

PLSC 112 (CRN 10040)
Introduction to American Government
Eastern Michigan University, Fall 2013
T & TH 3:30-4:45, Pray-Harrold Room 420

Professor Laverty (LLaverty@emich.edu)

Office Hours (in 601P Pray-Harrold):

Mondays & Wednesdays: 11:00-12:00

Tuesdays & Thursdays: 2:00-3:00

And by appointment at other times

COURSE THEMES AND OBJECTIVES

In this class we will examine the connections between citizenship and power in the United States. You will have an opportunity to develop your own political beliefs, as well as explore ways to articulate those beliefs within the context of our political system. Upon successful completion of this course you will have developed a basic understanding of how the American government functions, why it sometimes does not function the way you might like it to, and what your options are when that happens.

GENERAL EDUCATION STATEMENT

This class counts toward the “Knowledge of the Disciplines: Social Science” general education requirement. Please refer to the handout titled “General Education Statement” posted on our EMU Online page for details regarding learning objectives and outcomes for this course.

MY CONTACT INFORMATION

I am on campus Monday through Thursday. I encourage you to stop by and introduce yourself and ask questions during my office hours, or to make an appointment if my office hours are not convenient for you. *Email is a very good way to contact me* if you have questions outside of class or office hours. I check email frequently and will respond as soon as possible to your question.

Please include your first and last name and the course in your email. Doing this will likely result in a quicker and more helpful response. Generally I do not check email before 8:00am or after 9:00pm, or on weekends.

Email is a better way to reach me than by phone. If you do call and I'm not there, you can leave a message with our office staff and I will receive it the next time I am in the office. Please do NOT leave me a voice mail.

COURSE COMMUNICATION

I use EMU-Online to post various documents, assignments, discussion questions, and to provide you with other course-related information throughout the semester. I will also be sending out occasional emails to the entire class using the Emich email system. You are expected to check the class EMU-Online page and your Emich email every day. If you are not familiar with the Emich and EMU-Online systems, please ask for help. *Please note that I do not accept assignments via email.*

TEXTBOOK & READING ASSIGNMENTS

The following required textbook is available for purchase at the Eastern Michigan University bookstore, as well as other campus-area bookstores. You may choose to order your book online through a variety of

sites, but **be certain that you are getting the correct edition of the book you actually need (check the ISBN).**

- Barbour, Christine and J. Wright. (2012) Keeping the Republic: Power and Citizenship in American Politics (5th Brief Edition). Washington, DC. CQ Press. ISBN-13: 9781452220154
- NY Times newspaper
- Additional required readings will be posted on EMU-Online and/or announced in class.

If you experience any problems getting the textbook or accessing the additional readings, please let me know right away. You will not do well in this course if you don't have access to the reading material.

GRADES

As a professional student, you are ultimately responsible for your own success. If you are having difficulty, or think that you might have difficulty, it is your responsibility to contact me as soon as possible. I am here to help you, but I can't read your mind. Grades do not come from out of the blue, and I do not just "give" them out; you must earn your grade. I will be very pleased to help you by talking about the material, answering your questions, and providing study suggestions, among other things.

Final grades in this course are based on a 400 point scale and will be assigned according to the scale given below. There is no curve in this class, but I do take into consideration consistent improvements during the semester and I reserve the right to raise final grades where such improvement is shown.

Components of your Final Grade

3 Exams (100 points each) = 300 points

8 Quizzes (10 points each – I will drop your lowest quiz) = 70 points

Participation and Attendance = 30 points

Grading Scale

Final grades in this course are based on a total of 400 points and will be assigned according to the scale given below.

GRADING SCALE:

A = 372+ points

A- = 360-371 points

B+ = 348-359 points

B = 332-347 points

B- = 320-331 points

C+ = 308-319 points

C = 292-307 points

C- = 280-291 points

D+ = 268-279 points

D = 252-267 points

D- = 240-251 points

F = 0-239 points

PARTICIPATION & ATTENDANCE

Participation and attendance matter. You will have frequent opportunities to earn participation points in class. These will not be announced in advance and cannot be made up, if missed. Students who attend class regularly, who prepare for class by doing the assigned readings, and who participate in class discussions and exercises generally perform much better on exams. What's more, active students tend to enjoy class a lot more than those who only show up occasionally, arrive unprepared, and rarely participate.

Showing up is an important part of the game, but it isn't the only thing that matters. When you come to class, plan to participate. **I reserve the right to count as absent and/or dismiss anyone who arrives late or leaves early, sleeps during class, engages in non-course-related work or discussion, or disrupts the classroom environment.** This includes texting, surfing the web, playing online games, reading your email, checking facebook, etc. These types of activities are a distraction to you, to me, and to your fellow students.

QUIZZES

There will be eight take-home quizzes during the semester, each worth 10 points. Quizzes are designed to encourage you to keep up with the assigned reading material, and to gauge how well you understand the material. Therefore, you should do the assigned reading BEFORE you complete the quizzes. I will drop your lowest quiz grade.

