

AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

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POL K111
Fall 2011
Wednesday 6:00-8:45
RM D105

Prerequisites

Placement test score indicating ENG* K101 or completion of ENG* K100 with a "C" grade or better.

Course Description:

Through open discussion of political issues and controversies, this course examines the framework of our democracy. The broad study focuses on the strengths and weaknesses of American national government. Topics such as election campaigns, political parties, presidential power, and individual liberties are explored.

Required Text:

Stephenson Jr., D. Grier, et al. *Introduction to American Government*, 5th edition. Redding, CA: BVT Publishing, 2009.
ISBN: 978-1-60229-392-2

Learning Outcomes:

At the conclusion of this course, students should be able to:

- Recognize and articulate the theoretical underpinnings of this government, the operation of American institutions and politics, and the role citizens play in American governmental processes.
- Explain the policy making process in the United States through case study.
- Assess the strengths and weaknesses of our constitution through the comparison and contrast of other constitutions.
- Formulate views of organizational change or support for American Government systems.

Expectations of you:

- You should attend and participate in every class. Missing class will certainly affect your ability to learn and it will almost certainly affect your grade in a negative way. By contrast, attending and participating in all classes will enhance your learning experience and almost certainly improve your grade.
- You are responsible for reading the entire assignment before class. For example next week you are assigned chapter 1. Please have that chapter read before our next class.
- This class will consist of lectures, small group work, and class discussion. Let me assure you that this course is designed for you. Therefore, if you have any questions about the material please feel free to ask me immediately.

Expectations of me:

- While I expect you to prepare on a weekly basis, let me assure you that I will be there to help you. Please feel free to call, email, or come and see me in my office. Even if you are not having any difficulty with the material, please come and see me. My door is always open.

- American government is such an interesting subject. I will make sure that the class is well structured and you enjoy this learning experience.
- There are points in the semester where I will seek your honest, respectful feedback. If there is something that can be done to improve the teacher/learner process, please let me know.

Learning Outcomes Assessment:

This course demands active involvement in learning experiences accompanied by reading and writing activities that capture those experiences. The nature of the courses content requires critical thinking skills to be learned, developed, and applied. The following criteria will be used in evaluating your grade:

Participation – 15%

Students are expected to come to class prepared and actively participate in discussions and group work each week. The participation rubric will be handed out in class to further detail expectations.

Chapter Questions – 10%

Each class you are required to turn in a list of three questions about the readings. This means you must complete the readings and submit the questions before we cover them in class. The questions must be about the topic. Ask questions to clear up any confusion you may have about the reading assignments or to expand on something you are especially interested in. The questions will be consolidated and used as the basis for in-class discussion during the class. The first questions are due Week 2.

Constitution Paper – 10%

Find a copy of the constitution of a country other than the United States. Write a 3-4 page double-spaced paper comparing that constitution to the American Constitution. Answer the following questions in essay form:

- a. How is the government organized and what are the major branches of government?
- b. How is power divided between the branches of government?
- c. What is the process for elections?
- d. Is there a bill of rights? What is the extent of these rights and what limitations are placed on them?
- e. Is judicial review mentioned? If so, what is the procedure for judicial review?
- f. What is the process to amend the constitution? Is it easy or hard to amend the constitution?

Group Project – 15% (7.5% individual, 7.5% group)

Choose one of the following topics: Energy, Social Security, Environment, Health Care, Trade. As a group (4-5 people), give a 30 minute presentation to the class on one of the above topics. If a group also wanted to get together to examine another topic or issue in American Government (e.g. Abortion, Legalization of Marijuana, Stem Cell Research, etc.) please let me know and I would be happy to substitute one of the topics above for a topic of the group's choosing. Include in your presentation a brief legislative history of the policy, current/future problems, current initiatives, what are other countries doing about the issue, current stakeholders, and a references slide. Half of your grade will be based on the group presentation; the other half will be based on a one page peer evaluation. The peer evaluation will cover the roles/responsibilities of each member of the group and your thoughts as to how the group worked together.

Mid Term – 15%

Take home exam in essay form. Answer 2 of 5 questions (minimum 500 words per question double spaced).

Perception of American Politics – 20%

In the final paper you will discuss your overall impressions of American Politics. You are to discuss three things you would do to change the way government works and how you would make these changes. Be sure to back up your reasoning with outside sources. Also, discuss your preconceptions at the start of the semester and how they were changed. Which ideas were reinforced by your studies and which ones were modified or reversed. Most importantly, explain why your ideas changed. Give evidence supporting your change of views. You must properly cite any material you quote. You are to use at least three quality outside sources for this paper. Your paper should be 5-7 pages double spaced excluding the references page.

Final Exam – 15%

Take home exam in essay form. Answer 2 of 5 questions (minimum 500 words per question double spaced).

TOTAL – 100%

Grade	Equivalent	Quality Points
A	94-100	4
A-	90-93	3.7
B+	87-89	3.3
B	83-86	3
B-	80-82	2.7
C+	77-79	2.3
C	73-76	2
C-	70-72	1.7
D+	67-69	1.3
D	63-66	1
D-	60-62	0.7
F	0-59	0

Academic Integrity:

Student Discipline Policy, section 2:10, Board of Trustees of Connecticut Community Colleges) Academic Dishonesty shall in general mean conduct which has as its intent or effect the false representation of a student’s academic performance, including but not limited to (a) cheating on an examination, (b) collaborating with others in work to be presented, contrary to the stated rules of the course, (c) plagiarizing, including the submission of others’ ideas or papers (whether purchased, borrowed, or otherwise obtained) as one’s own, (d) stealing or having unauthorized access to examination or course materials, (e) falsifying records of laboratory or other data, (f) submitting, if contrary to the rules of a course, work previously presented in another course, and (g) knowingly and intentionally assisting another student in any of the above, including assistance in an arrangement whereby any work, classroom performance, examination or other activity is submitted or performed by a person other than the student under whose name the work is submitted or performed.

Students with Disabilities:

Students with disabilities who wish to receive accommodations in this class should contact Chris Scarborough at 860-892-5751 or cscarborough@trcc.commnet.edu ASAP so that the necessary accommodations can be implemented in a timely fashion.

Refund/Withdraw Policy:

The deadline for students to withdraw is a week before classes end. Before withdrawing from any course please speak with me. I encourage you to also speak with financial aid (if you are using financial aid).

Non-attendance does not constitute dropping or withdrawing from class.

Technology Statement:

Please do not answer or make a call during class time unless it is necessary and you let me know ahead of time. Texting is not allowed during class unless we are on a break.

Cancellation of Class:

If the college is closed due to inclement weather, you can find out by going to the TRCC webpage at <http://www.trcc.commnet.edu/>. If I need to cancel class for other reasons, I will inform you by email and on the course Facebook page (TRCC American Government - Dave Ferreira). Be sure to have an accurate email on record and join the Facebook page.

Late Assignments:

Acceptance of late homework/assignments is done on a case-by-case basis. The penalty assessed is based upon several criteria including: informing me ahead of time, how late, and the reason why the assignment is late. The best thing to do if you find yourself in this scenario is to let me know ahead of time and speak with me before or after class.

Calendar of Topics:

**Please note that this is a projected schedule. It may change during the semester.*

August 31 – Introductions/ General Knowledge Test; Why do politics matter? (Intro)

September 7 - Constitution (Ch 1)

September 14 – Federalism (Ch 2)

September 21 – Civil Liberties and Civil Rights (Ch 3)

September 28 – Ideology (Ch 4)

October 5 - Public Opinion (Ch 5)

Constitution Paper Due

October 12 – Mass Media (Ch 6)

Mid Term Exam handed out at end of class

October 19 – Parties and Interest Groups (Ch 7)

Mid Term Exam Due

October 26 – Campaigns and Elections (Ch 8)

November 2 – Congress (Ch 9; Ch 14 page 423-424),

November 9 - Presidency (Ch 10; Ch 14 page 421,423)
Election Day is November 8th So Get Out and Vote!

November 16 – Bureaucracies (Ch 11); The Supreme Court (Ch 12)
Group Project Presentations

November 23 – Thanksgiving Week *Class Not in Session*

November 30 – Domestic Policy (Ch15);

December 7 - Foreign Policy (Ch 16)

Final Exam handed out at end of class; Perception of American Politics Paper Due

December 14 – Future Challenges Based Upon Class Vote. No readings assigned.
Final Exam Due in Class