

American Government
PLSC 112
Fall 2013
Marshall Rm #203
TTH 12:30-1:45 pm

Instructor: Barbara Patrick, Ph.D.

Office: Department of Political Science, Pray Harrold Hall

Office Hours: 2-4:00pm T; 12pm-4pm W 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 may be lowered. 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%
Class Participation and Assignments: 15%
Test One: 20%
Test Two: 20%
Test Three: 20%

Semester Project

This project requires students to serve as investigative task forces 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 paper 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 7 to 10 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:

- *School Safety and Arming School Administrators and Volunteer Security
- *Downsizing the Government and Contracting Out Public Services
- *Hurricane Katrina (government respond/rebuilding the MS Coast and New Orleans)

- *Immigration Policy (Path to Citizen or Stringent Policies)
- *Same Sex Marriage (Yea or Nay)
- *Teaching Homosexuality in School
- *School Choice: Options for Students Attending Underperforming Schools (Good or Bad?)
- *The Patriot Act (Violation of Civil Rights or Protecting America)
- *The Prison System (Strict Incarceration v. Rehabilitation)

COURSE OUTLINE

Week One (September 5, 2013)

Thursday- Introduction

Week Two (September 10-12, 2013)

Chapter 1 What is Politics?

Chapter 2 The Constitution: Rules of the Game

Week Three (September 17-19, 2013)

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

Chapter 3 The Executive Branch: The President and the Bureaucracy

Week Four (September 24-26, 2013)

Chapter 3 The Executive Branch: The President and the Bureaucracy...continued...

Research Paper Presentation (Expectations)

Week Five (October 1-3, 2013)

Chapter 4 The Legislative Branch: Congress

Thursday-Test One

Week Six (October 8-10, 2013)

Chapter 4 The Legislative Branch: Congress...continued...

Chapter 5 The Judicial Branch: The Supreme Court and Federal Court System

Week Seven (October 15-17, 2013)

Chapter 5 The Judicial Branch: The Supreme Court and Federal Court System...continued...

Chapter 6 Civil Rights and Liberties: Protecting the Players

Week Eight (October 22-24, 2013)

Chapter 6 Civil Rights and Liberties: Protecting the Players...continued...

Chapter 7 Voters and Political Parties

Week Nine (October 29-31, 2013)

Chapter 7 Voters and Political Parties
Thursday-Test Two

Week Ten (November 5-7, 2013)

Chapter 8 Interest Groups and the Media
Chapter 9 Who Wins, Who Loses: Pluralism vs. Elitism

Week Eleven (November 12-14, 2013)

Tuesday-Research Day
Thursday-Chapter 9 Who Wins, Who Loses: Pluralism vs. Elitism

Week Twelve (November 19-21, 2013)

Tuesday- Presentation Day
Thursday- Presentation Day

Week Thirteen (November 26-28, 2013)

Tuesday-Research Day
Thursday- Holiday

Week Fourteen (December 3-5, 2013)

Tuesday-Presentation Day
Thursday-Presentation Day

Week Fifteen (December 10-12, 2013)

Tuesday-Review Day
Thursday- Wrap Up Session

The instructor reserves the right to amend the syllabus.