

**American Govt.  
POLS-K111  
Mr. Phil Mayer**

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(860)892-5749

OFFICE HOURS (faculty office #11)

M 9:30 to 11am; 2 to 3:30 tutoring (TASC)

T 1 – 2; 6 – 6:30

W: 9:30am to 11am 2 – 3:30 TASC

Thurs: 1 - 2

\* TASC tutoring center is located in the left side of the library (learning resource center)  
\* available by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION: An extensive overview of America’s system of government and its three branches: executive, judicial, and legislative. We will discuss the roles and functions of each branch, as well as the system of checks and balances. We will also explore how our nation’s history has influenced our system of government and modern-day politics. We will examine the role of public opinion , political parties, interest groups, the media. Other issues which will be examined in detail include civil liberties, civil rights, domestic policy, and foreign policy.

REQUIRED TEXT: *Approaching Democracy* by Larry Berman and Bruce Murphy

GRADES

5 tests (12.5% each)	60%	100-94 = A	79-77 = C+
Homework	15%	93-90 = A	76-73 = C
Project	15%	89-87 = B+	72-70 = C-
Final	10%	86-83 = B	69-67 =D+
		82-80 = B-	63-66 = D
			62-60 = D-

Students who have a “91” test average or higher and who have received a B or higher on the project do not have to take the final.

It is important that you attend class; you cannot learn if you’re not there. Numerous absences will affect your grade. It is your responsibility to get all notes, materials, and assignments for any classes that you miss. If you regularly (4 or more unexcused absences) miss class, or are consistently late and/or consistently leave early, that will be a clear signal to me that you do not care about grade; consequently, if you have a borderline average, and come to class, you will be given the higher grade; if you demonstrate that you don’t care about your grade, you will be given the lower grade.

I expect all of my students to have the integrity and character to be honest at all times. Students caught cheating will get a “0” on that test, and it will not be dropped. In addition, you may get an “F” in the class regardless of your average.

I expect students to arrive on time for class, not leave early, and to have gone to the facilities prior to class. Consistent violations are disruptive to your classmates will result in a lower grade.

We will at times discuss issues which people have different opinions about. Please remember to respect each other and act civilly at all times. If someone says something you disagree with, please raise your hand and wait to be called on.

**Snow:** In the event of wintery weather, please listen to 106.5, Q105, I-98, 1350AM, or WSUB for cancellations. If you do not hear that Three Rivers Community College is closed, that means we are open. You can also look at the website [www.trcc.comnet.edu](http://www.trcc.comnet.edu) or call the switchboard at 886-0177 for weather info. If you do not hear we are closed, TRCC is open and class will be held. However, if you believe that it is too dangerous to come to class, that’s understandable; you are still responsible for finding out what you missed and learning that material.

**Make-up exams** will be given ONLY if the student has contacted the instructor PRIOR to the test. Make-ups will be administered during my regular office hours ONLY. Students MUST take the exam BY THE NEXT SCHEDULED CLASS TIME – NO EXCEPTIONS. Failure to follow this policy will result in either a grade of 0 on that test, a penalty of 10 to 20 points, and/or a make-up exam that is all essay. You will be allowed to take one make-up exam per class per semester.

All work must be completed by the end of the semester – **no incompletes. NO EXTRA CREDIT!**

Ten points per day will be deducted from any assignment that is late. In the real world, those who can’t meet deadlines are fired.

\*\*\* The best way to study for my tests is to study my lecture notes and the homework I assign. It is important that students learn ALL of the definitions we discuss in class; toward that end, students will find making “flashcards” with the word on one side and the definition on the other useful. These flashcards can be used to learn about the various graphs we discuss as well.

