American Government
Spring 2019 Syllabus
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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
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 20/24 points. Extra Credit points will be added to your final point total, but remember that your GPA is calculated based on letter grades, not on your raw score in the course. For example, a student with a grade point total of 91 including Extra Credit will earn an A in this course, and a student with a grade point total of 105 including Extra Credit will also earn an A in this course. All assignments must be completed on time. Excused absences are required to make up missed assignments. 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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</thead>
<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>24 Points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>Feb 21</td>
<td>24 Points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constitution Project</td>
<td>Mar 28</td>
<td>18 Points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>Apr 25 or Apr 30</td>
<td>24 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 cannot 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. 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. 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, Jan 8 and Thursday, Jan 10)
   • 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 15 and Thursday, Jan 17)
   • Barbour and Wright, (KTR8), Chapter 2

Week 3: Politics of the American Founding  (Tuesday, Jan 22 and Thursday, Jan 24 - 1st JOURNAL ENTRY DUE)
   • Barbour and Wright, (KTR8), Chapter 3

Week 4: Federalism and the U.S. Constitution  (Tuesday, Jan 29 and Thursday, Jan 31)
   • Barbour and Wright, (KTR8), Chapter 4

Week 5: The Constitution and Fundamental American Liberties  (Tuesday, Feb 5 and Thursday, Feb 7)
   • Barbour and Wright, (KTR8), Chapters 4-5

Week 6: American Liberties and The Struggle for Equal Rights  (Tuesday, Feb 12 and Thursday, Feb 14 - 2nd JOURNAL ENTRY DUE)
   • Barbour and Wright, (KTR8), Chapters 5-6

Week 7: MIDTERM WEEK  (Tuesday, Feb 19 – Midterm Review and Thursday, Feb 21 - MIDTERM)
Week 8: Congress  
(Tuesday, Feb 26 and Thursday, Feb 28)  
• Barbour and Wright, (KTR8), Chapter 7

Week 9: The Presidency  
(Tuesday, Mar 5 and Thursday, Mar 7)  
• Barbour and Wright, (KTR8), Chapter 8

Week 10: Political Parties  
(Tuesday, Mar 12 and Thursday, Mar 14 - 3rd JOURNAL ENTRY DUE)  
• Barbour and Wright, (KTR8), Chapter 12

Week 11: SPRING BREAK  
(Tuesday, Mar 19- NO CLASS: Spring Break and Thursday, Mar 21 - NO CLASS: Spring Break)

Week 12: Voting, Campaigns, and Elections  
(Tuesday, Mar 26 and Thursday, Mar 28 - CONSTITUTION VIDEOS DUE)  
• Barbour and Wright, (KTR8), Chapter 14

Week 13: Elections and Public Opinion  
(Tuesday, Apr 2 and Thursday, Apr 4)  
• Barbour and Wright, (KTR8), Chapter 11

Week 14: Public Opinion and Course Conclusions  
(Tuesday, Apr 9 and Thursday, Apr 11- 4th JOURNAL ENTRY DUE)

Week 15: PROJECTS & EXAM REVIEW  
(Tuesday, Apr 16 - CONSTITUTION VIDEO VIEWING and Thursday, Apr 18 - FINAL EXAM REVIEW)

Week 16: NO CLASS  
(Tuesday, Apr 23 - NO CLASS)

**FINAL EXAM SCHEDULE:**  
POLI 101-01 (10:50 Class) - TUESDAY, APR 30th at 9:00 AM  
POLI 101-05 (12:15 Class) - THURSDAY, APR 25th at 12:00 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. You will receive a score out of 5 points halfway through the semester, which will be included in your Overall Midterm Grades. At the end of the semester, you will receive a separate score out of 5 points for your participation during the second half of the course.

In both cases, your participation score will be primarily based on attendance. Sign-in sheets will be passed around at the beginning of each class session. It is your responsibility to make sure that you sign them. Your name will not be added to any sign-in sheets after you leave the classroom. An attendance score will be assigned based on how many times you have signed my sign-in sheets.

