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.

General Education Learning Requirements

As part of a general education learning outcome, students will 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.

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 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%.

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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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify and explain the central principles, institutions, procedures, and decision-making processes of the American political system</td>
<td>Exams (Objective, Identification, 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 (Identification and Short Answer 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 Questions); Position Papers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop an analytical, social science disposition toward American politics</td>
<td>Exams (entire); Position Papers; Class Participation</td>
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*Examinations*

The three examinations will be a combination of objective (multiple choice and true/false), identification, and short answer questions. 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 may be more difficult than the regular test.

*Position Papers*

As part of the requirements for this class, each student is required to submit three position papers during the semester. It is your responsibility to ensure you have
completed the required number of papers, but you may choose any three from the seven listed in the syllabus.

The position papers are based upon the content in the Rourke text (You Decide!). Each paper should be 2-3 pages in length, with content distributed as follows:

1 page: Summary of the issue and of the competing arguments

1-2 pages: Discussion of your opinion on the issue. This must include which side of the debate you find 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 Rourke and Patterson texts, the class lectures, and your own general knowledge here.

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 on 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. A paper that has been drafted quickly and with little effort will be quite apparent to me, regardless of how well you think you can write in one sitting.

Please note also that I have no preference for which side of the issue you favor, only that you favor a side. In other words, there is no “right” answer to the debate contained in the text. The more thoughtful your essay appears to be, the higher your grade, regardless of your ultimate conclusion. My main concern is that you have a position and can make reasonable 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 lectures/events outside of class and to submit a one page response to each event/lecture linking the topic of the event/lecture
to a class reading/discussion. The lectures/events (which are subject to my approval if not selected by me) will be announced in class, posted on OAKS, or emailed to you.

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.

**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; 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. Session One: January 9th

Topic: Introduction to Course

Reading: None

B. Session Two: January 14th

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?

C. Sessions Three and Four: January 16th and 21st

Topic: The Articles of Confederation: Strike One

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?

D. Sessions Five and Six: January 23rd and 28th
**Topic:** The Constitution: The Greatest “Hundred Days”

**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?

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**E. Sessions Seven and Eight: January 30th and February 4th**

**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?

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**F. Session Nine: February 6th**

**Topic:** Review/Make-Up

**Reading:** None

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**G. Session Ten: February 11th**

**Topic:** Exam #1

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**PART TWO: THE INSTITUTIONS OF AMERICAN GOVERNMENT**

**H. Sessions Eleven, Twelve, and Thirteen: February 13th, 18th, and 20th**

**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 #1: Due February 13th**
I. Sessions Fourteen and Fifteen: February 25th and 27th

**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 constraints, if any, limit his power?

**Position Paper #2: Due February 25th**

J. Sessions Sixteen and Seventeen: March 11th and 13th

**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 #3: Due March 11th**

K. Sessions Eighteen and Nineteen: March 18th and 20th

**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 its function, in both theory and practice? Are courts too powerful, or not powerful enough?

**Position Paper #4: Due March 18th**

L. Session Twenty: March 25th

**Topic**: Review/Make-Up Class

**Reading**: None

M. Session Twenty-One: March 27th

**Topic**: Exam #2

**PART THREE: CONNECTING THE PEOPLE TO THE POWERFUL**
N. Sessions Twenty-Two and Twenty-Three: April 1st and 3rd

**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? Why or why not? Should they care?

O. Sessions Twenty-Four and Twenty-Five: April 8th and 10th

**Topic:** Political Participation: The Lion or the Lamb?

**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 #5: Due April 8th**

P. Sessions Twenty-Six and Twenty-Seven: April 15th and 17th

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

**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? What role does money play in modern politics? Is this a problem? Why or why not?

**Position Paper #6: Due April 15th**

Q. Session Twenty-Eight: April 22nd

**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 #7: Due April 22nd**
FINAL EXAM– Thursday, May 1st at 8:00 AM (9:25 SECTION)/TUESDAY, April 29th at 12:00 PM (12:15 SECTION)