EXAMS

There will be three exams in this course. Exams will be a mix of multiple choice and short answer/essay questions. Questions will be drawn from the assigned readings, lecture, discussions, and current events. The final exam may include a comprehensive section covering material discussed throughout the course.

If you arrive late to an exam, you will only be admitted if none of your classmates have already turned in their exams. Students who begin an exam late will not be granted additional time beyond the end of the regular exam period.

MAKE-UP EXAM POLICY

Students who must miss an exam for any reason and who wish to take a make-up are required to inform me BEFORE the exam is given. Students who do not make arrangements with me BEFORE the exam is given may be expected to have proof that they were immobilized in a body cast, with no friends or family nearby who could have called or emailed me. Except in such truly extraordinary circumstances, you will not be able to take a make-up if you do not let me know ahead of time.

ALL MAKE-UP EXAMS WILL BE ESSAY FORMAT. I reserve the right to ask different questions on make-up exams.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS

Late quizzes will be penalized by 5 points per class day. For example: if you turn in a quiz one class day late, the maximum number of points available to you will be five out of ten. No credit will be given for late extra-credit assignments.

QUALITY EXPECTATIONS

I expect college-level work. Among other things this means you need to type, proof-read, and spell check your work, and turn it in on time in an appropriate format. Assignments that fail to meet these criteria will be returned to you ungraded, and will be considered late until these problems are rectified and the assignment is turned in again. ***It is your responsibility to turn in computer-printed, stapled, hard copies of all assignments on time. Hand-written or emailed assignments will not be accepted. Assignments handed in after I collect them in class may be considered late.***

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

In general, here is what I expect of you.

- **Plan to participate.** Take an active role in your own education. That's the point of being here, right?
- **When you are in class, focus on this class.** There is no point in you physically going to class if you do not intend to be there mentally, too.

- **Ask for help.** If you have questions or need help, ask! In addition to your professors, there are many free support services available on campus.
- **Get to know your classmates.** Help each other when possible and appropriate. This is a valuable part of the college experience.
- **Turn in college-level work.** See the statement about “QUALITY EXPECTATIONS” in this syllabus. Turn in your final draft, not your first draft!
- **Take academic integrity seriously.** In a nutshell, don’t cheat. You’ll probably get caught. See section on “ACADEMIC INTEGRITY” in this syllabus. Even if you don’t get caught, you will be short-changing yourself. I take this very seriously and I hope you do, too.
- **Be courteous.** Especially in the realm of politics, people often hold very different opinions. You do not have to agree, but you must treat others with respect. Collegiality is expected and incivility will not be tolerated.
- **If you use a laptop or mobile device during class,** it is expected that you will be using it for purposes directly related to the class period (like taking lecture notes). Students who choose to use laptops or mobile devices for other reasons during class time may be asked to turn them off and/or to cease bringing them to class. Failure to abide by any such request may result in a referral to the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards.
- **Students who persistently disrupt class** will be asked to leave and may be referred to the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards for disciplinary action.

In general, here is what you can expect of me and of this class.

- **Expect me to be even-handed.** Of course I have my own political views, which I will share from time to time. I may also play devil’s advocate and espouse other points of view. I will provide you with a wide range of readings, including some that challenge conventional wisdom and some with which you may strongly disagree. However, *I do not grade or otherwise evaluate students on the basis of ideology.* It is not my job to teach you to mimic my ideas, views, and values; it is my job to help you acquire the tools and background knowledge with which you can develop your own political identity and understand other people’s views.
- **Expect me to answer your emails promptly.** I check email on a regular basis and will answer you as soon as possible. Please include your first and last name, and the course, in your email so that I can identify you and answer more quickly. Please also keep in mind that I teach other classes, have meetings, eat, sleep, commute, etc., too. (Just like you!) If you don’t get an immediate answer, it is probably for one of those reasons. I don’t usually check email between 9pm and 8am, or on weekends.
- **Expect courteous and professional treatment from me and from your classmates.** If there are any issues that you are concerned about, or anything that makes learning difficult for you in this class, I strongly encourage you to talk with me privately, either during office hours or via email.
- **Expect me to work with you in a reasonable manner regarding learning disabilities, religious observation, extended illnesses, and other true emergency situations.** If these issues impact you, please let me know as soon as possible. I may require documentation such as a letter from the EMU Students with Disabilities Office or the EMU Office of the Ombudsman, but in general, I will make every effort to work with you to construct a positive and effective learning experience in this class.
- **If you have questions about course material,** please contact me directly at LLaverty@emich.edu

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Cheating and plagiarism are unacceptable breaches of the trust that is crucial to the creation of a learning environment. At a minimum, any student found to have committed an act of academic dishonesty will receive a grade of zero on the assignment or exam in question. Students may also receive a failing grade for the entire course, as well as possible disciplinary action from the University. Please consult the [EMU](#)

[Student Conduct Code](#) for definitions of academic dishonesty, as well as procedures and punishments. You are also welcome to talk to me if you are in doubt about what constitutes academic dishonesty.

