**I. OBJECTIVES**

This class is intended to provide students with an understanding of the basic history, structure, theoretical justifications, and operation of the American governmental 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. Finally, the class is 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. As part of a general education learning outcome, students also will be able to apply social science concepts, models or theories to explain human behavior, social interactions or social institutions.

**II. REQUIRED TEXTS**

Each student must purchase/borrow:


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 or exams.

### III. EVALUATION

Grades will be based upon three in-class examinations (two mid-terms and one final), position papers, and class participation. The first mid-term exam will constitute 15% of the final grade, the second 20%; the position papers will constitute 20% of the final grade; the final exam will constitute 30% of the final grade; class participation will constitute 15%.

The examinations likely will be a combination of objective, short answer, and short essay questions. The final exam will not be cumulative. Instructions and assignments for the position papers are contained in a separate document that I will distribute during a subsequent class meeting.

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

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 may be more difficult than the regular test. Late assignments will be docked five points for every hour late; assignments handed in more than twenty-four hours late will not be accepted.
Class participation is highly encouraged, as reflected in its contribution to the final grade. The 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.

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.

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.

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 may be assigned a lower or failing final grade.

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.

The academic honor code applies in this class. Cheating in any form will not be tolerated and will result in serious penalty.

Laptops are allowed, but only for taking lecture notes. If the student uses the laptop for any other purpose, that student will be banned from computer use for the remainder of the semester. Use of cell phones during class is strictly prohibited. Turn phones off before entering the classroom.

V. 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.
VI. 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. August 22nd

**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 most people not care? What impact does this have on our democracy?

B. August 27th and 29th

**Topic:** The Articles of Confederation and the Framers of the Constitution - From Strike One to Home Run

**Reading:** Patterson, pp. 29-36; 610-627

**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?

C. September 3rd and 5th

**Topic:** The Constitution: the 4,400 Words Loved By (Almost) All

**Reading:** Patterson, pp. 36-63; 633-635

**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? Do these same arguments still persist today?

D. September 10th and 12th
**Topic:** Federalism Then and Now - From the Framers to Gay Marriage

**Reading:** Patterson, pp. 66-103

**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?

**E. September 17th**

Review/Make-Up

**EXAM #1 – September 19th**

**PART TWO: THE INSTITUTIONS OF GOVERNMENT**

**F. September 24th and 26th; October 1st**

**Topic:** Congress - The Most Dangerous Branch?

**Readings:** Patterson, pp. 344-389; Rourke, pp. 164-174

**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: Due October 1st**

**G. October 3rd and 8th**

**Topic:** The Presidency - The Power of One (Man)

**Readings:** Patterson, pp. 390-430; Rourke, pp. 176-190

**Key Topics:** How powerful is the President? What are the major tools the President can employ? What role does he play in policymaking and what limits, if any, constrain his role?

**Position Paper: Due October 8th**

**H. October 10th and 17th**
Topic: The Bureaucracy - A Necessary Evil?

Reading: Patterson, pp. 431-464; Rourke, pp. 192-207

Key Issues: What is the bureaucracy and why is it part of our government? What problems does it solve? What problems does it generate?

Position Paper: Due October 17th

I. October 22nd and 24th

Topic: The Judiciary: The Least Dangerous Branch?

Readings: Patterson, pp. 465-500; Rourke, pp. 208-221

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

Position Paper: Due October 24th

J. October 26th

Topic: Review/Make-Up Class

**EXAM #2 – OCTOBER 31st**

PART THREE: CONNECTING THE PEOPLE TO THE POWERFUL

K. November 5th and 7th

Topic: Public Opinion: A Finger to the Wind?

Readings: Patterson, pp.183-214

Key Issues: What is public opinion? Do policymakers care about public opinion? Should they?

L. November 12th and 14th

Topic: Political Participation: A Scream or a Whimper?

Readings: Patterson, pp. 215-241; Rourke, pp. 96-105
**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**: Due November 14th

**M. November 19th and 21st**


**Readings**: Patterson, pp. 281-314; 628-632 (review); Rourke, pp.120-132

**Key Issues**: How powerful are interest groups? How and to what extent do they influence our government? Is this a problem? What role does money play in modern politics? Is this a problem?

**Position Paper**: Due November 21st

**N. November 26th**

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

**Readings**: Patterson, pp. 315-343; Rourke, pp. 108-117

**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**: Due November 26th

**FINAL EXAM– SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7TH AT 8:00 AM (9:25 SECTION)/TUESDAY, DECEMBER 10TH AT 8:00 AM (10:50 SECTION)**