



POL-K111
American Government
Spring 2016
Wednesdays
6:30 – 9:15 p.m.
Room D-224

Thomas C. Reynolds
Adjunct Professor of Political Science
treyolds@threerivers.edu
(860) 334-9477
Office Hours: By appointment

SYLLABUS

I. Course Description

The course is an extensive examination of America's system of government and its three branches: executive, legislative, and judicial. We will discuss the roles and functions of each branch and the system of checks and balances. We will explore how our nation's history has influenced our system of government and modern day politics. We will examine the role of the bureaucracy, public opinion, political parties, interest groups, elections, and the media. Other issues to be examined include civil liberties, civil rights, and domestic and foreign policy. Lastly, this course seeks to inspire you to consider your own role in American democracy as a citizen, taxpayer, and voter.

II. Course Outcomes and Objectives

1. To demonstrate knowledge of the influences of our system of government.
 - a. To compare and contrast how democracy worked in Athens and Rome.
 - b. To identify the elements of the Magna Carta, Petition of Right, British Parliament, and the Habeas Corpus Act that were incorporated in America's system of government.
 - c. To explain the difference between direct and indirect democracy.
 - d. To define what government by contract means using examples.
2. To explain the checks and balances of the three branches of government: legislative, executive, and judicial.
 - a. To describe the historical events, including Shay's Rebellion that led to the U.S. Constitution being drafted and signed.
 - b. To explain the roles of Congress.
 - c. To explain the roles of the president
 - d. To explain how our federal court system is set up
 - e. To explain the Connecticut compromise.
3. To recognize the steps in the policy making process.
 - a. To differentiate the formulation of domestic policy and the formulation of foreign policy
 - b. To discuss a history of America's foreign policy.
4. To differentiate civil rights and civil liberties.
 - a. Define civil rights.
 - b. Define civil liberties.
 - c. Explain the importance of the 14th Amendment.

III. Instructional Methods

This course will utilize a variety of instructional methods, including traditional lecture, class discussions in various formats and small groups, and student presentations. Various tools will be used by the instructor, including PowerPoint slides containing text, photos, videos, and website links, and *Socrative*.

IV. Required Text

The reading assignments are a critical element of the course and are intended to complement the topics and activities presented and discussed during class. There is one required text that can be purchased at the bookstore or online: *We the People, 10th Edition*, by Benjamin Ginsberg et al. W.W. Norton & Co. (2015), ISBN: 978-0-393-93703-9. Additional required readings will be posted to Blackboard.

V. Course Requirements

❖ Tests (50% of Final Grade)

There will be four tests and each will cover approximately one-quarter of the course content. Each test will include an in-class portion (multiple choice, true/false, short answer) and take-home essays. Your total points on the in-class and take-home portions will be combined for your test grade. The essay questions will be available on Blackboard one week before the test date. The essays will be submitted and graded in Blackboard. A grading rubric for the essays will be available on Blackboard. Five points will be deducted for each day the essays are late. Make-up tests using an alternative version of the test will be given only if the student has made arrangements with the instructor prior to the test.

❖ Participation (20% of Final Grade)

Regular in-class participation is an important element of your final grade, enhances the teaching and learning process, and helps to provide for an engaging and interesting class. Participation includes two elements: (1) Class Contributions—50% of Participation grade and (2) Class Attendance—50% of Participation grade. A grading rubric for Class Contributions will be available on Blackboard.

❖ Assignments (20% of Final Grade)

There will be an assignment due every week, except during test weeks. Most often you will be required to prepare a short essay response to questions related to the assigned reading. Instructions for each week's assignment will be posted to Blackboard. These exercises serve to demonstrate your understanding of the concepts introduced in the readings and to facilitate our review of the topics during class. Therefore, class discussions of your completed assignments impact your participation grade. The grading rubric for the essays will be available on Blackboard. All assignments will be submitted and graded on Blackboard. You must have a hard copy or online access to your assignment during the class in which it is due. Late submissions will be subject to a penalty of five points per day. You have up to two weeks from the original due date to resubmit an assignment to improve your grade. Any late penalty applied to the original submission will still apply to the resubmittal.

❖ Research Project (10% of Final Grade)

You are required to complete a research project on a current, national public policy issue. The project will consist of two components: legislative report and a letter to Congress. These documents must be uploaded to Blackboard. Late submissions will be subject to a penalty of five points per day. Detailed instructions for this project will be distributed at a later date.

