American Government

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PLSC 112
Office Hours: M and W 11am-Noon
Tuesday, 5 – 6pm in Livonia
Class: M-W 9:30-10:45am

Course Objectives:
The objectives of the course are to familiarize students with the structure and operation of the American system of government and enable students to function as knowledgeable "citizens" in a democratic society. Particular emphasis this term will be put on the constitutional concepts and principles underlying the US political system, and a comparison of our system with other major political systems throughout the world as well as our own state and local political systems.

This course satisfies Area IV of EMU’s General Education requirements (Knowledge of the Disciplines: Social Science). Students are expected to accomplish the following in these classes:

• Acquire an understanding of social science methods and how they are used to engage in the systematic study of society and culture.
• 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 interpretations of contemporary issues, institutions, or structures.
• Use social science methods and content to interpret and analyze data and reports in the media and to make informed decisions regarding local, national, and international issues.
• Use basic social scientific research techniques to examine and present information in a clear and concise manner.
• Understand the relation between qualitative and quantitative research.

Course Materials:
I have ordered copies of GOVT 5, the most recent edition of the Brief Edition of the acclaimed American Government textbook by my colleagues Edward Sidlow and Beth Henschen (Wadsworth, 2014), through local bookstores, and as will be apparent I have used that text to structure the outline for the course (readings noted in the outline as Chapter numbers).

I will also periodically post additional articles on the class website and other materials for class (study guides, powerpoint slides, etc.) as appropriate. Since discussions of governments are in the news every day, I would encourage you to read a daily or weekly newspaper and share any interesting issues or insights with the class (these too are fair game on exams). Don't be afraid to ask questions or seek clarification on anything that is read or discussed in class. Class attendance is expected and participation is encouraged; indeed, past experience suggests a direct correlation between class attendance and grades.
Class Expectations and Grading:
Grading will be based on three non-cumulative exams during the term; exams are a mix of multiple choice and short answer/essay in nature and cover readings as well as classroom discussion (Exam 1 = 30% and Exam 2 and 3 = 35% each). Reading assignments should be completed in advance of class. I will also provide a Study Guide for each exam to highlight specific terms, concepts and questions as a means for improving your understanding of the material and to assist you in preparing for tests. Exam dates noted on the outline are approximate; students are responsible for completing exams when given. Make-up exams will be given only under exceptional circumstances, and must be approved in advance.

The course will follow a lecture-discussion format generally reflecting the outline of topics and readings below. Readings should be completed prior to class discussion, and regular attendance is expected. Based on past experience, attendance is highly correlated with success in the course. Reading topics and assignments listed are subject to change, but if that becomes necessary I will try to give you ample notice.

At times during the course we will be discussing issues that prompt strong feelings; however, discussions should be civil, and disagreements should be based on evidence and logic, and not personal. My job is to organize material, highlight and extend (but not replace) your reading, and get you to think. Getting you to think often means that I will argue positions that are not my own.

Unless authorized, electronics/digital devices (e.g., cell phones, laptops) cannot be used during class; turn them off and stow them beneath your seat once class begins. Note taking is easy since on most occasions I post my outlines or handouts ahead of classes. If you print the notes, bring them to class, and expand on them, then your subsequent retyping becomes your first careful review.

EMU Writing Support:
The University Writing Center (115 Halle Library; 487-0694) offers one-to-one writing consulting for both undergraduate and graduate students. Students can make appointments or drop in between the hours of 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. Mondays through Thursdays and from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Fridays. Students should bring a draft of what they’re working on and their assignment sheet. The UWC opens for the Fall 2013 semester on Monday, September 9 and will close on Thursday, December 12.

The UWC also offers small group workshops on various topics related to writing (e.g., Organizing Your Writing; Incorporating Evidence; Revising Your Writing; Conquering Commas; Using APA or MLA). Workshops are offered at different times in the UWC. Visit the UWC page (http://www.emich.edu/uwc) to see our workshop calendar. To register for a workshop, click the link from the UWC page for the type of workshop you wish to attend.

