

GVPT170 – Intro to American Government
Summer Term 2008
Tuesday/Thursday 12:30-3:20pm

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Office: 1135A Tydings Hall
Office Hours: Tuesdays 3:30-5:00pm
and by appointment

Course Description

This course will examine the historical development and contemporary performance of the American Democratic Government System. It will provide an overall introduction to the workings of the political processes and political institutions at the federal level, along with discussions on public policies debated within the system. Focus will be on the powers, organization, and rules and procedures of the United States government with emphasis on constitutional responsibilities and institutional procedures in the three branches of government. The course will be split in five sections: 1) a review of the general nature, development and mechanisms of U.S. democracy; 2) a discussion on the three branches of government; 3) a debate regarding public opinion, political participation of the electorate, and a description of the electorate; 4) an explanation of interest groups and their place in government; and 5) an examination of policymaking in today's federal government.

Required Texts

O'Connor, Karen and Larry J. Sabato. *American Government: Continuity and Change*, 2008.
Alternate Edition. New York: Pearson Longman. ISBN #978-0-205-51143-3

Additional readings will be available through the Blackboard course page (www.elms.umd.edu). Students should visit the website during the first week of class to be sure that they have no problems obtaining the on-line reading materials. Some reserve materials will be available at the main desk of McKeldin Library.

Course Requirements

All reading is due on the date it is assigned. Students are expected to complete the readings in advance and come to class prepared to discuss them. In conjunction with the assigned readings, students should read daily newspapers (*The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, etc.) to stay informed of current issues in U.S. politics. Throughout the course, there will be short, unannounced quizzes that are to help ensure all students are completing the assigned readings. For those who are, these will not be difficult; for those who are not, these will be difficult.

Attendance is required and unexcused absences will be penalized. Since the course is only six weeks, it is imperative that you attend all classes as you are responsible for the information discussed. I understand that unavoidable conflicts sometimes arise, therefore students will be allowed one absence without penalty, no questions asked. However, if you miss class due to illness, you are required to bring a doctor's note. This action will be reflected in your participation grade. There will be a short, 10-15 minute break during each class.

Although technology is a great tool, phones, iPods, blackberries, etc. are NOT welcome during class time.

The mid-term examination will be given during the first 1.5 hours of the sixth class (**Thursday, June 19**). Following the mid-term there will be a class discussion for the remainder of the time. A make-up mid-term examination will only be given to those with a written excuse and proper documentation.

Outline of Written Requirements

During some weeks you will be required to submit a 350-word, typed, and double-spaced description of a current event within the realm of American Government. It will need to focus on the topics discussed during previous weeks' classes. For example, if the week's readings include voting behavior then the current event will need to focus on that issue within U.S. politics. As an electorate, you need to be an informed citizen, this exercise is to help you discern information and discuss its potential ramifications on your voting decisions. These papers are due: **Thursday, June 12** and **Thursday, July 3**.

You can either write an Op-Ed or a Memo. The Op-Ed is an editorial letter written by a voter to a newspaper audience in support (or against) a specific policy presently being discussed by Congress. The Memo is an editorial letter written to a Representative/Senator as a member of a Congressional delegation asking for support (or opposition) of a bill written by the Congressman. You may choose to write either, but be aware of your audience. Whichever you choose, it should be one page in length, typed, single-spaced. You must also include a copy of the bill/policy you discuss in the paper. This paper is due: **Thursday, June 26**.

The research paper will be on a specific area of policy activity. Students will choose a policy, examine patterns of federal activity in this area and explain these patterns in terms of congressional and bureaucratic politics, structure and historical value. Students will also need to explain all sides of the policy. Please note that your opinion, albeit interesting, should not be included in this paper. A single page, typed, double-spaced description of the policy idea will be due **Tuesday, June 10**. An outline of your research will be due **Tuesday, June 24**. The final paper is due on the last day of class, **Thursday, July 10**. The length of the paper text (not including cover page and bibliography) should be about 7-8 pages. The final paper must be typed and double-spaced. A bibliography is required, as you are not experts in the field (yet). The papers must include at least fifteen properly cited sources; you can choose from MLA, Chicago, or APA formats. Wikipedia is not considered a valid source in this class. Articles from newspapers and reputable magazines, journal articles, and non-fiction books are valid sources.

All papers should be well written and proofread. Deductions will be made for typographical, spelling and grammatical errors. Every paper must include a cover page which states your name, date the paper is due, the section of the course, the title of the paper, and the honor pledge. All papers are due at the beginning of the class time; papers received after this time will be considered late and penalized one letter grade. No papers will be received after two days. No papers will be accepted via email unless there is an emergency situation, upon which documentation is required to explain the emergency.

Grades

Op-Eds/Memo – 20%

Mid-Term Exam – 25%

Final Paper – 30%

Class Participation/Quizzes – 15%

Current Events – 10%

You will be graded on the following scale:

A: 90-100

B: 80-89

C: 70-79

D: 60-69

F: 60 or below

Office Hours: I encourage all students to take advantage of my office hours. Please feel free to stop by and discuss any and all issues relating to the course (exams, papers, discussion) or to simply chat about politics. If these hours are not convenient, as noted, appointments can be made to meet at other times.

Email Policy: In this technological age, I understand that it is easier to contact me via email. I welcome any and all emails regarding the class; however, please understand that I will not be able to respond immediately to all of your emails. My policy is that I will respond to your emails within 24-48 hours. Also, when replying, please include the original email discourse. I am not available via IM, Facebook, or any other such medium.

