Course Description
This course serves as a broad overview of the workings of American government and the nature of American politics. This course will introduce you to many of the major issues in the study of American government, its historical foundations, institutions, and political processes. The purpose of this class is to teach you about the institutions, practices, and history of politics and government in the United States. This course will cover a great deal of ground, as we will discuss the Constitution, the three branches of the federal government, the state governments, interest groups, public opinion, campaigns, elections, and parties. In addition to studying the structure of American politics, we will discuss how individual Americans interact with their government. Who votes, and why does it matter? What do political parties and interest groups do, and why does it matter? Why do candidates run negative ads, and does it matter? For each subject, we will examine some of the leading perspectives in political science, and we will incorporate current events and our personal experiences, as well.

This course is organized with two short lectures and one recitation/discussion section (led by the teaching assistant) per week. Lectures will be broad and should be the foundation for engaging the material from the textbook and preparing for exams. Recitation sections are for discussion and reiteration and will provide a more intimate learning environment than the large lectures will allow. As will become clear below, recitation section grades contribute to your overall course grade, but do not enter your transcript separately.

Course Objectives
- To understand the structures and processes of American government and politics, the collective action challenges inherent in this system, and the practical implications of political structure and contestation in our lives.
• To sharpen our ability to think critically about the American political system by reading both contemporary and classic materials from a variety of sources that encompass both objective and opinion-based points of view.
• To demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of contemporary political debates.

Course Requirements

- **Chapter quizzes 10%**: For introductory courses, it is very important to keep pace with the material, as an understanding of later topics builds cumulatively on understanding of prior topics. Thus, to incentivize everyone to stay on top of things, I will be giving short quizzes on Blackboard that will be due before lectures on a given textbook chapter. These activities will be quite "easy" in the sense that if you do the assigned reading, there should be no ambiguity answering the quiz questions. The quizzes will be released as a group to Blackboard at the beginning of the semester and will be due by class time on the day they are due. At the end of the term, I will drop the lowest quiz grade for each student. You may not "make up" points for missed quizzes, except through the "enrichment activities" described below.

- **Midterm Exams 20% each; 40% total**: There are 2 "midterm" exams for the course. These will be held in class on Thursday 10/3 and Thursday 11/7. Each exam will consist of 35 multiple choice style questions. Exams can only be rescheduled under extraordinary (and well documented) circumstances. Elective travel is not such a circumstance - if you can’t make these exams, take the course some other time. Rescheduled exams must be taken as soon as possible and may be in a different format from the in-class exam (that is, they will most likely be short answers/essays). There will be no extra credit opportunities for exams.

- **Final Exam 25%**: There will be a comprehensive in-class exam covering material from the entire course. The final will be longer than the midterms (50 multiple choice questions) and will be held at the university’s designated time (Tuesday, December 17, from 10:30 a.m. to 1:15 p.m.).

- **Recitation Section 25%**: Each student is expected to register for and to attend a recitation/discussion section. These smaller groups will be led by the teaching assistant and the structure can vary from week to week. Your TA will provide a separate syllabus for recitation section expectations. In general, section grades will be based on attendance, participation, and assignments.

- **Enrichment Activities**: You will have the opportunity to complete an (optional) enrichment assignment, graded pass/fail. If you complete an assignment satisfactorily, I will drop 2 additional quiz grades (this can be very helpful if you miss quizzes throughout the semester) or add 5 percentage points to your final exam grade. Enrichment assignments are due by Monday, 12/16 at 10:30 AM. See the instructions and guidelines for these enrichment activities that are posted to Blackboard. Late enrichment papers will not be accepted.

Student Responsibilities

- **Class Attendance and Participation**: You are expected to attend class (showing up on time) and pay attention to lecture. This is a lecture class, but the material is often reflected in current events and we will often discuss politics and political science. These discussions are to remain civil and informed, and each student is expected to participate through discussion or by respectfully paying attention to the content of discussion.
• **Reading the news**: On this last point, I expect you to read at least 1 national news story (from whatever newspaper or website that you prefer) per day. On the days we have lecture, I may call on people to discuss such stories and the events surrounding them, so be prepared to introduce your story when called upon.

• **Readings**: Complete the readings listed in the course schedule. All reading should be completed before the lecture on the topic. 9 times out of 10, when struggling students come to my office, they admit that they haven’t been reading – this is the single best way to improve in the class. Read before lecture, listen and take notes, then read again.

• **Technology**: Turn your phones off while in class. **You may not use laptop computers or tablet devices in class, except if you are sitting in the back row.** If this restriction poses a challenge for you, please discuss it with me.

• **Email**: Use proper email etiquette. There are lots of guides online. See here for a good one: [http://www.wikihow.com/Email-a-Professor](http://www.wikihow.com/Email-a-Professor). Do not ask for extra credit or for grade changes over email. Also, do not email "I missed class yesterday - did I miss anything?” I will not reply to these emails. In the case that there is a technological difficulty with Blackboard while attempting a quiz, contact the TA (Margaret Appleby: mappleb@gmu.edu) ASAP.

• Regularly check the course Blackboard page for announcements and quizzes.

### Grade Distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter quizzes</th>
<th>10%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Midterm Exams</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recitation Section Grade</td>
<td>25%</td>
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### Letter Grade Distribution

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Grade</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>70.00 - 72.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>67.00 - 69.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>63.00 - 66.99</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77.00 - 79.99</td>
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### Required Book

There are three required books for this course; each are available at the campus bookstore and online:


Class Schedule
The following is a tentative schedule for the course. Updates to this schedule may be posted to Blackboard or communicated in class, as appropriate. This schedule is meant to give you a sense of the topic(s) to be covered on a given day. It is also meant to guide you if you wish to complete readings ahead of time. You are required to have read the assigned reading by the week listed below.

