

Introduction to American Government

TTH 2:00-2:50pm

Professor: Stella Rouse
Office: 1145 Tydings Hall
Office Hours: Monday 10-12; Wednesday 1-3
or by appointment
Tel: 301-405-4194
E-Mail: srouse@gvpt.umd.edu

Course Description and Objectives

This course introduces students to the fundamentals of American government and politics. We will focus mainly on the constitutional origins of the American political system, the structure and function of institutions, the political actors involved in government, and the crucial links between government and citizens. The course is intended to help students analyze the decision making processes of the government and help them comprehend how and why the government operates the way it does. Students will be strongly encouraged to apply the basic ideas of politics to current events as well as to how government affects their own lives.

Some of the more specific topics that will be covered in this course include but are not limited to:

- The Fundamentals of Democracy
- The Constitution
- Federalism
- The Role of the Media
- Public Opinion
- Interest Groups
- The Branches of Government
- Bureaucracy
- Political Parties, Voting, and Elections
- Domestic and Foreign Policy

Course Requirements

Required Readings:

1. Susan Welch, John Gruhl, John Comer, Susan Rigdon. *Understanding American Government: The Essentials* (Belmont: Wadsworth Cengage, 2008; ISBN: 978-0-495-50117-6).
2. David T. Canon, John J. Coleman, Kenneth R. Mayer. *The Enduring Debate 5th Edition* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company; ISBN: 978-0-393-93217-1).
3. Additional course readings throughout the semester, provided as website links and/or articles, will be used to complement the textbooks and the lectures.
4. Current events make up an important component of this course. As such, students will be required to stay informed about the **major** events making news. This can be done through several mediums:
 - Accessing the web sites for major media organizations such as CNN (cnn.com), New York Times (nytimes.com), The Washington Post (www.washingtonpost.com), Fox News (foxnews.com)
 - Watching the news on television or listening to the news on the radio
 - Reading the newspaper

Attendance and Participation:

Students are expected to attend class and their discussion section on a regular basis, in a timely manner, and without disruption to other students. Those students who come in late, leave early, or do not show up for class will miss randomly administered quizzes and assignments. These students will also notice that their participation grade will reflect failure to follow attendance etiquette.

Students are expected to come to class having read the assigned readings. During the discussion sections, students are expected to participate in conversations and debates on the relevant topic(s). Additionally, students are encouraged to ask any questions about the readings or current events.

In accordance with the philosophy of an institution for higher learning, our classroom will be a place where people can feel comfortable expressing diverse opinions without fear of ridicule or intimidation. It is therefore expected that students will remain respectful of others, regardless of whether or not they share similar opinions and beliefs.

Grades:

Student grades will be comprised of the following:

- | | |
|--|--------------------|
| 1. Exam I (tentatively October 17) | 25% of final grade |
| 2. Exam II (tentatively November 21) | 25% of final grade |
| 3. Final (TBA) | 40% of final grade |
| 4. Class Participation, Assignments, and Quizzes | 10% of final grade |

- All readings, lectures, quizzes, and class discussions are fair game on the exams.
- Exams I and II are non-cumulative, but the final is cumulative.
- Exams will consist of multiple choice, matching and/or short answer questions.
- Quizzes will be given during the weekly discussion section.
- Assignments are turned in via Blackboard or during the weekly discussion section.
- All grades will be calculated on the standard university scale.

Make-ups:

I will only consider exam make-ups under specific and compelling documented emergencies (serious illness, accident, family crises, etc.). Make-up exams will consist of short answer and essay questions.

There will be no make-ups for missed quizzes- NO EXCEPTIONS.

Assignments are expected to be completed by the assigned dates. A late assignment may only be turned in with prior approval of the instructor or the teaching assistant. Late assignments will only be accepted under specific and compelling circumstances.

Academic Honesty:

The work done in this course is expected to be solely the effort of each individual student. Plagiarism (copying the work of another without giving proper credit) and cheating will not be tolerated. Any form of academic dishonesty will result in a zero for the course (regardless of prior class achievement) and will be reported to the Office of the Dean of Students.

