AMERICAN GOVERNMENT  
Political Science 101, Section 3  
T/TH 12:15-1:30  
ONLINE & IN-PERSON Johnson Center, Room 207 (starting September 15th)

*PLEASE NOTE THAT ANY ITEM WITH A * IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE DUE TO CHANGES IN COVID-19 CIRCUMSTANCES AND/OR COLLEGE POLICY

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Office Hours: Virtual (by appointment only)*

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I. OBJECTIVES

This class is intended to provide students with an understanding of the basic history, structure, theoretical justifications, and operation of the American government system. Emphasis will be placed upon recognizing the relationships between current political issues and long-standing dilemmas in government and on the similarities and/or differences between the normative and empirical aspects of our national government. The class is also designed to increase students’ grasp of politics in order to augment their interest in the American political system.

As defined by the Department of Political Science, upon completion of the course, a student should be able to: 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 United States; and 4) Develop an analytical, social science disposition toward American politics.

General Education Learning Requirements

As part of a general education learning outcome, students can apply social science concepts, models or theories to explain human behavior, social interactions or social institutions. This outcome will be assessed in an essay question on the first exam. This question will constitute 20% of the exam; the exam will constitute 15% of your final grade.

II. REQUIRED TEXTS

Each student must purchase/borrow:


1

Additional readings may be assigned and will be posted on OAKS. It is the student’s responsibility to check email and OAKS regularly for information about any changes in course material, class schedule, or exams.

**III. EVALUATION**

Grades will be based upon three in-class examinations (two mid-terms and one final), one short paper, an in-class presentation/debate, class participation, and reading quizzes.* The first exam will constitute 15% of the final grade, the second 20%, and the final 25%; the paper will constitute 10%, in-class presentation 10%, class participation 15%, and reading quizzes 5%. Details for each of these are listed below.

These assignments correspond with the above learning objectives in the following way:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Assignment(s)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Identify and explain the central principles, institutions,</td>
<td>Exams (Objective, Identification, and Short Answer Questions); Class</td>
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<tr>
<td>procedures, and decision-making processes of the American</td>
<td>Participation; Reading Quiz</td>
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<td>political system</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evaluate the basic strengths and weaknesses of the American</td>
<td>Exams (Identification and Short Answer Questions); Short Paper; Class</td>
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<td>political system through the application of political concepts</td>
<td>Participation; In-Class Presentation</td>
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<td>and ideas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relate historical events and/or developments to contemporary</td>
<td>Exams (Short Answer Questions); Short Paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>political issues, debates, and outcomes in the United States</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop an analytical, social science disposition toward</td>
<td>Exams (entire); Short Paper, Class Participation; In-Class Presentation</td>
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<td>American politics</td>
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*Examinations (60% of final grade)*

The **three examinations** will be a combination of objective (multiple choice and true/false), identification, short answer, and essay. The final exam will not be cumulative. Examinations must be taken at the scheduled time, unless arrangements have been made with the instructor at least 48 hours prior to the exam. Make-up exams will only be offered once and will be more difficult than the regular test.

*Small Group Position Paper (10% of final grade)*
As part of the requirements for this class, you will submit one position paper during the semester. For the paper, you will be assigned to a small group of 2 or 3 students; that group will be jointly responsible for writing a single paper which will be submitted on behalf of the group. Once the class list is finalized, I will randomly assign students to each group and post the assignments on OAKS.

The position papers are based upon the content in the Canon text (Fault Lines). The relevant pages are listed below in Section VII. Each paper should be 3-4 (double spaced) pages in length, with content distributed as follows:

1 page: Summary of the issue and of the competing arguments from the readings. Do NOT rely on the chapter’s introduction in your paper for your summary. You must address the articles themselves. Be sure to summarize BOTH of the articles in the chapter.

2-3 pages: Discussion of the group’s opinion on the issue. This must include which side of the debate your group found most convincing and why. This explanation should not consist of simply “because the other side is wrong” but should include a thoughtful analysis of precisely where and how the competing position is insufficient. You should draw upon the Canon and Abernathy texts, the class lectures, and your own general knowledge here; outside research is not permitted. Also, be sure that you do NOT simply repeat the arguments contained in the text. I want independent analysis from your group (though you should not consult any outside sources).