Week 01: T 08/27 & Th 08/29 — The Logic of American Politics
  - Logic, Chapter 1
  - Quiz 1 due on Tuesday

Week 02: T 09/03 & Th 09/05 — The Constitution
  - Logic, Chapter 2
  - Declaration of Independence (Appendix 2 in Logic)
  - Articles of Confederation (Appendix 1 in Logic)
  - U.S. Constitution and all amendments (Appendix 3 in Logic)
  - Quiz 2 due on Tuesday

Week 03: T 09/10 & Th 09/12 — Guest Lectures by Former VA Lt. Governor William Bolling
  - Reading TBA
  - No Quiz this week.

Week 04: T 09/17 & Th 09/19 — Federalism
  - Logic, Chapter 3
  - Quiz 3 due on Tuesday

Week 05: T 09/24 & Th 09/26 — Civil Liberties and Rights
  - Logic, Chapter 5 (for Tuesday)
  - Logic, Chapter 4 (for Thursday)
  - Quiz 4 due on Tuesday
  - Quiz 5 due on Thursday

Week 06: T 10/01 & Th 10/03 — Catch-Up/Midterm Exam 1
  - No Quiz this week.
  - Midterm Exam 1 on Thursday 10/3
  - Don’t forget to bring Scantron sheets and pencils

Week 07: T 10/08 & Th 10/10 — Public Opinion
  - Logic, Chapter 10
  - Quiz 6 due on Tuesday

Week 08: T 10/15 & Th 10/17 — Voting and Participation
  - Logic, Chapter 11
  - No class on Tuesday 10/15
  - Quiz 7 due on Thursday
Week 09: T 10/22 & Th 10/24 — Voting and Participation/Political Parties
  • Logic, Chapter 12
  • Quiz 8 due on Thursday

Week 10: T 10/29 & Th 10/31 — Political Parties/Interest Groups
  • Logic, Chapter 13
  • Quiz 9 due on Thursday

Week 11: T 11/05 & Th 11/07 — Interest Groups/Midterm Exam 2
  • No Quiz this week.
  • Midterm Exam 2 on Thursday 11/7

Week 12: T 11/12 & Th 11/14 — Congress
  • Logic, Chapter 6
  • Quiz 10 due on Tuesday

Week 13: T 11/19 & Th 11/21 — The Presidency
  • Logic, Chapter 7
  • Quiz 11 due on Tuesday

Week 13: T 11/19 & Th 11/21 — The Bureaucracy
  • Logic, Chapter 8
  • Quiz 12 due on Tuesday
  • No class on Thursday 11/27

Week 14: T 11/26 & Th 11/28 — The Courts/Catch-Up
  • Logic, Chapter 9
  • Quiz 13 due on Tuesday

FINAL EXAM Tuesday 12/17, 10:30 a.m. - 1:15 p.m.
Additional Concerns

Syllabus
This syllabus is a *tentative* guide for the course. I reserve the right to make announced changes to this document and will distribute these changes in class and on the course website. Each student will be responsible for all announcements and materials covered in class.

Class Conduct
Class atmosphere will be quite relaxed. Just a few guidelines to make sure:

- Arriving a few minutes late is tolerated as long as you make an effort to minimize the disturbance for other students.
- Eating and drinking in class should be reduced to a minimum. It is not forbidden, but please make sure that you are not disturbing others.
- Turn off all cell phones (or don’t even bring them).
- If you have to leave a class early, please let me know in advance. It is very rude to simply walk out in the middle of a class.

Disabilities and Accommodations
Please let me know within the first week of class if you require assistance or special consideration. I can make accommodations for those who need them but must be informed of the need in advance. Any requests for accommodation based on a disability must be arranged through the Office of Disability Services (ODS). [http://ods.gmu.edu/](http://ods.gmu.edu/)

Academic Integrity
All work completed in your name must be yours and yours alone. Any work you borrow or ideas you gather from other sources must be cited properly. Please see me if you are concerned about proper citation style. Any attempt to present someone else’s work as your own will be met with the harshest consequences. You will receive an F for the assignment and an F for the course. Furthermore, notification of, and supporting documentation for, the violation will be forwarded to the appropriate university administrators.

Enrollment Statement
Students are responsible for verifying their enrollment in this class. Scheduled adjustments should be made by the deadlines published in the Schedule of Classes.

- Last Day to Add: 9/3
- Last Day to Drop: 9/17

Please note, after the last day to drop a class, withdrawing from this class requires the approval of the dean and is only allowed for nonacademic reasons. Undergraduate Students may choose to exercise a selective withdrawal. See the Schedule of Classes for selective withdrawal procedures.

Other Useful Campus Resources
Writing Center

- B213 Robinson Hall; (703) 993-1200; [http://writingcenter.gmu.edu](http://writingcenter.gmu.edu)
University Libraries
  
  • http://library.gmu.edu

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)
  
  • 703.993.2380; http://caps.gmu.edu

University Policies

The University Catalog, http://catalog.gmu.edu, is the central resource for university policies affecting student, faculty, and staff conduct in university academic affairs. Other policies are available at http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu. All members of the university community are responsible for knowing and following established policies.