REGRADE POLICY

It is natural that two people may have occasional differences of opinion about assignment grades. In the case that this occurs in this course, I will be happy to discuss the assignment in question. The following guidelines for discussing grades have been developed to ensure that such a discussion is productive for the student and the instructor.

- I am always happy to explain any comments that I have written on a student's paper or exam. I am also happy to help students understand why they earned the grade they did, and how they might do better on similar assignments in the future.
- Students who feel that the grade recorded on their assignment is incorrect should contact me to discuss their concerns. I might ask the student to provide the assignment in question *AND* a written summary of exactly what they think they did not receive credit for, as well as why they think they should have. Students should include a reference to any material (textbook pages, lecture notes, etc.) that supports their argument.
- If students have concerns about their grades or comments on their assignments, they are expected to bring this to my attention promptly. I will not entertain requests for re-grades more than one month after the assignment was returned.
- A federal law called "Family Education Rights and Privacy Act" (FERPA) prohibits me from sharing information about any student's grades with other students or with friends and family members, without the written consent of the student in question. In other words, please don't have mom & dad email me about your grade!

HELPFUL EMU OFFICES AND LINKS

Here are several useful links to campus resources. Most of these are available to you both on the physical campus and on our virtual (online) campus. Please take advantage of them.

Help with course material, class projects, and assignments:

- **Professor Laverty's email address:** LLaverty@emich.edu
- The **Halle Library** website: <http://www.emich.edu/halle/>
- The **Holman Success Center** (tutoring and other study help) website: <http://www.emich.edu/hsc/>
- The website for the **Academic Projects Center** (helpful for writing papers and working on assignments): <http://www.emich.edu/apc/> *They are open for DROP-IN visits from 11am-5pm on Mondays-Thursdays, in Halle Library Room 116.*
- The website for the **University Writing Center** (help with writing papers): <http://www.emich.edu/uwc/> *Check out their new satellite location in Pray-Harrold Room 211, as well as Halle Library Room 115*

Help with student conduct expectations, health and disability issues, or EMU policy:

- Eastern Michigan University's **Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards** and **Student Conduct Code:** <http://www.emich.edu/studentconduct/index.html>
- Information about **University Health Services**, including **Snow Health Center and Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS):** <http://www.emich.edu/uhs/>
- Eastern Michigan University's **Disability Resource Center:** <http://www.emich.edu/drc/>
- Eastern Michigan University's **Office of the Ombudsman:** <http://www.emich.edu/ombuds/>

COURSE SCHEDULE

Please consult this schedule regularly for reading and other assignments. We will follow this schedule as closely as possible, but some changes may occur. Any changes will be announced in class and/or via EMU-Online.

PLSC 112 Reading & Assignment Schedule (Fall 2013)

Week	Topic	Reading	What's Due
Week One 9/5	Power and Citizenship in American Politics	KTR ch. 1	
Week Two 9/10 & 9/12	Power & Citizenship in American Politics Politics of the American Founding	KTR ch. 1 KTR ch. 2 (Thursday)	Quiz #1 on Thursday
Week Three 9/17 & 9/19 Constitution Day is Tuesday 9/17	Politics of the American Founding	KTR ch. 2	Quiz #2 on Thursday
Week Four 9/24 & 9/26	Federalism	KTR ch. 3	Quiz #3 on Thursday
Week Five 10/1 & 10/3	Federalism Exam #1 on Thursday	KTR ch. 3	Exam #1 on Thursday
Week Six 10/8 & 10/10	Congress	KTR ch. 6	
Week Seven 10/15 & 10/17	Congress	KTR ch. 6	Quiz #4 on Thursday
Week Eight 10/22 & 10/24	The Presidency	KTR ch. 7	Quiz #5 on Thursday
Week Nine 10/29 & 10/31	The Presidency The Judiciary	KTR ch. 7 KTR ch. 9 (Thursday)	
Week Ten 11/5 & 11/7	The Judiciary	KTR ch. 9	Quiz #6 on Tuesday
Week Eleven 11/12 & 11/14 11/12 is the last day for withdrawal from an individual course	Exam #2 on Tuesday Civil Liberties	Exam #2 KTR ch. 4 (Thursday)	Exam #2 on Tuesday
Week Twelve 11/19 & 11/21	Civil Liberties	KTR ch. 4	Quiz #7 on Thursday
Week Thirteen 11/26 NO CLASS ON THURSDAY – THANKSGIVING BREAK	Civil Liberties	KTR ch. 4	

Week Fourteen 12/3 & 12/5	Civil Rights	KTR ch. 5	Quiz #8 on Thursday
Week Fifteen 12/10 & 12/12	Civil Rights	KTR ch. 5	

Final Exam

Your final exam is scheduled for **Tuesday, December 17, at 3:00pm** in our regular classroom. ***BE ON TIME.*** To double check your exam schedule for all of your classes, please check EMU's final exam calendar, available [here](#).