Research Report (85% of Research Project grade): The report will be a short research paper on a topic before the U.S. Congress. The paper must be at least six pages, excluding the works cited. The paper is intended to demonstrate your ability to research and understand a national issue, to interpret the legislative process and the role of official and unofficial actors, and to evaluate the issue in the context of the principles and concepts discussed in class. A grading rubric will be available on Blackboard. Papers must follow the MLA guide to style, formatting, and citation of sources. The paper will be submitted through *SafeAssign* on Blackboard, which discourages plagiarism and encourages original work and critical thinking.

Letter to Congress (15% of Research Project grade): You must prepare and send a 1-2 page letter to your U.S. Representative or U.S. Senator that briefly describes the policy issue in your Research Report and proposes specific policy responses you wish the elected official to pursue. The exercise is intended to give you practical experience in reducing a policy issue to its most important components and advocating for a particular policy response. A grading rubric and a sample letter template will be available on Blackboard.

VI. Evaluation Procedures

Your final grade will be determined by a weighted combination of scores on tests, participation, assignments, and the legislative project, as outlined below. A running tally of your final grade will always be available in "My Grades" on Blackboard.

Tests	50%
Participation	20%
Assignments	20%
<u>Research Project</u>	<u>10%</u>
	100%

VII. Grades

Grades will be posted on Blackboard. The total amount of points earned during the semester will correspond to the grade scale listed below.

A	=	94 - 100
A-	=	90 - 93
B+	=	87 - 89
B	=	83 - 86
B-	=	80 - 82
C+	=	77 - 79
C	=	73 - 76
C-	=	70 - 72
D+	=	67 - 69
D	=	63 - 66
D-	=	60 - 62
F	=	00 - 59
W	=	Withdrawal
I	=	Incomplete

VIII. Communication and Extra Help

This course will make use of Blackboard, and you will be expected to check it regularly for announcements, course materials, grades, and syllabus updates. Please email or call the instructor as needed or meet with him during office hours or by appointment to discuss course content or any concerns. The instructor will always find time to meet with students one-on-one or in small groups.

If your schedule makes in-person meetings difficult, the instructor is also available for online meetings.

IX. Use of Technology in Classroom

Cell phones, laptops and tablets may not be used in class. This practice has been observed to result in a dramatic improvement in the quality and degree of student attentiveness and engagement and to greatly reduce distractions for the instructor and other students. Exceptions will be announced by the instructor, such as accessing essays submitted through Blackboard that are required for class discussions or logging into *Socrative*.

X. College Withdrawal Policy

A verbal “drop or withdrawal” from course(s) cannot be accepted by the instructor. Students must complete the required form and file it with the Registrar’s Office. Refer to the academic calendar for the exact ending date for the drop period.

XI. Student Disability Policy

If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to immediately contact the Disabilities Counseling Services at 860-892-5751. I am unable to provide accommodations based upon disability until I have received an accommodation letter from the Disabilities Counselor.

XII. Attendance Policy

Consistent attendance at class meetings is crucial to success in this course. You are expected to attend all classes in order to receive full benefit from instruction. Class attendance will be reflected in your “Class Participation” grade. Students having attendance problems should speak with the instructor before taking any action.

XIII. Academic Dishonesty

Conduct which as its intent or effect leads to the false representation of a student’s academic performance and/or knowingly and intentionally assisting another student to do so in any way constitutes academic dishonesty. In the event of academic dishonesty, the College’s policy will be enforced.

XIV. Early Warning Policy

Students experiencing academic difficulty and/or chronic absenteeism will be notified of their class standing.

XV. Non-discrimination policy/statement

Three Rivers Community College does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religious creed, age, sex, national origin, marital status, ancestry, present or past history of mental disorder, learning disability or physical disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or genetic information in its programs and activities. In addition, the College does not discriminate in employment on the basis of veteran status or criminal records. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the non-discrimination policies: Gregory Souza, Title IX Coordinator, Gsouza@threerivers.edu, Room C-131, 860-215-9486.

XVI. Sexual Misconduct Policy/Statement

Three Rivers Community College strongly encourages all students to report any incidents of sexual misconduct, which includes, but is not limited to, sexual harassment, intimate partner violence, and sexual assault. Students have the right to the prompt and fair resolution of all claims, and the College will preserve the confidentiality of all who report to the fullest extent possible and allowed by law. College employees will explain the limits of confidentiality before information about the

incident is revealed. To report sexual misconduct, or to learn more about your options, please contact the Title IX Coordinator noted in the previous section. If you need immediate, confidential assistance, please call the Sexual Assault Crisis Center of Eastern Connecticut hotline at 860-437-7766.

