

AMERICAN GOVERNMENT
Political Science 101, Section 3
T/Th: 1:40-2:55 PM
Maybank Hall, Room 111
Spring 2018

Instructor: Claire Wofford, J.D., Ph.D. **Office:** 114 Wentworth Street, Room 205

Office Hours: Wed: 1:00-2:30; Th: 12:30-1:00 (and by appointment)

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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:

Patterson, Thomas E. 2015. *We the People: A Concise Introduction to American Politics*, 11th ed., McGraw Hill: New York, NY. (hereinafter "Patterson")

Canon, David T., John J. Coleman, Kenneth R. Mayer. 2014. *Fault Lines: Debating the Issue in American Politics*, 4th ed. Norton: NY. (hereinafter “Canon”)

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), three short position papers, and class participation. The first exam will constitute 15% of the final grade, the second 20%, and the final 30%; the papers will constitute 20%; class participation will constitute 15%.

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

| Objective | Assignment(s) |
|---|--|
| Identify and explain the central principles, institutions, procedures, and decision-making processes of the American political system | Exams (Objective, Identification, and Short Answer Questions); Class Participation |
| Evaluate the basic strengths and weaknesses of the American political system through the application of political concepts and ideas | Exams (Identification and Short Answer Questions); Short Papers; Class Participation |
| Relate historical events and/or developments to contemporary political issues, debates, and outcomes in the United States | Exams (Short Answer Questions); Short Papers |
| Develop an analytical, social science disposition toward American politics | Exams (entire); Short Papers; Class Participation |

Examinations

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 Papers

As part of the requirements for this class, you will submit **three position papers** during the semester. For the papers, 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 **2-4 (double spaced) pages** in length, with content distributed as follows:

1-2 page: Summary of the issue and of the competing arguments from the readings. Please note that some chapters have two articles, others have three articles. You are responsible for **all the articles** in your assigned chapter. Do NOT rely on the chapter's introduction in your paper for your summary. You must address the articles themselves.

2-4 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. Feel free to draw upon the Canon and Patterson texts, the class lectures, and your own general knowledge here. 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.**

Class Participation

Class participation is highly encouraged, as reflected in its contribution to the final grade. The class participation grade is comprised of two elements: in-class participation (10%) and attendance/written response on relevant campus events (5%).

The **in-class participation** 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.

You are also required to attend at least **three campus or community events** (lectures, films, roundtables etc.) outside of class and to submit a **one page (double spaced)** response to each event/lecture **linking the topic of the event/lecture to a class reading/discussion**. The events (which are subject to my approval if not selected by me) must be connected in some way to American government and politics. I will post potential events regularly on OAKS, but you should also seek out events on your own. Do **NOT** wait until the end of the semester to complete these assignments. If you “run out” of relevant events, you will not be permitted to make up the assignment and you will receive a zero. If you have scheduling difficulties due to employment, please let me know as soon as possible. Conflicts with extra-curricular activities (including Greek life, sports teams etc.) are NOT acceptable reasons for failure to complete the assignment.

In terms of evaluation, you will be assigned either a check minus, check, or check plus, which roughly correspond to a C, B, and A, respectively. This mark will be based upon the clarity and content of your description of the event, how well you link it to class material, and the quality of your writing. These papers can be turned in at any time, but all papers must be handed in **in hard copy by 1:40 p.m., on Thursday, April 19th (last class session)**.

Pop Quizzes

I also reserve the 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; attendance will be taken. Only documented illness, 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 at least twenty-four hours before your absence. Any student who has more than two unexcused absences will be assigned a lower or failing final grade. As tardiness disrupts the classroom

environment, any student **who is late more than two times will be assigned one unexcused absence**

The rules of the student code of conduct apply in this class. Appropriate behavior is required at all times. Students are expected to attend class prepared and on time. 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 in the classroom. Use of cell phones during class is strictly prohibited. Turn phones off before entering the classroom.

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 be 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 a 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 Handbook at <http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/honor-system/studenthandbook/index>.

VI. DISABLED STUDENTS

The College of Charleston policy regarding disabled students and reasonable accommodations will apply in this class and accommodations will be provided for those students with documented disabilities. Please speak with me **as soon as possible** if you are in need of assistance.

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.

Also, please be aware that both the final and mid-term exams will be based upon information contained in **both the text and the lectures**. Focusing solely upon the text or the lecture material will be insufficient to perform well in this class.

PART ONE: THE FOUNDATIONS OF AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

A. Session One: January 9th

Topic: Introduction to Course and Each Other

Reading: None

B. Session Two: January 11th

Topic: Who Cares About Politics?

Reading: None

Key Issues: Why should you care about politics and American government? What relevance does it have to your life and future? Why do so many people not care? What impact does this have on our democracy?

