

The College of Charleston
Spring 2017

POLI 101.02 - American Government

MWF 8:00-8:50 A.M.

Maybank Hall 207

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Office Hours	Mon/Wed/Fri – 1:00-3:30 P.M. and by appointment
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Course Description and Objectives

As Americans we are constantly reminded of the benefits, challenges and conflicts of citizenship in our constitutional form of government. The legislative enactments, judicial rulings and executive decisions made by officials that we elect or appoint to public office have broad consequences for how we conduct our daily lives. As major shifts and changes in the political, social and demographic landscapes of America occur, we look to our government for rational, effective responses. The current gridlock in our national government challenges us to consider some thorny questions: why do our government leaders appear to be incapable of finding solutions to the major issues currently before the country, including the domestic and global economy, immigration, education, the environment, voting rights, global conflicts, civil rights, gun control, etc.? Why is our political environment so polarized by party and by ideology - and what is the effect of this gridlock on government's ability to function? We will examine these issues, including our roles as citizens in participating in the debates about the most effective solutions and the leaders most capable of providing leadership.

On Tuesday, November 8, 2016 The American people elected a new President, all 435 members of the U.S. House of Representatives and 1/3 of the U.S. Senate. The newly elected American President will instantly be among the world's most recognizable Heads of State, will become the face of America across the world and will lead the country into peaceful or conflict-filled relations with the rest of the world. For the first time in recent history Americans elected a President with no experience in government at the local, state or federal level.

Many states elected new Governors and all 50 states elected or re-elected members of State Legislatures. All of these changes have the potential to change how local, state and national governments address the major issues about which Americans are most concerned.

Citizens are increasingly called upon to make choices about the kind of government philosophy and actions they wish to support; an equally important challenge is to be well enough informed to make rational choices.

This class- POLI 101.02- counts towards the College's General Education Social Science requirement. At the end of the semester students should be able to: (a) apply social science concepts, models or theories to explain human behavior, social interactions or social institutions, (b) identify and explain the central principles, institutions, procedures and decisions-making processes of the American political system; (c) evaluate the basic strengths and weaknesses of the American political system through the application of political concepts and ideas; (d) relate historical events and/or developments to contemporary political issues, debates and outcomes in the United States and (e) develop an analytical, social scientific

disposition toward American politics. These learning outcomes will be assessed using the grading procedures outlined below with the indicated percentages for each requirement.

Course Requirements

- A. Regular class attendance is expected of all students and will constitute 15% of your final grade. Attendance will be recorded on a daily sign-in sheet. Absences will be excused only if they are officially validated.
- B. Expectation for class participation includes reading assignments prior to class, joining in class discussions, respecting the opinions of others and turning in assignments on time. Late assignments will incur severe grade penalties.
- C. The use of cellphones, I pads, tablets and other electronic devices during class for your personal use is not permitted. Personal computers may be permitted for the exclusive use of taking notes and verification may be required at any time. Failure to observe this policy will result in severe grade penalties and may result in expulsion from the class. Use of cell phones is never permitted during class sessions.
- D. Students are strongly encouraged to utilize office hours and/or schedule appointments to discuss assignments and readings.
- E. Students who are receiving services through the Center for Disability Services, are scheduled to travel with an athletic team or participate in a student government related or other official off-campus activity during the semester must present a letter of verification signed by the appropriate college official.
- F. Students who plan personal (i.e., non-emergency) off-campus trips prior to a scheduled exam (ex. Midterm or Final) will not receive excused absences nor the opportunity to make up the exam.
- G. Each student is required to select a current public issue for research and study during the semester from a list provided by the professor. At the end of the semester students studying the same topic will be required to make a group presentation to the class on the research topic. The presentation will include a group consensus on whether the solution/s proposed by the relevant government institution or agency is an effective response to a contemporary public issue causing disagreement and/or conflict among our citizens.

