

Political Science 100

Elizabeth

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Introduction to American Government

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[\(Links to an external site.\)](#)

Course Objectives

We have an odd dichotomy in this country. On the one hand, many people say they can't stand and/or don't understand government/politics. Yet, frequently those same people have some fairly decided opinions as to the kind of society they want to live in, what kinds of decisions they should normally be free to make and actions to take. And people have some pretty decided opinions as to what government should or shouldn't do. Those are essentially political discussions.

Democracy is based on the idea that an informed public can engage in rational discussion that leads to decision-making in public affairs. Therefore we will approach American government as a series of questions worthy of answering. Many of the questions have both a theoretical and a practical component

In this course we will take a methodical, organized exploration of our American political system. We will discuss what perspectives people have and why and what options people have when it

comes to implementing conclusions about the decisions they would like to determine outcomes in this country.

With this course in American government the goal is to expand your knowledge of the basic structure of our government, the ideologies which propel politicians and citizens and the complex interrelationship between the two. You will further develop and enhance your critical reading and writing skills.

Course Requirements

Exploration and comprehension require discussion therefore discussion and participation are *essential* as is evidence that you have read the required textbook assignments *before* discussion. There will be three exams, two short papers and several small writing assignments.

In Brief

Discussion Forum/Participation – 5-10 points each

Occasional Assignments – 10 points each

Exams – 100 points each, 300 points total

Writing Assignments/Papers – 200 points total

Textbook

We will not use a printed textbook but instead will access textual materials through Canvas.

Class Policies

Late Work:

All late work will be penalized one letter grade for each day that it is late. Assignments turned in late on the day they are due will be docked half a letter grade. Excuses will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, but extensions will only be granted in extraordinary circumstances. Written verification, such as a doctor's note, will be required.

If you have an extenuating circumstance, you must let me know ASAP. I will be far less sympathetic to excuses received after an assignment is due.

Exams:

If you cannot take an exam at the scheduled time because of health or personal problems, you may take a make-up exam, subject to the following conditions:

- 1) You must notify me before the exam. If you are going to miss an exam, you will know ahead of time. Send an email, call, do not use carrier pigeons. If you do not let me know before the exam you will receive a zero for that exam.
- 2) No one may take more than one make up exam except under extraordinary circumstances.

The Classroom

Learning is both an individual and a community experience. If you understand the material well, we need your insights and observations. If you don't understand the material, we need your

questions.

You are expected to stay on top of the reading and take the initiative to learn the material. If you do not complete the reading you may fall behind and lose participation points in class. If you know that an assignment will fall at a busy time of the semester, I suggest you start working on it earlier.

If you are active and engaged in class it will be easier to learn and the process will be much more enjoyable!

Please be respectful and exercise decorum during our class sessions. This means, among other things, that cell phones must be turned off, iPods should be put away, there should be no side conversations, respect your classmates' opinions in class discussions, and please no reading of non-class materials during class.

No use of laptops unless it is accompanied by a request from Disability Services.

Most importantly, please be on time for class. Consistent lateness is disruptive to the class and will result in a much lower participation grade. There is a column in the grade book for attendance and participation.

I am always available to answer questions or discuss any class-related issues. Please feel free to send me an email, stop by my office during office hours, or make an appointment when needed. If you have a disability and need any special learning accommodations, please let me know ASAP so arrangements can

be made.

Cheating and plagiarism will be punished with a failing grade and a report to the Dean of Students. Plagiarism is defined as “stealing and passing off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own or using (another's production) without crediting the source” (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary). It is a serious act and will be treated as such. If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please ask me.

Special Needs

If you have special needs that will affect your ability to learn in this class, let me know and appropriate steps will be taken to assist you.

Canvas

I use Canvas extensively. You will find the syllabus, course calendar in the 'Course Information' module. Rubrics for the papers can be found in the papers module. In the discussion forums you will find one, 'Questions for the professor' which I will check everyday, M-F. One forum is for you to get in touch with fellow students, 'Coffeehouse.' There are also some assignments in the forums. Reading questions can be found in the weekly modules.

Honor

The university's Academic Integrity Policy is available via the web at: <http://www.uncg.edu80/Leg/Policy/HonorPolicy.html>

Course Outline

- 1 American Political Culture
- 2.: Revolution and the Constitution
- 3 Federalism
- 4 Civil Liberties and Rights

First Exam

- 5 Voting and Elections
- 6 Political Parties
- 7 Interest Groups
- 8 The Media

Second Exam

- 11 The Congress
- 12 The Presidency
- 13 The Courts

Final Exam