

American Government
Fall 2017 Syllabus
Instructor: Professor Roneka Matheny

<u>Course Number:</u>	<u>Day/Time:</u>	<u>Location:</u>
POLI 101-08	TR 9:25-10:40	114 ECTR
POLI 101-09	TR 10:50-12:05	320 BELL

Office Location: TBD
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Office Hours: By appointment
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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:

- Christine Barbour and Gerald C. Wright, *Keeping the Republic: Power and Citizenship in American Politics* (CQ Press, 8th Edition, 2016)
- 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 20/25 points. Extra Credit points will be added to your final point total, but grades will not be allowed to exceed 100 points. For example, a student with a point total of 96 and 5 Extra Credit points will still have a final grade of 100. All assignments must be completed on time. Excused absences are required to make up missed assignments; however, Extra Credit opportunities can not be made up under any circumstances. Detailed information about all assignments can be found at the end of this syllabus.

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Due Date</u>	<u>Point Value</u>
Class Participation	N/A	10 Points
Current Events Journal	Varies	15 Points
Midterm Exam	Oct 5	25 Points
Civic Engagement Project	Nov 28	25 Points
Final Exam	Dec 7 or 12	25 Points
Extra Credit	N/A	5 Extra Points

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 can not 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. I 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. Students should strive to complete the readings by the BEGINNING of the week, so that comments and class discussions will be informed and enlightened AND so that you will be prepared for pop quizzes. Any required readings that do not appear in the textbook will be made available in class.

Week 1: Politics: Who Gets What, and How?

(Tuesday, Aug 22 and Thursday, Aug 24)

- Barbour and Wright, *Keeping the Republic: Power and Citizenship in American Politics, 8th Edition (KTR8)*, Chapter 1, pg 1-25

Week 2: American Citizens and Political Culture

(Tuesday, Aug 29 and Thursday, Aug 31 - **1st JOURNAL ENTRY DUE**)

- Barbour and Wright, *(KTR8)*, Chapter 2, pg 30-51

Week 3: Politics of the American Founding

(Tuesday, Sept 5 and Thursday, Sept 7)

- Barbour and Wright, *(KTR8)*, Chapter 3, pg 55-77

Week 4: Federalism and the U.S. Constitution, Fundamental American Liberties

(Tuesday, Sept 12 and Thursday, Sept 14)

- Barbour and Wright, *(KTR8)*, Chapter 4-5, pg 83-116, 122-159

Week 5: The Struggle for Equal Rights

(Tuesday, Sept 19 and Thursday, Sept 21 - **2nd JOURNAL ENTRY DUE**)

- Barbour and Wright, *(KTR8)*, Chapter 6, pg 165-204

Week 6: Political Parties

(Tuesday, Sept 26 and Thursday, Sept 28 - **ENGAGEMENT PLAN DUE**)

- Barbour and Wright, *(KTR8)*, Chapter 12, pg 393-421

Week 7: MIDTERM WEEK

(Tuesday, Oct 3 – **Midterm Review** and Thursday, Oct 5 - **MIDTERM**)

Week 8: Congress

(Tuesday, Oct 10 and Thursday, Oct 12)

- Barbour and Wright, (*KTR8*), Chapter 7, pg 209-247

Week 9: The Presidency

(Tuesday, Oct 17 - **NO CLASS: Fall Break** and Thursday, Oct 19 - **3rd JOURNAL ENTRY DUE**)

- Barbour and Wright, (*KTR8*), Chapter 8, pg 253-286

Week 10: Voting, Campaigns, and Elections

(Tuesday, Oct 24 and Thursday, Oct 26)

- Barbour and Wright, (*KTR8*), Chapter 14, pg 461-497

Week 11: Public Opinion, Media, Power, and Political Communication

(Tuesday, Oct 31 and Thursday, Nov 2)

- Barbour and Wright, (*KTR8*), Chapters 11 & 15, pg 359-387, 502-531

Week 12: The American Legal System and the Courts

(Tuesday, Nov 7 and Thursday, Nov 9)

- Barbour and Wright, (*KTR8*), Chapter 10, pg 322-353

Week 13: Economic Policy, Foreign Policy

(Tuesday, Nov 14 - **4th JOURNAL ENTRY DUE** and Thursday, Nov 16)

- Barbour and Wright, (*KTR8*), Chapter 17-18, pg 575-604, 609-645

Week 14: Social and Environmental Policy

(Tuesday, Nov 21 and Thursday, Nov 23 - **NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING**)

- Barbour and Wright, (*KTR8*), Chapter 16, pg 536-569

Week 15: ACTIVISM PROJECT WEEK

(Tuesday, Nov 28 - **ENGAGEMENT PROJECTS DUE** and Thursday, Nov 30 - **FINAL EXAM REVIEW**)

FINAL EXAM SCHEDULE:

POLI 101-08 (9:25 Class) - THURSDAY, DECEMBER 7th at 9:00AM

POLI 101-09 (10:50 Class) - TUESDAY, DECEMBER 12th at 9:00AM

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. All students should attend class regularly because attendance will be factored into your class participation points. However, as the phrase suggests, class *participation* will measure more than just coming to class. Your engagement in class discussions and the amount of preparation that is apparent from your commentary in class will also be considered.

