GVPT 170: American Government
Winter 2016
Section: WB11
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Office Hours: By appointment or via email

**I RESERVE THE RIGHT TO MAKE SLIGHT CHANGES TO THE SYLLABUS AS NEED BE THROUGH THE TERM**

Course Description
This course introduces students to the development and current institutions of American government. The course will be broken into three sections. The first part of the course will address the origins and development of the U.S. government. The second part will discuss both formal and informal American political institutions. The last portion of the course will be devoted to public opinion, campaigns and elections. I hope that by the end of this course you leave with a solid foundation of the constant yet ever changing role of American government and politics.

Course Goals
Students will:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the considerations and concerns that shaped the foundation of our Constitution and the structure of American government.

2. Understand the structure and development of American political institutions including, Congress, the Presidency, the judiciary, political parties and interest groups.

3. Analyze political behavior including public opinion, campaigns and elections.

Assignments
Participation (25%)
Chapter Assignments (30%)
Mid-term Exam (20%)
Final Exam (25%)

Participation: Since this is an online class, participation will be graded on your responses to one discussion question per class day (see end of syllabus for more details on the discussion board). Each discussion question will be posed on the dates listed in the course schedule (see below). Questions will be found in the Discussion Section on ELMS/CANVAS. You have to post at least two times each day of the class. One post will be a direct response to the question of the day and the other post will be a direct response to one or more of your fellow classmates. The discussion questions will be relevant to the day's readings and on current events. Your responses to the discussion questions and your classmates should be well thought out and they should ultimately contribute to expanding the discussion. Your responses should be at least ½ of a double-spaced page. I will post each question by 8AM on each class day. The daily discussion questions must be completed by 48 hours after my initial posting in order for you to receive a grade (questions posted on Monday will be due on Wednesday at 8am, Tuesday: Thursday, Wednesday: Friday, etc. No questions will be posted on Saturdays and Sundays). Your responses will be graded on length but mostly on content. If you have any clarifying questions on the course materials and readings you can post those as well. I will respond with a written response to those questions.

Chapter Assignments: In addition to your daily participation on the discussion board, I will also post a series of comprehension questions that will directly test your understanding of the assigned textbook chapter for that day. These questions can be multiple choice, fill in the blank as well as short answer. These questions will be graded for accuracy as the answers are objective and can be found in your textbook. The chapter assignments will be posted by 8AM on each class day. Your responses to these questions must be completed within 24 hours of my initial posting (questions posted on Monday will be due on Tuesday at 8am, etc.).

Exams: The midterm exam will cover all material from the beginning of the course, while the final exam will cover all material after the midterm exam. Exams will be posted at 8 am on the days listed below. You will take all exams on ELMS/Canvas and they will be time limited (120 minutes). You will have three days to complete the exams. The exams are open-book but you may not use any other materials other than your textbook and the assigned readings. You will not have enough time to look up each answer, so the open book policy may not be that beneficial to you. The open book policy is only helpful if you have been completing your assigned readings every day. The exam will consist of a number of multiple choice questions and two written response essays. All questions will come from the assigned readings.

Grades

A: 97-100 A+, 93-96 A, 90-92 A-
B: 87-89 B+, 84-86 B, 80-83 B-
C: 77-79 C+, 74-76 C, 70-73 C-
D: 67-69 D+, 64-66 D, 60-63 D
F: 59 and below

Required Readings

All other supplementary materials will be made available to students on ELMS.

Student Expectations
1. Because this is an online course, grades will be based entirely on written work and performance on exams. Students are expected to answer each set of questions covering the textbook reading as well as provide thoughtful and meaningful discussion posts as well (see end of syllabus for more details on the discussion board).

2. Access to the course page can be found on ELMS. For any questions please contact the helpdesk at www.helpdesk.umd.edu.

3. The due dates that follow in the course calendar will not change. Late work will be penalized 5 points for each day beyond the due date. If there are any conflicts with a due date due to a family or medical emergency, please notify me within 24 hours. I do reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus as need be.

4. If you are registered with Disability Support Services (DSS) and require any special accommodations, please notify me immediately. Your DSS accommodation form is due by the second day of class.

5. Because this is a course on politics, disagreements will most likely occur. All students are expected to be respectful at all times. Lewd comments, profanity and personal attacks are never acceptable and will be removed from the discussion board immediately.