XVII. Digication Statement

All students are required to maintain an online learning portfolio in Digication that uses the college template. Through this electronic tool students will have the opportunity to monitor their own growth in college-wide learning. The student will keep his/her learning portfolio and may continue to use the Digication account after graduation. A Three Rivers General Education Assessment Team will select and review random works to improve the college experience for all. Student work reviewed for assessment purposes will not include names and all student work will remain private and anonymous for college improvement purposes. Students will have the ability to integrate learning from the classroom, college, and life in general, which will provide additional learning opportunities. If desired, students will have the option to create multiple portfolios. More information on Digication is located at

http://www.trcc.commnet.edu/Div_IT/EducationalTechnology/Digication.shtml

XVIII. Current Events

Throughout the semester we will discuss current events facing the nation to illustrate and explore the principles and issues raised in the course. This will require that you read a quality source of national news and analysis every day. Examples of national news sources include the *New York Times* (www.nytimes.com), *Washington Post* (www.washingtonpost.com), and *Wall Street Journal* (www.wsj.com).

XVIII. Course Outline

The preliminary course outline is attached. Please note that the version on Blackboard will always reflect the most up-to-date information. Always note the version date on the top left of the syllabus. "Bb" in the course outline indicates that the document may be found on Blackboard.

COURSE OUTLINE		
Foundations of American Democracy		
1	Wed. Jan. 27	Course Introduction Politics Democracy Read: Bb: Syllabus Bb (not the text): Ch. 1—Approaching Democracy Bb: Vaclav Havel's Address to Congress
2	Wed. Feb. 3	The Founding Declaration of Independence Read: Text: Ch. 2—The Founding and the Constitution, pp. 39-45 Read: Text: Declaration of Independence, pp. A1-A3 Due: Short Essay
3	Wed. Feb. 10	U.S. Constitution Read: Text: Ch. 2—The Founding and the Constitution, pp. 45-70 Text: U.S. Constitution, A9-A14 Due: Short Essay; SOPCAB Exercise Assign: Essays for Test #1
4	Wed. Feb. 17	Federalism Read: Text: Ch. 3—Federalism Due: Federalism Worksheet
5	Wed. Feb. 24	TEST #1 (Weeks 1-4) Civil Liberties Civil Rights Read: Text: Ch. 4—Civil Liberties Text: Ch. 5—Civil Rights, pp. 157-178 Due: Essays for Test #1
Institutions of American Democracy		
6	Wed. Mar. 2	Congress Read: Text: Ch. 12—Congress, pp. 471-486 Due: "Who Represents Me?" Assignment Assign: Essays for Test #2
7	Wed. Mar. 9	Presidency Read: Text: Ch. 13—The Presidency Bb: "Who Decides Whether the U.S. Should Wage War?" Due: Short Essay Assign: Essays for Test #2
8	Wed. Mar. 16	TEST #2 (Weeks 4-7) Bureaucracy Read: Text: Ch. 14—Bureaucracy in a Democracy Due: Essays for Test #2 Assign: Research Project
9	Wed. June 24	Judiciary Read: Text: Ch. 15—The Federal Courts Due: Research Project Topic & Sources
	Mar. 21-25	Spring Break—No Classes

Participation in American Democracy		
10	Wed. Mar. 30	Political Participation and Voting Campaigns and Elections Read: Text: Ch. 8—Political Participation and Voting, pp. 299-320 Read: Text: Ch. 10—Campaigns and Elections Due: Short Essay Assign: Essays for Test #3
11	Wed. Apr. 6	Political Parties Public Opinion Read: Text: Ch. 12—Elections and Voting Due: Political Typology Survey & Short Essay
12	Wed. Apr. 13	TEST #3 (8-11) Media Interest Groups Read: Text: Ch. 11—Groups and Interests Due: Essays for Test #3
Policy Making in American Democracy		
13	Wed. Apr. 20	Domestic Policy Read: Text: Ch. 17—Social Policy, pp. 685-698 Due: Research Report Assign: Essays for Test #4
14	Wed. Apr. 27	Economic Policy Foreign Policy Read: Text: Ch. 16—Government and the Economy, pp. 641-669 Text: Ch. 18—Foreign Policy and Democracy, pp. 725-737 Due: Letter to Congress
15	Wed. May 4	TEST #4 (12-14) Due: Essays for Test #4