Grading

Grade will be based on a five part research paper that examines a current political issue, a Midterm Examination, a Final Examination and individual and group class participation as follows:

A.	Research Paper, Part 1	10%
B.	Research Paper, Part 2	10%
C.	Research Paper, Part 3	10%
D.	Research Paper, Part 4	10%
E.	Research Paper, Part 5	10%
F.	Midterm Examination	15%
G.	Final Examination	20%
H.	Class Attendance	15%

Required Textbook

Ginsberg, Benjamin; Lowi, Theodore J; Weir, Margaret and Tolbert, Carolyn J.: **We The People**, (10th Edition), 2014, W.W. Norton and Company, Inc. New York.

You are encouraged to keep abreast of contemporary political and social issues, many of which may be the subject of class discussions. You are also encouraged to share relevant articles, reports, etc. with the class. Several national newspapers, including the *New York Times*, *Washington Post* and *Wall Street Journal* are available on-line at no charge. Local state and political news is reported in the *Charleston Post and Courier* and Columbia's *The State Newspaper*.

Students are encouraged to utilize the **Center for Student Learning** (CSL) academic support services for assistance in study strategies and course content. The Center offers tutoring, supplemental instruction, study skills and various workshops. These services are available to you at no extra cost. You may visit the CSL website at <http://csl.cofc.edu> or call (843) 953-5635.

Course Outline and Reading Assignments

January 2017

Wed	11	Introductions and class overview
Fri	13	Class overview and semester assignments
Mon	16	Martin Luther King Holiday – No Class
Wed	18	Who are the Americans? Ginsberg, Chapter One
Fri	20	American Political Culture Chapter One
Mon	23	American Political Culture
Wed	25	Theories of Government- Purpose and Values
Fri	27	The Historic Foundations (Handout)
Mon	30	The Historic Foundations

February 2017

Wed	1	Framing the Constitution Ginsberg, Chapter Two <u>Paper One Due</u>
Fri	3	Framing the Constitution
Mon	6	The Bill of Rights Chapter Four
Wed	8	The Bill of Rights

The Institutions of the Federal Government

Fri 10	The Executive Branch – Constitutional authority and powers Chapter Thirteen <u>Paper Two Due</u>
Mon 13	Constitutional authority and powers
Wed 15	The Executive Office of the President
Fri 17	The Executive Office of the President
Mon 20	The Federal Cabinets
Wed 22	The Federal Cabinets
Fri 24	The Executive agencies

Mon 27

Midterm Examination

March 2017

Wed 1	The Regulatory agencies
Fri 3	Government Corporations
Mon 6	Spring Break
Wed 8	Spring Break
Fri 10	Spring Break
Mon 13	The Legislative Branch- Constitutional Powers
Wed 15	The Legislative Branch
Fri 17	The Legislative Branch
Mon 20	The federal workforce – the “bureaucracy” <u>Paper Three Due</u>
Wed 22	The federal workforce
Fri 24	Federalism – dual constitutionalism
Mon 27	Federalism
Wed 29	The Federal Court system
Fri 31	The Federal Court system

April 2017

Mon 3	The U.S. Supreme Court <u>Paper Four Due</u>
Wed 5	The U.S. Supreme Court
Fri 7	State governments – constitutional functions
Mon 10	State governments – Executive leadership
Wed 12	State governments – Legislative leadership
Fri 14	Local governments – constitutional functions
Mon 17	Local governments – Executive leadership
Wed 19	Local government- Legislative leadership <u>Paper Five Due</u>
Fri 21	Class Presentation – Group One
Mon 24	Class Presentation – Group Two
Wed 26	Class Presentation – Group Three Last day of Spring Semester Classes
Thu 27	Reading Day

May 2017

Fri	Final Examination 8:00 A.M. – 11:00 A.M. Maybank 207
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Required Assignments

The purpose of this required assignment is to study a current political issue with the potential for major impact on the lives of Americans. Once you select your topic you will be required to write five papers on the subject and draw a conclusion as to whether (a) the current law or administrative solution is effective in responding to the issue; (b) whether a new law or administrative solution is necessary to solve or mitigate the stated problem; (c) whether the management of this issue should be left to federal, state or local authorities; (d) state your personal opinion on whether you support or oppose the law or administrative solution as you begin your research and (e) in your final paper state whether your opinion became more informed, changed or remain the same at the conclusion of your research- including what factors or information changed your opinion or helped you to maintain your original position.

