

**American Govt.  
POL111  
Mr. Phil Mayer**

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(860)215-9453

OFFICE HOURS (faculty office C208)

Monday 11-noon in C117 ; 12:30-1300pm

Wednesday 11noon tutoring center C117; 12:30-1:30

Thursday 2pm-3pm in C117 tutoring

\* TASC tutoring center is located in the left side of the library (learning resource center).If I do not have tutong *appts*, I will be in my office.

\* 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	10%	93-90 = A-	76-73 = C
Project	15%	89-87 = B+	72-70 = C-
Final	15%	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 and successfully completed the homework 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.

**IF YOU ARE ABSENT 3 OR MORE TIMES, YOU WILL NEED TO WITHDRAW FROM THE CLASS OR YOU WILL AUTOMATICALLY GET AN F IN THE CLASS.**

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: Wednesday Sept. 21

(movie Sept 23: 13 days)

### **NO CLASS 10/08; work on project.**

test 2: Chapters 4 to 6 and amendments: due Wed. Oct 12

test 3: Chapters 7 to 9: Wed., October 26

test 4: Chapters 10 to 12: Wed. Nov. 16; movie: Gideon's trumpet

test 5: Chapters 13 to 15: Wed. Dec 9

final: chapters 1 to 15: (take-home) Due Monday, Dec 12 by noon (NO CLASS – email me final or drop it off at my office and SLIP UNDER MY OFFICE DOOR, C208.

### **Tentative course schedule**

Week1: introduction, Chapter 1 and 2

2: Chapter 2 and 3; handout

3: TEST; intro chapter 4

4: chapter 4-5

5: chapter 5-6

6: chapter 7-8

7: chapter 9,

8: TEST Oct. 16, chapters 10, 11

9: Chapter 12, 13

10-11: Chapter 13, 14

11-12: Chapter 14, 15

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

**PROJECT: DUE Wed., Oct. 7** 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.

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.

Instead of researching a particular, students can choose to critique a book instead. The paper should still be 4-5 pages and give a brief summary of what the book was about, what you liked, disliked about, did you agree or disagree and why, and were the book's conclusion supported by facts and evidence? Suggestions: *United* by Senator Cory Booker of NJ and *Crisis Point* by Senators Tom Daschle (D, South Dakota) and Trent Lott (R)

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

**POWERPOINT:** Because the class has 30 students, we will not have enough time to do oral presentations. However, I would like you to prepare a 7-10 slide powerpoint presentation on your topic. Basically, design it as if you really were giving a presentation. Make sure your powerpoint presentation includes both sides of the issue. Powerpoint is due same day as the project and should be attached to it via a staple.

Possible topics for project: Lack of affordable housing, bailouts, raising the national minimum wage, 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).

**Digication:** As a student you will maintain an online learning portfolio using a college-designed template in Digication. Through this electronic tool you will have the opportunity to monitor your own growth in college-wide learning. It may even help you determine a major that is best suited to you. You will be able to keep and maintain your learning portfolio after graduation. A Three Rivers General Education Assessment Team will select and review random works to improve the college experience for all. If your work is selected and reviewed for assessment purposes, it will remain anonymous and private. Digication provides a "place" where you will connect your learning from the classroom, college, and life in general. Sometimes when you review all of the work you have done and think about it, you end up learning something different and perhaps unexpected. Please review your course outlines to determine what assignments to upload into the TRCC Digication template and please post your own choices, as well. Have fun in learning!

**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

**OUTCOMES:**

- 1) To demonstrate knowledge of the influences of our system of government.
  - a) To compare and contrast how democracy worked in Athens with how it worked in 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 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment.