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, interest groups, and the news media 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.

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 encompasses both objective and opinion-based points of view.
- To demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of contemporary political debates.

Course Requirements

- Daily quizzes/in-class assignments 15%: For introductory courses, it is very important to keep pace with the material, as an understanding of later topics builds cumulatively on under-
standing of prior topics. Thus, to incentivize everyone to stay on top of things, I will be giving short quizzes at the conclusion of each substantive lecture. These activities will be quite "easy" in the sense that if you attend class and pay attention, there should be no ambiguity answering the quiz questions. These quizzes will be released to Blackboard by the conclusion of each lecture, and will be due by 9:00AM the next day. I will often reserve the last few minutes of class time for quiz taking; or, you can complete the quiz in your own time after class. I will drop the lowest two quiz grades for each student. You may not "make up" points for missed quizzes, except through the "enrichment activities" described below.

- **Midterm Exams 25% each; 50% total**: There are 2 "midterm" exams for the course. These will be held in class on February 22 and March 29. Each exam will consists of approximately 50 multiple choice style questions. Exams can only be rescheduled under extraordinary (and well documented) circumstances. Rescheduled exams must be taken as soon as possible and may be in a different format from the in-class exam (that is, it will most likely be short answers/essays). I will curve exam grades up if the average grade is below a B- and will make an announcement via Blackboard if this is the case. I will never post the uncurved grades to Blackboard, so the grade you see after an exam is the grade you get. There will be no extra credit opportunities for exams.

- **Final Exam 35%**: There will be a semi-comprehensive in-class exam covering material from the entire course. The final will be longer than the midterms (approximately 80-100 multiple choice questions) and will be held at the university’s designated time (TBA).

- **Enrichment Activities**: You will have two opportunities to complete an (optional) enrichment assignment, graded pass/fail. If you complete an assignment satisfactorily, I will drop 3 additional quiz grades. You may earn this bonus twice if you submit both enrichment assignments, meaning I drop 6 additional quizzes, for a total of 8 dropped quizzes. Enrichment assignments are due on XXXX and XXXX. 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 will 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.

- **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.** The only exception to this policy is at the end of class when I allow time to complete the daily quiz. If this restriction poses a challenge for you, please discuss it with me.

- Regularly check the course Blackboard page for announcements and quizzes.
Grade Distribution

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<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily quizzes/in-class assignments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Exams</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<td>Final Exam</td>
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Letter Grade Distribution

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Required Book

There is one required book for this course and it is available at the campus bookstore:

- The companion website is a really good resource for reviewing course materials: https://edge.sagepub.com/kernell7e

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: M 01/23 & W 01/25 — Introduction to Political Science**

- Logic, Chapter 1
- Except from Mancur Olson’s *The Logic of Collective Action* (available on Blackboard)

**Week 02: M 01/30 & W 02/01 — 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)
Week 03: M 02/06 & W 02/08 — Federalism

- *Logic*, Chapter 3

Week 04: M 02/13 & W 02/15 — Civil Rights and Liberties

- *Logic*, Chapters 4 and 5

Week 05: M 02/20 & W 02/22 — Review and Exam

- First Exam on Wednesday 2/22
- Don’t forget to bring Scantron sheets and pencils

Week 06: M 02/27 & W 03/01 — Congress

- *Logic*, Chapter 6

Week 07: M 03/06 & W 03/08 — The Presidency

- *Logic*, Chapter 7

Week 08: M 03/13 & W 03/15 — SPRING BREAK

- No class - Enjoy the break!

Week 09: M 03/20 & W 03/22 — Bureaucracy/Judiciary

- *Logic*, Chapters 8 and 9

Week 10: M 03/27 & W 03/29 — Review and Exam

- Second Exam on Wednesday 3/29
- Don’t forget to bring Scantron sheets and pencils

Week 11: M 04/03 & W 04/05 — Public Opinion

- *Logic*, Chapter 10

Week 12: M 04/10 & W 04/12 — Voting, Campaigns, Elections

- *Logic*, Chapter 11

Week 13: M 04/17 & W 04/19 — Political Parties

- *Logic*, Chapter 12
Week 14: M 04/24 & W 04/26 — Interest Groups

• *Logic*, Chapter 13

Week 15: M 05/01 & W 05/03 — Politics and Media

• *Logic*, Chapter 14

Week 16: M 05/08 & W 05/10 — Study Period
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/

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: 1/30
• Last Day to Drop: 2/24

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
- A114 Robinson Hall; (703) 993-1200; 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.