POLS 1010  
Introduction to American National Government  

Fall 2015  
11:00-12:15  
Science and Technology C-307  

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Office Hours  
Tuesday 9:00-10:30  
Wednesday 12:00-2:00  
Thursday 9:00-10:30  
and by appointment and by drop-in  

email  
web page  

COURSE DESCRIPTION  

This course will present you with an understanding of American Government, a field of the Social Science discipline of Political Science. You will learn about the institutions and processes of American Government, how Political Scientists study American Politics, and the relevance of our research in American Politics to general knowledge.  

READINGS  
See the attachment at the end of the syllabus to find the instructions for accessing the readings.  

GRADING  
The course grade will be based on four cumulative examinations and several unannounced quizzes. All exams will be in-class, closed book. Each test will consist of multiple choice questions and short answer items. Students are to provide their own bubble sheets for the multiple choice portion. You are responsible for the material covered in the readings and the lectures. Exams are each worth 20% of your final grade. The grade earned on the final exam, in addition to being worth 20% of your final grade, will also substitute for the lowest grade on exams 1-3, assuming the final is higher than one of these. In the event that an exam is missed, the grade on the final will substitute for the missed exam. There will be unannounced quizzes over the material throughout the term. The highest 75% of the quizzes (however many there will be is to be determined) will count. So, if there are four quizzes, the highest three will count. If there are eight, the highest six will count. These quizzes will constitute 20% of your final grade.
Every effort will be made to get your exams and quizzes back by the next class session. All students are expected to attend class. I expect all students to have completed the assigned reading by class. I am comfortable in calling on you regardless of whether you raise your hand or not.

I will diligently enforce the University Academic Integrity Policy. See the following: http://www.ecu.edu/cs-acad/fsonline/customcf/facultymanual/newmanual/part4.pdf. If you have any questions as to how this is related to this class, please see me.

CLASS DECORUM

I expect all students to exhibit a high level of courtesy toward each other. Please arrive on time and stay for the entire class. While I endorse the reading of newspapers and the listening to music, please refrain from doing either in class. Newspaper reading and listening to music outside of class is optional. Last, please be respectful while someone is asking or answering a question. Treat those individuals as you would wish to be treated. The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.

East Carolina University seeks to comply fully with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Students requesting accommodations based on a disability must be registered with the Department for Disability Support Services located in Slay 138 (252) 737-1016 (Voice/TTY).

Foundations of American Government

What is the purpose of government? What was the founders’ view of the purpose of government and the role of the citizen in a republic? Are these views still relevant today? How does the Constitution underpin U.S. government? What are the philosophical underpinnings of American government? Why did Anti-Federalists dislike the proposed Constitution?

Chapters 1, 2, and 3

Civil Liberties and Civil Rights

What are the institutional guarantees of civil liberties and rights that are listed in Constitution? How has the 14th amendment influenced constitutional protections at the state level? What is equal protection under the law? What forms of speech are protected? How have these rights changed over time?

Chapter 4

Institutions of American Government: The Legislature

How does the legislature work? Is it efficient? How has the power of the legislature changed over time? Does Congress represent the desires of the nation? Is Congress representative of the nation? How do the Senate and House of Representatives differ? Are these differences of consequence?

Chapter 9

Institutions of American Government: The Executive

What are the formal and informal powers of the presidency? How does the president use these powers to influence policy? How does the president relate to the other offices within the executive branch? What are the influences on the executive branch? Who controls the
bureaucracy? Does a permanent professional bureaucracy that is largely insulated from the elected branches serve democracy well?

Chapters 10 and 11

**Institutions of American Government: The Judiciary**
What role does the court play in American democracy? What is the proper role of the courts in the policy making process? How have the power of the courts changed over time? Why is the court, which was once thought to be the weakest branch, thought to be the most powerful?

Chapter 12

**Political Culture and Public Opinion**
What is political culture? Is there a distinctive American political culture? How do we come by our political beliefs? What are the sources of public opinion? How do we assess what the political attitudes and opinions of the populace?

Chapter 5

**Interest Groups**
What is the role of interest groups? How do they influence public policy? How do they influence elections? Why do people join them? Why do people not join interest groups with which they find themselves in agreement? What are the strategies employed by interest groups?

Chapter 8

**The Media and Technology**
What are the political functions of the media? How has it changed since the Founding? Is it biased? Do you believe your text? Why or why not? How has technology changed the way we interact with politics and government? How has technology changed the way government and politicians communicate with us?

Chapter 6

**Political Parties**
What is a political party? How have they changed over time? Why are we a two-party system? What is the tea party? Is it a political party?

Chapter 7

**Campaigns and Elections**
What are the strengths and weaknesses of our system for electing officials? How do people get elected to office? What is the role of political parties? How big a role does money play? Why do people bother to participate in politics?

Chapter 7

**Public Policy**
What is public policy? What does it mean to make public policy? What factors explain the policies
made by those in the various branches of national, state, and local government?

Chapters 13 and 14

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