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. Your job in your Currents Events Journal is to identify these connections.

Each student will create a 4-part Current Events Journal. For each journal entry, you will choose 1 articles from recognized, professional news sources, you will summarize that article, and then you will answer the following questions: Have we discussed this or a related topic in class? What perspectives from the textbook and class discussions may have been missing from the article? Do you react to the article any differently than you would have before taking this class? If the article presents a viewpoint, do you agree or disagree with it? Why or why not? Each journal entry must be between 1,000-1,500 words long and must be submitted typed and double-spaced. Pay attention to grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

Part 1 is due on Thursday, August 31st and is worth 6 points. It must be between 2,000 and 2,500 words.
Part 2 is due on Thursday, September 21st and is worth 3 points. It must be between 1,000-1,500 words.
Part 3 is due on Thursday, October 19th and is worth 3 points. It must be between 1,000-1,500 words.
Part 4 is due on Tuesday, November 14th and is worth 3 points. It must be between 1,000-1,500 words.

The entire journal is worth 15 points of your final grade.

3. Midterm Exam

All students must take the Midterm Examination. It will be offered on Thursday, October 5, 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 25 points of your final grade.

4. Civic Engagement 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. This will put you well on your way to becoming an informed and engaged citizen. But what about your family, your friends, your co-workers, and everyone else that you regularly come into contact with? Have they taken a semester of Political Science as well? If not, how do we expect for THEM to become informed and engaged citizens?

For your Civic Engagement Project, all students must plan and execute a project that will contribute to the creation of an engaged and informed citizenry. This project can either be completed alone or with a partner. You may select your own partner. Your project will consist of 2 parts: the Report and the Class Presentation. Part 1, the Report should be between 1,500 and 2,000 words long. It should clearly and concisely describe your project's motivations, content, and relevance to this course. Make sure that you also include your reaction to your experience. Part 2, the Class Presentation should be in the form of a video. All group members must appear in the video. The video should accomplish the same goals as your report; however, the information should be presented in a fun and entertaining way. These videos will be shown in class and shared with faculty, staff, and members of the community, so make sure that they are professional and represent this class well.

Choose one of the following topics for your project:

- **Teaching and Learning:** Using readings, lectures, and discussions from this course, create your own class for a student group on campus or a group from the local community. Make sure that your information is accurate and accessible for the audience you have chosen. In addition to your report, submit any handouts and/or teaching materials, as well as feedback forms from all participants.
- **Enhancing the Electorate:** What challenges to voting in America have you learned about in class this semester? How can you address one or more of these challenges with ACTION? Leading a voter registration drive? Disseminating voter information and/or political materials? Helping out at your county Board of Elections? Volunteering for a community organization or campaign? Once you decide on the action you plan to take, make contact with the relevant campus or community officials, show them your syllabus, and make sure that your project can be completed on an acceptable timeline for this course. I am more than happy for them to contact me if necessary.
- **Public Policy:** What single social, environmental, economic, or foreign policy or legal issue that you learned about this semester interested you the most? First, do some research on the policy or issue. Are there relevant bills currently being considered at the state or federal level? If not, why not? How can you raise awareness about the policy or issue? Writing a letter to a particular lawmaker? Leading or participating in a relevant protest? Advocating for an organization that champions the policy or issue?

In order to make sure that you do not procrastinate, you will submit your partner and topic selections, as well as a rough plan for your project and your current progress on Thursday, September 28.

The Civic Engagement Project Report and Presentation are both due at the beginning of class on Tuesday, November 28th. The video presentations will be shown in class. The entire project is worth 25 points of your final grade. It will be graded on relevance to course content, professionalism, creativity, and difficulty. 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., *throughout the entire course*. It will combine true/false, multiple choice, and short answer. The Final Exam accounts for 25 points of your final grade.

6. Extra Credit

There will be ample opportunities to earn Extra Credit points this semester. These opportunities will include Chapter Quizzes from your textbook and short papers in reaction to movies and events on campus 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.

The quiz dates will be a surprise, therefore regular class attendance is recommended. Each quiz will pertain to the readings, lectures, and discussion of the week that it is given. 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 will be distributed and taken during the first few minutes of class. Quizzes that are missed as a result of absence or tardiness will result in a quiz grade of zero, regardless of the reason for the absence or tardiness.