Academic Honesty
The University expects all students to adhere to accepted norms of intellectual honesty in their academic work. It is your responsibility to refrain from plagiarism,
cheating and generally dishonest behavior. Any form of plagiarism, cheating or collusion will result in failure of the course. The official University honor code policy is located at: http://www.shc.umd.edu/SHC/HonorPledgeInformation.aspx.

Course Schedule

Unit I: Conceptual and Constitutional Foundations of American Government

Jan 4: The Constitution
Kernell et al. Chapter 1 and Chapter 2
“The Anti Federalist Papers” & “The Federalist Papers #1,10,15” (Available on ELMS)

Jan 5: Federalism
Kernell et al. Chapter 3
Peterson: “The Price of Federalism” (Available on ELMS)

Jan 6: Civil Liberties
Kernell et al. Chapter 5

Jan 7: Civil Rights
Kernell et al. Chapter 4

Unit II: Institutions of American Government

Jan 8: Congress
Kernell et al. Chapter 6
Mayhew: “Congress: The Electoral Connection” (Available on ELMS)

Jan 11: The Presidency
Kernell et al. Chapter 7
Kernell: "Going Public” (Available on ELMS)
Jan 12: The Bureaucracy

Kernell et al. Chapter 8
Wilson: "Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It" (Available on ELMS)

Jan 13: The Judiciary

Kernell et al. Chapter 9
Rosenberg: "The Hollow Hope" (Available on ELMS)

Midterm Exam Posted: must be completed on Saturday Jan. 16 by 8:00am.

Jan 14: Political Parties

Kernell et al. Chapter 12
Aldrich: "Why Parties?" (Available on ELMS)

Jan 15: Interest Groups

Kernell et al. Chapter 13
Schattschneider: "The Semi-Sovereign People" (Available on ELMS)

Unit III: Political Behavior and the Mass Public

Jan 18: Voting and Political Participation

Kernell et al. Chapter 11

Jan 19: Campaigns and Elections

Kernell et al. Chapter 11
Jan 20: The Media
Kernell et al. Chapter 14
Patterson: “Out of Order” (Available on ELMS)

Jan 21: Public Opinion
Kernell et al. Chapter 10

Jan 22: Public Policy
Kernell et al. Chapter 15

Final Exam Posted: must be completed by Monday Jan. 25 at 8:00am.

GVPT 170 Winter Term 2016 Discussion Board Guidelines

Class participation is an important aspect of this course. Students are required to offer comments, questions, and replies to the discussion question as well as to classmate postings. Students are expected to actively participate in EACH discussion throughout the term. The faculty role is as an observer and facilitator. I will be reading all messages and I will participate in the discussion as appropriate. You will receive points based on the guidelines listed in the syllabus and for content. The criteria below should give you an idea of what I’m looking for when it comes to content. Your final participation grade will be determined by averaging the number of points that you receive each day during the term. Your average score will correspond to a grade based off of a scale that I have determined.

“A” Discussion 4 points: Distinguished/Outstanding Students earning an “A” for discussion activities have participated 2 or more times during the 48 hour period and have posted outstanding information.

“A” discussion postings:
• are made in time for others to read and respond
• deliver information that is full of thought, insight, and analysis
• make connections to previous or current content or to real-life situations
• contain rich and fully developed new ideas, connections, or applications; follows directions in regards to length
“B” Discussion 3 points: Proficient Students earning a “B” for discussion activities have participated at least 2 times during the 48 hour period and have posted proficient information.

“B” discussion postings:
• are made in time for others to read and respond
• deliver information that shows that thought, insight, and analysis have taken place
• make connections to previous or current content or to real-life situations, but the connections are not really clear or are too obvious
• contain new ideas, connections, or applications, but they may lack depth and/or detail; follows directions in regards to length

“C” Discussion 2 points: Students earning a “C” for discussion activities have participated at least 1 time during the 48 hour period and have posted basic information.

“C” discussion postings:
• are not made in time for others to read and respond
• are generally competent, but the actual information they deliver seems thin and commonplace
• make limited, if any, connections, and those are often cast in the form of vague generalities
• contain few, if any, new ideas or applications; often are a rehashing or summary of other comments; does not follow directions in regards to length

“D-F” Discussion 1 point: Below Expectations Students earning a “D-F” for discussion activities have participated at least 1 time during the 48 hour period and have posted information that was below expectations.

“D-F” discussion postings:
• may not all be made in time for others to read and respond
• are rudimentary and superficial; there is no evidence of insight or analysis
• contribute no new ideas, connections, or applications
• may be completely off topic; does not follow directions in regards to length

No participation in a discussion board activity will result in a zero for that activity.