Several students will be researching the same topic and at the end of the semester there will be a group presentation to the class regarding whether the current law/administrative solution solves the identified problem or presents additional problem for government and the public.

You will select your topic from the following:

1. **The Death Penalty – The Policy Question: Is the death penalty cruel and unusual punishment in violation of the 8th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution? Is it discriminatory against minorities and the poor?**
2. **Gun Control –The Policy Question: Should the current federal laws be revised to prevent assault weapons from being transported on U.S. airlines?**
3. **Immigration Policy –The Policy Question: Should the current U.S. immigration laws be revised to “grandfather” into citizenship children who were brought to American by their undocumented parents?**

Once you have selected your topic you will write five papers on your topic as outlined below:

I. The Death Penalty

Paper One :

- Identify the states that currently impose the death penalty.
- State the specific crimes in each state for which the death penalty can be imposed.

Paper Two:

- Identify the number of inmates on death row in each state and the racial composition of these inmates by state.
- State the average number of years an inmate remains on death row before execution and the average per year costs to states, if such data is available.

Paper Three:

- Identify the methods of execution utilized by each state.
- Identify the sources from which the required drugs are secured, if applicable.

Paper Four:

- Describe the work of the Innocence Project, a national advocacy group that investigates the number of inmates on death row who are wrongfully convicted.
- State the number of death row inmates the Innocence Project found to be wrongfully convicted in the past five years.

Paper Five- Based on the above information, do you support or oppose abolition of the death penalty? State the reasons for your position.

II. Gun Control Laws – Transport of assault weapons on U.S. Airlines.

Paper One-

- Define the term “ assault weapon” as used by the federal Assault Weapons Ban law of 1994.
- Identify the major classifications of assault weapons as described in the law.

Paper Two

- Describe the most recent incident of mass murder using an assault weapon in a U.S. airlines facility.

Paper Three-

- Identify the event that led to the creation of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).
- Identify the specific agency of the DHS that has responsibility for airline safety for the flying public.

Paper Four-

- Describe the current DHS rules and regulations for the transport of assault weapons on U.S. airlines.
- Explain how the agency ensures that the proper procedures are being followed for the transport of assault weapons.

Paper Five- Based on the above information:

- In your opinion, are there major gaps in the current DHS policies regarding the transport of assault weapons on U.S. Airlines?
- If you were a sitting member of Congress what recommendations would you make for changes in DHS policies on this issue?

III. Immigration Policy and the status of undocumented young adults

Paper One –

- Explain the term “1.5 generation immigrants”.
- Explain the approximate number of students in this category and the principal reasons why they constitute a problem for immigration officials.

Paper Two-

- Provide the official name for the “Dream Act”.
- Identify the authors, the purpose for the law and the principal elements.

Paper Three-

- Describe the principal beneficiaries of the Dream Act.
- Describe the economic benefits of the Dream Act.

Paper Four-

- Describe the purpose and elements of the “Deferred Act for Childhood Arrivals” program established by the Obama administration.

Paper Five-Based on the above information:

- Do you support or oppose a change in U.S. immigration laws to provide an accelerated path to citizenship for the Dreamers?

The maximum length for papers 1-4 is 4 double- spaced pages, excluding graphs and appendices.

The maximum length for paper # 5 is 6 double-spaced pages, excluding graphs and appendices.

The Modern Library Association (MLA) style guide should be used for your works cited list.