However, as the title suggests, this is a class participation grade, not just an attendance grade. That means that it will measure more than just coming to class. Your engagement in class discussions, your preparation for
discussion of course content, and your behavior in class can each have either a positive or a negative effect on your initial attendance score. The resulting score will be your class participation grade.

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 follow these steps:

1. **Choose a topic that is currently receiving a lot of media attention.** (Examples from last semester are the Supreme Court confirmation hearings for Justice Kavanaugh, the 2018 Midterm Elections, the murder of Washington Post journalist Jamal Khasshogi, the Pittsburgh synagogue shooting, the political mail bomber, etc.)

2. **Identify at least two news sources (either print, online, or from television) that are covering that topic in different ways.** Perhaps one source is liberal, and the other one is conservative. Alternatively, one source could be academic or scientific, while the other is opinion-based. BRIEFLY summarize the topic and the different “spins” of the sources you have chosen.

3. **Identify the concepts, vocabulary, and/or theories from Political Science that are needed for an intelligent citizen to understand the topic and be able to cut through the spin.**

4. **How well do YOU understand the topic?** If well, then explain how you learned the necessary information to help you understand the topic (ex: from this class, from another class, from family, from the media, etc.). If not so well, then describe the other political science/government classes you have taken. Why do you feel they did not prepare you to be able to understand the topic?

5. **How well do others understand the topic?** Discuss our topic with your family and friends. Does their level of understanding seem to match yours? If not, why do you think that is?

Each journal entry must be a minimum of 800 words and must be submitted to the appropriate OAKS dropbox. Pay attention to grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

Part 1 is due on Thursday, January 24th.
Part 2 is due on Thursday, February 14th.
Part 3 is due on Thursday, March 14th.
Part 4 is due on Thursday, April 11th.

Each entry is worth 6 points. The entire journal is worth 24 points of your final grade.

3. Midterm Exam

All students must take the Midterm Examination. It will be offered on Thursday, February 21st, 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 24 points of your final grade.

4. CofC Translates the Constitution for Millennials 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 and your constitutional rights. This will put you well on your way to becoming an informed and engaged citizen. But what about the rest of your generation? Have they all taken Political Science courses? What about the ones who took classes but never learned anything useful? What about the ones who never went to college at all? This semester, we will take one small step toward helping your generation become more informed and engaged citizens. We will translate the United States Constitution from the archaic language of the 18th Century to more modern, easy to understand lingo.

To complete this project, each student will work individually to complete the following steps:

1. You will be assigned a specific portion of the Constitution to translate early in the semester. Remember, the full text of the US Constitution with all of the Amendments can be found at the back of your textbook in Appendix 3.
2. Over the next several weeks, you will research your assigned section and prepare a translation into modern, everyday language. Use a combination of the textbook, lectures, class discussions, and personal research.
3. Prepare a Powerpoint (or similar kind of visual presentation) that will help to explain your section of the Constitution. This visual aid will play on a monitor behind you while you orally present the original and translated text.
4. Prepare a brief oral presentation where you read the original text that you were assigned and your translation. Try to keep your presentation to 5 minutes or less.
5. Film your presentation using your visual aid in the One Button Studio at the Addlestone Library. All videos must be filmed using the One Button Studio. Any other filming method will result in a failing grade.
6. Submit your completed video to the appropriate OAKS dropbox or bring it to class on a flash drive by Thursday, March 28th.
7. I will combine all of the videos into a single video file, and we will watch it in class on Tuesday, April 16th. It will also be available for you to share with your family and friends on my YouTube page: www.YouTube.com/ProfessorNeka

The entire project is worth 18 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., from the second half of the course. It will combine true/false, multiple choice, and short answer. The Final Exam accounts for 24 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 (see the bottom of page 1 of this syllabus). 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 Tuesday, April 23rd.