explain how you will divide the work for this project among your group members,
4. Propose a timeline for the rest of the semester (When will you meet to plan? When will your event be? When will you film and what will your video look like? Will you have enough time to edit?)
5. Design a detailed lesson from the information in your chapter. The amount of content you cover and the way you choose to present that content is totally up to you. However, you must teach your students legitimate facts from course materials, and you must incorporate a connection to the 2018 Midterm Elections. Be detailed and thorough about the content you will cover and your presentation methods so that I can approve them before your event takes place.

The Lesson Plan part of the project is worth 8 points.

Your final video is due at the beginning of class on Tuesday, November 27th. Make sure it includes a few student responses. You can submit your video file in three ways: post it to a personal YouTube page and share it with me, submit it on a flash drive, OR upload it to the appropriate OAKS dropbox. We will attempt to watch all of the videos in class. The Video 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 250-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, November 29th.