PLSC 112 – American Government – Fall 2016

Dr. Edward Sidlow
Holly Groszko – Teaching Assistant

REQUIRED TEXTS: The following book is required reading in this course:

Sidlow, Edward & Hensch, Beth. 2015. GOVT
ISBN: 978-1285871110
Book Only – The CourseMate Access Code is NOT Required

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COURSE DESCRIPTION & PURPOSE:
This course is designed as an introduction to the American political system. We will focus on the Constitution, broad theories of American government, the electoral process, and interest groups as well as the three branches of the federal government and the development of public policy. American government can be viewed as a complex game in which various actors engage in political battles within various arenas in order to determine who gives what to whom and why. Specifically, we will study how governmental structures, the political preferences of individuals/groups, and historical/philosophical forces influence who wins and loses the game of American politics.

As we study American government, certain pivotal questions will be raised: 1) How democratic is the American republic? 2) Why does the government “fail” to act quickly and efficiently when dealing with policy problems? (Is this a bad thing?); and 3) Is major change in the political system possible and/or desirable?

In addition to the book noted above, students are expected to read a daily newspaper and to frequently watch a national news program. The New York Times offers a nice discount program for college and university students; details can be found at nytimes.com/student or by phone, 1-888-nyt-coll (698-2655).

Responses to the assignments should be well thought out and include support from the resources provided, not simply a reiteration of what you read in the text and lectures. As such, this course requires a great deal of writing. There are a number of resources available to students for whom writing is not a strong subject – including the EMU Writing Center and the Holman Learning Center.

We cannot overstate the importance of knowing the rules and political dynamics of the governmental process. Government influences almost every aspect of life by defining individual rights and liberties, establishing economic regulations, instituting tax and spending programs, conducting foreign policy, and enacting social-welfare programs. In fact, it is difficult to think of an area of life in which the government is not a factor.
It is extremely important that you read through all of the information here. You will also receive extra credit points by completing a simple quiz based on the syllabus information.

**COURSE OUTCOMES:**
Some of the outcomes that students can expect to gain from this course are:

- Understand and compare formal and informal social and political structures, organizations, and institutions.
- Explore and understand power relationships and the impact of social change on different groups and on society in general.
- Develop an appreciation of different perspectives on contemporary issues, institutions, or structures.
- Use basic social scientific research techniques to examine and present information in a clear and concise manner.

Please be sure to make note of all of the due dates (which are posted in at least 3 areas of the course) and plan accordingly. Do not wait until the last minute to complete the assignments if possible. Poor planning and procrastination will not be considered valid excuses for missing a due date.

**STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES:**
First and foremost, you will need to use a computer with a stable Internet connection...the university has several computer labs and if you are off campus, your local library should have computers to use if your home connection is unstable. **Not having an Internet connection available will not be considered a valid excuse for not completing an assignment.** In addition, please also remember that having technical problems with an exam late on the day that an exam is due will not leave you with enough time to resolve the issue and regain access to the exam, so it is best to not wait until the last minute to complete assignments, especially exams.

You must check your university e-mail frequently. We recommend that you DO NOT have your emich account e-mail forwarded to the address that you may use regularly, because we have experienced interface problems in the past. We will send you handouts and assignments as well as any necessary updates and comments to your emich account. Not checking your e-mail in time to receive these will not be considered a valid reason for not completing assignments.

Students are required to take the examinations and turn in written work as well as assignments on the dates given in the course outline. When you open an assignment you may see two different dates, an ACCESS date and a DUE date. The dates that students are able to ACCESS an assignment will, at times, extend beyond that assignment’s DUE date. This does NOT extend the DUE date, however.

*Due dates are listed in several areas. Because you are not required to come to lectures, the course contains numerous written exercises designed to provide you with information that goes beyond the text. These exercises will be based on the textbook, lecture slides, Web links and
video links found throughout the course. While your grade on these assignments will not be based on grammar and spelling, it is expected that students will proof read and spell check responses before submitting them. This is a university course and the expectation is that students will submit university-level work. You may want to draft your responses in a Word document to upload to the course. This can serve several purposes: 1) You will be able to use the spelling and grammar check; 2) You will be able to save your response on your computer, in the event that there is a technical problem, you will have the work saved.

The exams will have a mixture of multiple choice, true & false and short answer/essay questions. The length of the exams are determined by the number of chapters in the section. It is your responsibility to establish and maintain a stable connection to the Internet during exams, as they can be accessed only one time. If you do experience technical difficulties, you must contact tech support and one of the instructors as soon as possible and we will try to accommodate you. If you do not let us know right away, though, we will be unable to help you. Additionally, if you experience a technical issue that prevents you from completing an exam, you will have to contact tech support to have the problem documented and corrected before being allowed to re-access the exam.