Tentative Schedule of Readings and Important Dates:Week 1:**Introduction to American Democracy (The American People)**

Tue. September 2 - No Readings

Thu. September 4 - Welch et al., Chapter 1

Article: "Minorities Expected to be Majority in 2050"

<http://www.cnn.com/2008/US/08/13/census.minorities/index.html?ref=hpmostpop#cnnSTCText>

Fri. September 5 - Canon et al. eds., "What Does it Mean to be an American" (pp. 33-50)

Week 2:

Tue. September 9 - Introduction to American Democracy (The American People) continued

The Constitution and Federalism

Thu. September 11 - Welch et al., Chapter 2

Compare the Constitution to the Articles of Confederation

<http://home.earthlink.net/~gfeldmeth/chart.art.html>

Fri. September 13 - Canon et al. eds., The Federalist, No. 15 and No. 51 (pp.60- 69)

Week 3:

Mon. September 15 - Final date for dropping courses without receiving a "w"

Tue. September 16 - The Constitution and Federalism (continued)

Public Opinion

Thu. September 18 - Welch et al., Chapter 3/The Constitution and Federalism wrap up

Fri. September 19 - Canon et al. eds., "Jumping Frogs, Endangered Toads, and California's Medical-Marijuana Law (pp. 96-105)

Week 4:

Tue. September 23 - Public Opinion (continued)

News Media

Thu. September 25 - Welch et al., Chapter 4/Public Opinion wrap up

Fri. September 26 - Canon et al. eds., pp. 329-341 (Gallup and Morin)

Week 5:

Tue. September 30 - News Media (continued)

Interest Groups

Thu. October 2 - Welch et al., Chapter 5/News Media wrap up

Fri. October 3 - Canon et al. eds., pp.348-358 (Nagourney; Permuter & McDaniel)

Week 6:

Tue. October 7 - Interest Groups (continued)

Political Parties

Thu. October 9 - Welch et al., Chapter 6/Interest Groups wrap up

Fri. October 10 - Canon et al. eds., pp. 490-495 (The Federalist No. 10- Madison)

John Bibby, "*Political Parties in the U.S*"<http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/election04/parties.htm>

Exam Review

Week 7:

Tue. October 14 - Political Parties (continued)

Elections

Thu. October 16 - Welch et al., Chapter 7/Political Parties wrap up

Fri. October 17 - **EXAM I (Covers American Democracy through Political Parties)**

Week 8

- Tues. October 21 - Elections (continued)
 Thu. October 23 - Elections (continued): Lecture on Youth Voting
 Everything you ever wanted to know about the Electoral College
<http://www.hks.harvard.edu/case/3pt/electoral.html>
 Fri. October 24 - Canon et al. eds., pp. 373-381 ("Power to the Voters"- Parker)

Week 9:**Congress**

- Tue. October 28 - Welch et al., Chapter 8
 Thu. October 30 - Congress (continued)
 Fri. October 31 - Article outlining the pros and cons of term limits
<http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/2000/0009.wallison.html>

Week 10:**The Presidency**

- Tue. November 4 - ELECTION DAY
 Welch et al., Chapter 9
 Thu. November 6 - The Presidency (continued)
 Fri. November 7 - Canon et al. eds., pp. 206-215 ("The Power to Persuade"- Neustadt)

Week 11:**The Bureaucracy**

- Mon. November 10 - Final date to drop courses
 Tue. November 11 - Welch et al., Chapter 10/The Presidency wrap up
 Thu. November 13 - The Bureaucracy (continued)
 Fri. November 14 - Canon et al. eds., pp. 245-263 (W. Wilson; J. Wilson)
 Exam Review

Week 12:**The Judiciary**

- Tue. November 18 - Welch et al., Chapter 11/The Bureaucracy wrap up
 Thu. November 20 - The Judiciary (continued)
 Fri. November 21 - **EXAM II (Covers Elections through the Bureaucracy)**

Week 13:**Civil Liberties and Civil Rights**

- Tue. November 25 - Welch et al., Chapters 12 & 13/The Judiciary wrap up
 Article about the narrow decisions of the Supreme Court
http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/23/us/23memo.html?_r=1&oref=slogin
 Thu. November 27 - Thanksgiving Holiday
 Fri. November 28 - Thanksgiving Holiday

Week 14:

- Tue. December 2 - Civil Liberties and Civil Rights (continued)

Domestic Policy

- Thu. December 4 - Welch et al., Chapter 14/Civil Liberties & Civil Right wrap up
 Fri. December 5 - Canon et al. eds., pp. 150-158 (Cole and Dempsey; Posner)

Week 15:**Foreign Policy**

- Tue. December 9 - Welch et al., Chapter 15/Domestic Policy wrap up
 Thu. December 11 - Foreign Policy (continued)
 Fri. December 12 - Discussion Foreign Policy/Exam Review

GVPT 170

Fall 2008

FINAL EXAM-

**Thursday, December 18th
10:30 am - 12:30 pm**