C. Sessions Three-Four: January 16th and 18th

Topic: The Articles of Confederation: Strike One

Reading: Patterson, pp. 28-35; 577-594 (U.S. Constitution)

Key Issues: Why and how did the Articles of Confederation structure the government? What challenges arose after its adoption? Why and how was it rejected? What is your response to reading the Constitution?

D. Sessions Five-Six: January 23rd and 25th

Topic: The Constitution: The Greatest “Hundred Days”

Reading: Patterson, pp. 35-64; 595-599 (Federalist #10); Canon, pp. 30-57

Key Issues: How would you describe the Framers of the U.S. Constitution? What are the major structural features of the U.S. Constitution, as drafted by the Framers? What are its benefits and problems? Why was there so much debate over its drafting and adoption? Were those debates resolved? How? What does this process tell us about modern politics and the process of governing?

Position Paper: Canon, pp. 30-57. Groups TBD
Due January 25th

E. Sessions Seven-Nine: January 30th, February 1st, and February 6th

Topic: Federalism Then and Now: From the Framers to Gay Marriage, Marijuana, and Immigration

Reading: Patterson, pp. 65-99; Canon, pp. 58-70.

Key Issues: What is federalism and why is it part of the government? How have scholars understood federalism to operate in practice? What current political issues are issues of federalism “in disguise”? How should they be resolved?

Position Paper: Canon, pp. 58-70. Groups TBD
Due February 6th

F. Session Ten: February 8th

Topic: Review/Makeup Day

G. Session Eleven: February 13th

*****Exam #1*****

PART TWO: THE INSTITUTIONS OF AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

H. Sessions Twelve-Fifteen: February 15th, 20th, 22nd and 27th

Topic: Congress: The “Most Dangerous” Branch?

Readings: Patterson, pp. 327-368; Canon, pp. 95-103

Key Issues: How is Congress structured? Why? Has Congress developed as the Framers envisioned? How does Congress operate? What factors generally shape these processes? What are the benefits and problems of our modern Congress?

Position Paper: Canon, pp. 95-103. Groups TBD
Due February 27th

I. Sessions Sixteen-Seventeen: March 1st and 6th

Topic: The Presidency: The Power of One (Man?)

Readings: Patterson, pp. 369-407; Canon, pp. 104-114

Key Issues: How powerful is the President? What are the major tools the President can employ? What role does he play in policymaking? What, if anything, constrains his power? How powerful should the President be?

Position Paper: Canon, pp. 104-114. Groups TBD
Due March 6th

J. Session Eighteen: March 8th and 13th

Topic: The Bureaucracy: A Necessary Evil?

Reading: Patterson, pp. 408-440; Canon, pp. 115-132

Key Issues: What is the bureaucracy? Why is it a fundamental part of our government? What problems does it solve? What problems does it generate? What should be done to remedy those problems?

Position Paper: Canon, pp. 115-132. Groups TBD
Due March 13th

K. Session Nineteen: March 15th and 27th

Topic: The Judiciary: The Least Dangerous Branch?

Readings: Patterson, pp. 441-474; Canon, pp. 133-157

Key Issues: How is the judicial branch structured? What is its function, in both theory and practice? Are courts too powerful, or not powerful enough?

Position Paper: Canon, pp. 133-157. Groups TBD
Due March 27th

L. Session Twenty: March 29th

Topic: Review/Makeup

M. Session Twenty-One: April 3rd

*****Exam #3*****

PART THREE: CONNECTING THE PEOPLE TO THE POWERFUL

N. Session Twenty-Two: April 5th

Topic: Public Opinion: A Finger to the Wind?

Readings: Patterson, pp.176-206

Key Issues: What is public opinion? Do policymakers care about public opinion? Why or why not? Should they care? Why or why not?

O. Session Twenty-Three: April 10th

Topic: Political Participation: The Lion or the Lamb?

Readings: Patterson, pp. 207-231; Canon, pp. 182-199

Key Issues: How and why do citizens participate (or not) in government? What factors affect participation rates? How would you improve political participation?

Position Paper: Canon, pp. 182-199. Groups TBD
Due April 10th

P. Sessions Twenty-Four-Twenty-Five: April 12th and April 17th

Topic: Interest Groups, *Citizens United*, and the Power of K Street: Looking for “A Better Tomorrow” Today

Readings: Patterson, pp. 268-297; 595-599 (review); Canon, pp. 228-250

Key Issues: How powerful are interest groups? How and to what extent do they influence our government? What role does money play in modern politics? Is this a problem? Why or why not?

Position Paper: Canon, pp. 228-250. Groups TBD
Due April 17th

Q. Session Twenty-Seven: April 19th

Topic: Government and The Media: How Much is Too Much? How Few is Too Few?

Readings: Patterson, pp. 298-325; Canon, pp. 158-181

Key Topics: What is the relationship between media and the government? How has this changed over time? What benefits does this relationship bring? What problems?

Position Paper: Canon, pp. 158-181. Groups TBD
Due April 19th

*****FINAL EXAM – TUESDAY, MAY 1ST AT 12:00 PM**