### COURSE OUTLINE

test 1: Chapters 1 to 3 handout: Tuesday, September 11

test 2: Chapters 4 to 6 and amendments: Thursday, Sept. 27

test 3: Chapters 7 to 9: Tuesday, October 16

test 4: Chapters 10 to 12: Thursday, Nov. 1

test 5: Chapters 13 to 15: Thursday, Nov. 15

Nov. 29, Dec. 4 and Dec 6: oral presentation dates  
final: chapters 1 to 15: (take-home) due Monday, Dec. 10 at noon (NO CLASS – email me final or drop it off at my office (there is a mailbox on the door))

### **Tentative course schedule**

Week

August 28: introduction, Chapter 1 and 2

Sept. 4: Chapter 2 and 3; handout

Sept. 11: TEST; intro chapter 4

Sept. 18: chapter 4-5

Sept. 25: chapter 5-6: TEST 09/27

Oct. 2: chapter 7-8

Oct. 9: chapter 9, TEST Oct. 16

Oct. 16: TEST Oct. 16, chapter 10, 11

Oct. 23: Chapter 12, 13

Oct. 30: Chapter 13, 14 TEST Nov. 1

Nov. 6: Chapter 14, 15

Nov. 13: Chapter 15, TEST Nov. 15

Nov. 20: NO CLASS

Nov. 27: “Gideon’s Trumpet” \*\*\* There will be an assignment based on this!

Nov. 29, Dec. 4, Dec. 6” oral presentations

Final Due on Dec. 10 at 12 noon

The final is cumulative. It is also a take-home exam: students may email their answers or place them in my mailbox.

**PROJECT: DUE Thursday, October 4.** You may drop the paper off in my office, room 11 of the annex or email them to me. (You may email me homework and the take-home final) Grammar is 25% of the grade. Please see the staff of the Writing Center for assistance – they are wonderful and nice and will help you with the paper. You can even email them a paper, and they will reply back with comments.

I want to select a political issue that interests you and write a 4 to 5 page report on the issue. Begin by describing the issue (what is the problem, what caused the problem, who does it affect, why should we be concerned), then present both sides of the issue. The library has an extensive collection of magazines that will help you, including but not limited to Newsweek, Time, U.S. News, and the Economist. It also has Nexus-Lexus, a computerized database of thousands of Newspapers across the country. The paper must cite at least 8 sources, so that students are exposed to a variety of perspectives on their issue. Grammar is 25% of the grade.

All facts and quotes must be properly cited. All works must be properly cited.

One-fourth of the grade will be based on an ORAL PRESENTATION. The presentation will be 5 minutes long and should include visual aids (numbers, facts,

powerpoint, etc.). The purpose of this is to teach you a skill you will need in the workplace and to build your confidence.

Possible topics: Lack of affordable housing, raising the national minimum, cost of energy, universal health care, social security, cost of prescription drugs, cost of tuition, welfare reform: is day care necessary to get people into workforce?, congestion (I-95 for example), lack of funding for mass transit, environment, cost of oil, war in Iraq, terrorism, America's policy toward Israel, outsourcing, Central American Free Trade Agreement., urban renewal (Hartford, New Haven).

College Withdrawal Policy: A student who finds it necessary to discontinue a course MUST complete a withdrawal form obtained from the Registrar's Office. Students may withdraw from class anytime during the first ten weeks of the semester without being in good standing or obtaining prior permission of the instructor. After that period, a student wishing to withdraw must obtain written authorization of the instructor to receive a "W" grade for the course. Students who fail to properly withdraw and discontinue coming to class will receive an "F" grade. Eligibility for refund of tuition is based upon date of withdrawal when received by the registrar. Verbal withdrawals will not be accepted.

Learning Disabilities Statement: If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to contact Disabilities Counseling Services at 383-5240. To avoid any delay in the receipt of accommodations, you should contact the counselor as soon as possible. Please note that I cannot provide accommodations based on disability until I have received an accommodation letter from the Disabilities Counselor.

**CELL PHONE POLICY:**

Students are notified that cellular phones and beepers are allowed in class or in the Learning Resource Center only if they are turned off or turned to a silent mode. Under no circumstances are phones to be answered in class. When there are extenuating circumstances that require that a student be available by phone or beeper, the student should speak to the instructor prior to class, so that together they can arrive at an agreement