The UWC also has several satellite sites across campus. These satellites provide writing support to students within the various colleges. For more information about our satellite locations and hours, visit the UWC web site: http://www.emich.edu/uwc.

The Academic Projects Center (116 Halle Library) also offers one-to-one writing consulting for students, in addition to consulting on research and technology-related issues. The APC is open 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays through Thursdays for drop-in consultations. Additional information about the APC can be found at http://www.emich.edu/apc. Students visiting the Academic Projects Center or any of the satellites of the University Writing Center should also bring with them a draft of what they’re working on and their assignment sheet.
**Academic Integrity:**
Academic dishonesty, including all forms of cheating and/or plagiarism, will not be tolerated in this class. Penalties for an act of academic dishonesty may range from receiving a failing grade for a particular assignment to receiving a failing grade for the entire course. In addition, you may be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Services for discipline that can result in either a suspension or permanent dismissal. The **Student Conduct Code** contains detailed definitions of what constitutes academic dishonesty, and it can be accessed online at [www.emich.edu/sjs](http://www.emich.edu/sjs).

**Classroom Management Issues:**
Students are expected to abide by the **Student Conduct Code** and assist in creating an environment that is conducive to learning and protects the rights of all members of the University community. Incivility and disruptive behavior will not be tolerated and may result in a request to leave class and referral to the Office of Student Services (SJS) for discipline. Examples of inappropriate classroom conduct include repeatedly arriving late to class, using a cellular phone, or talking while others are speaking.

**Students with Disabilities:**
If you wish to be accommodated for your disability EMU Board of Regents policy #8.3 requires that you first register with the Access Services Office (ASO) in room 203 King Hall. You may contact ASO by telephone at (734) 487-2470. Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with ASO promptly as you will only be accommodated from the date you register with them forward. No retroactive accommodations are possible.

**Course Outline:** Dates and Topics are subject to change as we proceed through the term

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Topic and Assignment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9/9</td>
<td>Review of course syllabus, expectations; The Shepherd’s Story (The Tragedy of the Commons) — why we need government, what is it, what is politics?</td>
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<td>9/14-16</td>
<td>The nature of governing and government; politics, public policy, political systems. The Constitution and the Declaration of Independence; Chapter 1-2; Appendix, Federalist Papers</td>
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<td>9/17</td>
<td>Last Date for 100% tuition refund</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/21-23</td>
<td>Federalism and intergovernmental relations; unitary and federal systems The assignment of governmental authority. Chapter 3; Federalism 1 &amp; 2</td>
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<td>9/23</td>
<td>Undergraduate and graduate applications due for December 15 processing</td>
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<td>10/2</td>
<td>Last date for 50% tuition refund</td>
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<td>10/5</td>
<td>EXAM 1</td>
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10/7/12/19  
Political parties and interest groups. Political parties; party functions; nature of the party system; party organization; nomination and campaign processes. Pressure groups; nature, role and impact of interest groups; sources of influence; distinguished from political parties. Chapters 6-7.  
**Political Parties and Interest Groups**

10/19/21/26/28  
Campaigns, elections and political participation. Political participation and elections; state and national requirements governing elections; voting procedures and patterns across state and local units; who votes, why and why not? Direct democracy techniques—why do we have them, what are the consequences? Chapter 8-9; **Political Participation and Elections**

11/2  
**EXAM 2**

11/4/9/11/18  
The Congress. Legislative bodies; the institution, role, authority and power; representative government—what does that mean? Structure, process and conflict in legislative decision-making—why it is so hard to make law. Chapter 11

11/16  
No class, I am out of town

11/18/23/30  
The Presidency and the bureaucracy. The executive institution, role, authority and power variations; comparing national, state and local chief executives; nature and role of bureaucratic agencies; civil service; questions of accountability; reinventing government. Chapter 12-13

*No class on 11/25*  
*Eve of Thanksgiving, Thanksgiving Day, 11/28/13*

12/2/7/9  
The Judiciary. The Courts and the judicial process; typical court system; selection of judges; the nature of law; judicial policy-making. Chapter 14

12/14  
Final review, catching up on things we missed

12/18  
**FINAL EXAM – 9:00 - 10:30 a.m.**