The assignments and quizzes will be available for working ahead a bit, but it is not recommended that you work too far ahead. Exercises can be accessed multiple times up to the due dates but the exams and the quizzes will only be accessible one time. Failure to complete these assignments in a timely fashion will have a serious impact on your grade. You are responsible for knowing what you have to do and by when it must be done. This is sometimes a challenge, and online learning is not for everyone. If you run into problems or find that you are having difficulty keeping up, please let us know so that we can help you before it becomes an insurmountable problem.

We do understand that emergency situations may arise which prevent students from completing assignments on time. These will be dealt with on an individual basis. As a general rule, late assignments will not be accepted. Students may be required to show proof of circumstances preventing the completion of an assignment on time.

We do also strongly recommend reading the text and lecture slides prior to completing the assignments. The textbook is required for this course.
ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:

In addition to completing the required assignments on time, you will be required to answer any and all questions in your own words. Cutting and pasting answers from any source, without proper citation, is a form of plagiarism and will not be accepted. Any assignments that are completed in this way, including exams, will NOT be given any credit and can result in disciplinary action by the university. Furthermore, answers which are simply copied from any source, even with proper citation, will not receive credit. Our goal is to help you learn, rather than have you simply spend money on a textbook to copy from.

Please see the university's policy on plagiarism and academic dishonesty at http://www.emich.edu/policies/print.php?id=124. Judicial Services defines plagiarism as "Plagiarism - deliberate and knowing use of someone else’s work or ideas as one’s own. Examples of plagiarism are: quoting a source verbatim, or paraphrasing text from a given source, without properly citing the source; turning in a research paper that was written by someone else; or in any other way passing off someone else’s work as one’s own; or failing to give credit for ideas or materials taken from someone else."

We do not recognize the Web site "wikipedia.org" as a valid scholarly source. Please do not use this as a source for information. There are Web links provided in the assignments and the ‘Webliography’ as well as numerous videos, lecture slides, podcasts and of course, the textbook. These should always be your primary sources for information when completing the assignments.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT:

Instructors are completely unable to resolve technical problems. The Canvas system provides a number of ways to find resolution to a technical problem. Click on the “Help” link at the very top right of the page to access Live Chat, Support Hotline, FAQ, etc. If you experience any technical problems that prevent you from completing an assignment or exam, you MUST contact tech support and one of us ASAP in order to receive any extension. Tech Support is available 24/7. These issues will be dealt with on an individual basis and no student is guaranteed an extension. Please note that poor planning is never an excuse for not completing an assignment, so it is best to not wait until the last minute to complete assignments, especially exams.
Grades will be based on:

35% Five (5) Exams
25% Chapter Essays & Quizzes
40% Final Essay

Grading Scale:

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<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>100 – 94%</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>93 – 90%</td>
<td>A-</td>
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<td>89 – 86%</td>
<td>B+</td>
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<td>85 – 83%</td>
<td>B</td>
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<td>82 – 80%</td>
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<td>75 – 73%</td>
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<td>72 – 70%</td>
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COURSE SCHEDULE: We will follow this outline:

Part I – The Foundations of American Democracy
Due September 19

Chapter 1
Essay, Chapter Quiz

Chapter 2
Essay, Chapter Quiz

Chapter 3
Essay, Chapter Quiz

Part I Exam
Available September 15 - 20

Part II – Our Liberties and Rights
Due September 30

Chapter 4
Essay, Chapter Quiz

Chapter 5
Essay, Chapter Quiz

Part II Exam
Available September 29 – October 1

Part III – The Politics of Democracy
Due November 9

Chapter 6
Chapter Quiz

Chapter 7
Essay, Chapter Quiz

Chapter 8
Essay, Chapter Quiz

Chapter 9
Essay, Chapter Quiz

Chapter 10
Essay, Chapter Quiz

Part III Exam
Available November 3 - 10

Part IV – Institutions
Due December 9

Chapter 11
Essay, Chapter Quiz

Chapter 12
Essay, Chapter Quiz

Chapter 13
Essay, Chapter Quiz

Chapter 14
Essay, Chapter Quiz

Part IV Exam
Available December 1 - 10
Part V – Public Policy

Due December 18

Chapter 15
   Essay, Chapter Quiz

Chapter 16
   Essay, Chapter Quiz

Part V Exam
   Available December 15 - 19

Final Essay

Due December 20

We look forward to working with you this semester!