

American Government
CRN 12928
PLSC 112
Fall 2016
Pray Harrold #323
MW 11-12:15 pm

Instructor: Barbara Patrick, Ph.D.

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Office Hours: 12:30-4:00pm T; 12:30pm-2pm MW or by appointment

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COURSE OBJECTIVE:

This course explores the structure and undercurrents of American government by providing an introduction to the ideas and institutions that shape politics in the United States. We will focus our analysis on three major areas: the Constitution and the debates of the founding era, the institutions of modern American government, and the political behavior of the American mass public. We will study the strategies, roles, and limitations of both governmental elites and ordinary citizens, with particular emphasis on how they communicate and interact within the constitutional “rules of the game” to promote or inhibit the achievement of public goods. Ultimately, the goal of this course is to help each member of the class arrive at a deeper, more comprehensive understanding of the forces that shape American government and politics, so that he or she may be both a more discerning student and critic of the system and a more informed and reflective participant in it.

TEXTBOOK:

Basics of American Politics, 14th Edition, Pearson Publishing by: Gary Wasserman

Class Attendance and Etiquette:

Class attendance is very important. You have 2 absences, after the second absence your grade will be lowered ½ letter per day you have an unexcused absences. Repetitive late arrivals can also result in an absence. If you arrive late or must leave early it is your responsibility to inform me. Also it is very important that you arrive on time on exam days. If you arrive after the first student completing the exam has left the room, you will not be allowed to complete the exam. Make-up exams are only given with adequate documentation at the end of the semester. Examples of excusable and limited circumstances under make ups are permitted include: travel to represent the University, serious documented illness, or a real family emergency. Class attendance on days that student present days is also very important. Failure to appear on present days without an excused absence will result in a grade deduction. Late arrivals on presentation days will also affect your presentation grade.

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.

Academic Integrity:

Academic dishonesty, including all forms of cheating and plagiarism, will not be tolerated. Penalties for an act of 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 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

GRADING SCALE:

Semester Project and Presentation: 25%

Political Engagement Assignments: 10%

Class Participation: 5%

Test One: 20%

Test Two: 20%

Test Three: 20%

Political Engagement/The Presidential Election Process

In addition to reading the course material, you will be required to write two summary documents over the course of the semester that ask you to analyze, engage in, and demonstrate and understanding of the 2016 Presidential Election Process. The summary discussion must incorporate pertinent policy issues essential to the American political process. The write up must be 2 to 3 paragraphs long. This will translate into 200 to 400 words. The first paragraph should summarize the issue. The second paragraph should demonstrate that you can place the issue within the context of the course material. Your write up must be checked for grammar and spelling.

Semester Project

This project requires students to serve as investigative team that examine different American government and public policy issues. They will study the issue, examine previous responses, and submit research that adequately addresses the problem. Grading is based on the ability to appropriately analyze the issue and to include relevant literature.

Students will be required to present their research to the class as well as submit a written paper to the instructor. The formal presentation of your analysis will count as 10% of your grade. The visual elements of your presentation will account for 5%. The finished product or written paper will account for 10% of your overall grade. The paper should present a well-established

argument with documented sources. More and higher quality citations are worthy of higher grades. Papers should highlight the long term political and administrative implications of policies. It should include the use of scholarly sources. It should be 10 to 15 pages in length. **Out of fairness to all students, I will not accept late assignments.** Presentation will take place in a debate type format. Students will be assigned to groups or team during the first class session and will be afforded class to work with their teammate on the assignment.

I will allow students time to work on summer projects during class.

A list of possible topics is included below.

Topics:

- *Downsizing the Government and Contracting Out Public Services
- *Federalism and the Government's Response to Hurricane Katrina: Understandable/vs. Inadequate
- *Immigration Policy (Path to Citizen or Stringent Policies)
- *Teaching Homosexuality in School
- *Police Office Accountability Reforms and the Use of Body Cameras (The Positives and Negatives)
- *Michigan Emergency Manager System (Effective/Efficient Administration or Curtailing Democracy)
- *America's Aging Population (Addressing Health/Medicare and Retirement Pensions)
- *E-Government (How can the government use technology to be more efficient; what are the drawbacks)
- *Race to the Top and No Child Left Behind: Progressive Federalism vs. Damaging Performance Policy
- *The Flint Water Crisis: Assessing the breakdown of government

COURSE OUTLINE

Week One (September 7, 2016)

Wednesday- Introduction

Week Two (September 12-14, 2016)

Monday-Chapter 1 What is Politics?

Wednesday-Chapter 2 The Constitution: Rules of the Game

Week Three (September 19-21, 2016)

Monday-Chapter 2 The Constitution: Rules of the Game...continued....

Wednesday-Chapter 3 The Executive Branch: The President and the Bureaucracy

Week Four (September 26-28, 2016)

Monday-Chapter 3 The Executive Branch: The President and the Bureaucracy...continued...
Wednesday-Research Paper Presentation (Expectations)

Week Five (October 3-5, 2016)

Monday- Chapter 4 The Legislative Branch: Congress
Wednesday-Test One

Week Six (October 10-12, 2016)

Work on Semester Project

Week Seven (October 17-19, 2016)

Monday-Chapter 4 The Legislative Branch: Congress...continued...
Wednesday-Chapter 5 The Judicial Branch: The Supreme Court and Federal Court System

Week Eight (October 24-26, 2016)

Monday-Chapter 5 The Judicial Branch: The Supreme Court and Federal Court System...continued...
Wednesday-Chapter 6 Civil Rights and Liberties: Protecting the Players

Week Nine (October 31-November 2, 2016)

Monday-Chapter 7 Voters and Political Parties
Wednesday-Test Two

Week Ten (November 7-9, 2016)

Monday-Chapter 7 Voters and Political Parties
Wednesday-Chapter 8 Interest Groups and the Media

Week Eleven (November 14-16, 2016)

Monday-Research Day
Wednesday- Chapter 9 Who Wins, Who Loses: Pluralism vs. Elitism

Week Twelve (November 21-23, 2016)

Monday- Chapter 9 Who Wins, Who Loses: Pluralism vs. Elitism
Wednesday- Holiday

Week Thirteen (November 28-30, 2016)

Monday-Presentation
Wednesday- Presentation Day

Week Fourteen (December 5-7, 2016)

Monday-Presentation Day

Wednesday-Presentation Day

Week Fifteen (December 11-14, 2016)

Monday-Review Day

The instructor reserves the right to amend the syllabus.