****Note: This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor. Some additional readings may be expected regarding policies being discussed at that time.*

Tuesday, June 3

Introduction

- 1) Discussion of syllabus and class requirements
- 2) Historical Development: The Founders' expectations and the evolution of American Democratic Government
 - a. Read → O'Connor & Sabato, Chapters 1-2
 - b. Read → Declaration of Independence, The Constitution of the United States, The Bill of Rights and other Amendments to the Constitution (#1-27)
(www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/ourdocs/NewNation.html)
 - c. Read → The Federalist Papers, #1, #10
(<http://thomas.loc.gov/home/histdox/fedpapers.html>)

Thursday, June 5

- 3) Federalism
 - a. Read → O'Connor & Sabato, Chapters 3-4
 - b. Read → The Federalist Papers, #44, #46; The Anti-Federalist Papers, #17
(www.thisnation.com/library/antifederalist/index.html)
 - c. Read → Kernell & Smith, 3.1

Political Institutions

- 1) Development of Institutions
 - a. Read → Kernell & Smith, Chapter 1
 - b. Read → The Federalist Papers, #51

Tuesday, June 10 → PAPER DESCRIPTION DUE

- 2) Congress
 - a. Read → O'Connor & Sabato, Chapter 7
 - b. Read → Kernell & Smith, 6.1-6.2
 - c. Read → The Federalist Papers #52, #62

Thursday, June 12 → CURRENT EVENTS PAPER DUE

- 3) Executive
 - a. Read → O'Connor & Sabato, Chapters 8-9
 - b. Read → Kernell & Smith, 7.1-7.2, 8.1-8.2
 - c. Read → The Federalist Papers, #67-68

Tuesday, June 17

- 4) Judicial
 - a. Read → O'Connor & Sabato, Chapter 10
 - b. Read → Kernell & Smith, 5.1, 5.3-5.5, 9.2, 9.4
 - c. Read → The Federalist Papers, #78-80

Thursday, June 19 → MID-TERM EXAMINATION

Public Opinion and Participation

- 1) Public Opinion
 - a. Read → O'Connor & Sabato, Chapter 11
 - b. Read → Kernell & Smith, 10.2

Tuesday, June 24 → PAPER OUTLINE DUE

- 2) Political Parties, Voting, and the Electorate
 - a. Read → O'Connor & Sabato, Chapters 12-13
 - b. Read → Kernell & Smith, 10.4, 11.2, 12.1

Thursday, June 26 → OP-ED/MEMO DUE

- 3) Political Campaigns
 - a. Read → O'Connor & Sabato, Chapters 14-15
 - b. Read → Kernell & Smith, 11.1

Tuesday, July 1

- 4) Civil Rights, Civil Liberties
 - a. Read → O'Connor & Sabato, Chapters 5-6
 - b. Read → The Bill of Rights and other Amendments to the Constitution (#1-27) (www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/ourdocs/NewNation.html)
 - c. Read → Voting Rights Act 1965 (<http://www.ourdocuments.gov/content.php?page=milestone>);

Thursday, July 3 → CURRENT EVENTS PAPER DUE

Interest Groups

- 1) Development of Groups
 - a. Read → Kernell & Smith, 1.1
- 2) Interest Groups
 - a. Read → O'Connor & Sabato, Chapter 16
 - b. Read → Kernell & Smith, 13.1-13.2

Public Policy Processes

- 1) Elitism vs. Pluralism
 - a. Read → Wasserman, Chapter 8
- 2) How Policy is Made
 - a. Read → Stella Z. Theodoulou "The Contemporary Language of Public Policy: A Starting Point," "How Public Policy is Made;" Roger W. Cobb and Charles D. Elder "Issues and Agendas;" John W. Kingdon "Agenda Setting" – all from Public Policy: Essential Readings, Stella Z. Theodoulou and Matthew A. Cahn (eds.)

Tuesday, July 8

- 3) The Budget Process
 - a. Read → The Congressional Appropriations Process: An Introduction (<http://appropriations.house.gov/pdf/appfacts.pdf>)
 - b. Read → Davidson and Oleszek, Congress and Its Members, Chapter 14, p. 433-449
 - c. Read → Rubin, The Politics of Public Budgeting: Getting And Spending, Borrowing And Balancing, Chapter 1, p.1-36
- 4) Domestic Policy Making (Immigration, Health Care, etc.)
 - a. Read → Davidson and Oleszek, Congress and Its Members, Chapter 14, p. 420-433
- 5) Foreign Policy Making
 - a. Read → Davidson and Oleszek, Congress and Its Members, Chapter 15

Thursday, July 10 → FINAL PAPER DUE

Any discussion not completed, we will take the last class to review.

Disability Accommodations

Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first contact the Department Chair, Dr. Mark Lichbach (301-405-4156) and Dr. Jo Ann Hutchinson at Disabilities Support Services (301-314-7682). Dr. Hutchinson will discuss arrangements to verify the disability and establish eligibility for appropriate academic accommodations. They should then schedule an appointment with the professor to make appropriate arrangements; this must be completed during the first week of classes.

Religious Observance

Religiously observant students wishing to be absent on holidays that require missing class should notify their professors in writing at the beginning of the semester, and should discuss with them, in advance, acceptable ways of making up any work missed because of the absence.

Excused Absences for University Extracurricular Activities

Students participating in an officially sanctioned, scheduled University extracurricular activity will be given the opportunity to make up class assignments or other graded assignments missed as a result of their participation. It is the responsibility of the student to make arrangements with the instructor prior to any missed scheduled examination or other missed assignment for making up the work.

Academic Integrity

Please make sure to visit the Student Honor Council website that details the University's Code of Academic Integrity (www.studenthonorcouncil.umd.edu/code.html#honor_statement).

Honor Pledge

"I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this examination."