In terms of evaluation, your group’s mark will be based upon several factors. In particular, I will attend to your grammar, spelling and punctuation, your ability to concisely explain the debate, and, most importantly, the thoroughness with which you have considered the issue and your position. Unless I am informed otherwise, I will assume that each group member contributed equally and will assign each group member the same grade. If this is an incorrect assumption, please let me know so that I can adjust individual grades as needed. Such reports will be held in the strictest confidence.

Please note also that I have no preference for which side of the issue your group favors, only that you favor a side. In other words, there is no “right” answer. The more thoughtful the essay appears to be, the higher your grade, regardless of your ultimate conclusion. My main concern is that your group reach a position and make reasonable, well-constructed arguments for it.

Papers are due in hard copy at the start of class on the date listed in the syllabus. Papers will be docked five points for every hour beyond this deadline. No paper will be accepted twenty-four hours after it is due.

In-Class Presentation/Debate (5% of final grade)
In addition to writing a paper, your group will also be responsible for presenting that paper in front of the class and engaging in a brief debate (facilitated by me) with the other group. You will have approximately 5 minutes to present the class with an overview of your paper. Please do NOT simply read from the paper. One (or several) of you should introduce the topic of the reading, summarize for the class the primary arguments made by each author, and then explain which position was adopted by your group and why. The other group will then do the same. I will, as needed, ask questions of each group to generate discussion and debate. You will be graded based upon your level of preparation, adherence to the time limit, and thoughtfulness during the debate. Please practice before your presentation.

Class Participation (15% of final grade)

Class participation is highly encouraged, as reflected in its contribution to the final grade. The grade will be based upon how actively you participate in the course. Active participation means that, at a minimum, you come to class having completed the reading(s) assigned for that day. You will be evaluated based upon both the frequency and substance of your involvement in class discussions.

Reading Quizzes (10% of final grade)

To ensure students are reading the text prior to class, there will be a weekly reading quiz that must be completed. The quiz will be posted on OAKS 24 hours before the relevant class session and MUST be completed before class.

Pop Quizzes

I also reserve to right to give random pop quizzes if it appears that students are not reading the material or coming to class well-prepared. If instituted, these quizzes will be factored into your class participation grade.

Grading Scale

The grading system is based upon the following scale: 93-100% A; 90-92 A-; 87-89% B+; 83-85% B; 80-82% B-; 77-79% C+; 73-76% C; 70-72% C-; 67-69% D+; 63-67% D; 60-62% D- 0-59%; F. Extra credit is not permitted.

IV. ATTENDANCE AND CLASS BEHAVIOR

Attendance is required for all classes, either during synchronous Zoom sessions or in-person classes. Attendance will be taken during every in-person class. Only documented illness (subject to exception for Covid-related absences), family emergency, or institutional permission constitute excused absences. Please let me know of any such absences in advance whenever possible; if you will be missing class for a school-related reason (activity, athletics etc.), you must let me know twenty-four hours before your absence.
Any student with a Covid-related absence should inform me as soon as possible. The student and I will make reasonable accommodations/arrangements as needed. My classes are built on mutual respect and trust, and I expect that you will be honest and truthful about the cause of your absence(s).

As tardiness disrupts the classroom environment, any student who is late more than two times will have their participation grade dropped by 10%.

If classes are suspended due to inclement weather, pandemic or substantial interruption of instruction, I will announce a plan for a change in modality to ensure the continuity of learning. All students must have access to a computer equipped with a web camera, microphone, and Internet access. Resources are available to provide students with these essential tools.

The rules of the student code of conduct apply in this class. Appropriate behavior is required at all times. Students may not speak while other students or the instructor is speaking. Classroom debate is highly encouraged, but students are expected to conduct themselves with decorum and respect.

Laptops are not allowed during in-person class sessions. Use of cell phones during class is strictly prohibited. Turn phones off before entering the classroom/Zoom session.

V. ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

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 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 both by 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 Dean of Students. A student found responsible by the Honor Board for academic dishonesty will receive an XXF 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 XX to be expunged. The F is permanent. 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, quiz and/or test, no collaboration during the completion of the 
assignment is permitted. Other forms of cheating include possessing or using an 
unauthorized study aid (which could include accessing information via a cell phone or 
computer), 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.

Students can find the complete Honor Code and all related processes in the Student 

VI. DISABLED STUDENTS

The College will make reasonable accommodations for persons with documented 
disabilities. Students should apply for services at the Center for Disability Services/SNAP 
located on the first floor of the Lightsey Center, Suite 104. Students approved for 
accommodations are responsible for notifying me as soon as possible and for contacting 
me one week before accommodation is needed

VII. ASSIGNMENTS AND LECTURE TOPICS

Please note that I reserve the right to alter these assignments as necessary. Notice of such 
changes will be provided in advance and students are expected to alter their reading as 
necessary. Indeed, given current circumstances, change is so likely that this syllabus 
includes only the material to be covered during the first three weeks of class. An 
updated syllabus will be distributed when it is determined whether in-person classes 
will resume.

*DUE TO COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS, THE FIRST THREE WEEKS OF CLASS 
WILL INCLUDE SYNCHRONOUS ZOOM SESSIONS ONLY. DURING THESE 
SESSIONS, HELD AT THE CLASS TIME LISTED ABOVE, WE WILL DISCUSS 
THE MATERIAL COVERED IN THE TEXT, THE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS 
POSTED ON OAKS, AND THE PRE-RECORDED LECTURE POSTED ON 
OAKS. THE LECTURE AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS WILL BE POSTED 24 
HOURS BEFORE CLASS

*The Zoom sessions will NOT be re-teaching of material covered in the text or lecture but 
will build upon that material. Therefore, YOU MUST READ THE ASSIGNED PAGES 
IN THE TEXT, READ AND CONSIDER THE KEY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS 
POSTED ON OAKS, AND LISTEN TO THE LECTURE PRIOR TO CLASS.

SECTION ONE: THE FOUNDATION OF AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

A. Session 1: Tuesday, August 25th
**Topic:** Introduction to the Course & Each Other

**Modality:** Zoom – 12:15 pm, EST (I will send invitation via email)

**Reading:** Syllabus

**Additional Assignment:** None

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**B. Session 2: Thursday, August 27th**

**Topic:** Who Cares About Politics?

**Modality:** Zoom – 12:15 pm, EST (I will send invitation via email)

**Reading:** Abernathy, pp. 3-10

**Additional Assignments:** Listen to lecture; read/consider discussion questions; complete reading quiz

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**C. Session 3: Tuesday, September 1st:**

**Topic:** The Articles of Confederation: Striiiiiiike One

**Modality:** Zoom – 12:15 pm, EST (I will send invitation via email)

**Reading:** Abernathy, pp. 33-40; 530-535 (Articles I-VII and Amendments 1-10 of the U.S. Constitution)

**Additional Assignments:** Listen to lecture; read/consider discussion questions; complete reading quiz

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**D. Session 4: Thursday, September 3rd**

**Topic:** The Greatest (?) “Hundred Days” of All Time

**Modality:** Zoom – 12:15 pm, EST (I will send invitation via email)

**Reading:** Abernathy, pp. 40-52; Canon, pp 15-25; 31-34

**Additional Assignments:** Listen to lecture; read/consider discussion questions; complete short paper and prepare presentation on Canon text (Groups 1 & 2 ONLY); complete reading quiz
E.  **Sessions 5: Tuesday September 8th**

**Topic:** Think We Fight Now? Ratification Debates

**Modality:** Zoom – 12:15 pm, EST (I will send invitation via email)

**Reading:** Abernathy, pp. 52-59; 540-543 (Federalist #10)

**Additional Assignments:** Listen to lecture; read/consider discussion questions; complete reading quiz

F.  **Session 6: Thursday, September 10th**

**Topic:** Federalism Then and Now, Part 1

**Modality:** Zoom – 12:15 pm, EST (I will send invitation via email)

**Reading:** Abernathy, pp. 63-68

**Additional Assignments:** Listen to lecture; read/consider discussion questions; complete reading quiz