INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS – SPRING 2014
UWM POL SCI 104:001
Wednesdays, 4:00pm-6:40pm
Bolton Hall B46

Instructor:  Joseph Cera
Office:  Engelmann Hall B73
Office Hours:  Thursdays 2:30pm-4:00pm or by appointment
Email:  jacera@uwm.edu

REQUIRED TEXT

Ginsberg, Benjamin, Theodore Lowi, Margaret Wier, and Caroline Tolbert. We the People: An Introduction to American Politics, Shorter 9th Edition.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Students taking this course will be introduced to American government and politics. Together we will examine the incentives and constraints that influenced the founders as they created our political institutions and evaluate how those institutions have functioned over time. We will explore modern American governmental institutions and structures, paying careful attention why they work the way they do and how they produce the outcomes they produce. We will also critically examine the political process that has grown up around these institutions and structures; we will evaluate how our politics can warp and sometimes break the institutions on which they focus. Finally, we will apply our understanding of these topics to current situations, events, and developments regarding American politics and governance.

GRADING

Your final grade will be determined by performance on two midterm examinations and a final examination, weekly reading reaction papers, and class attendance/participation.

Midterms/Final Exam (75% of final grade):
All three examinations will have similar formats; a multiple-choice section followed by a written short-answer/essay section. The midterms will be non-cumulative, but the final exam will require knowledge of some concepts from earlier in the semester. There will be no curve or adjustment applied to grades. There will be no opportunities for extra credit.
Examination schedule and weights are as follows:

Midterm 1: 20% of final grade Wednesday, October 1, 2014
Midterm 2: 25% of final grade Wednesday, November 12, 2013
Final Exam: 30% of final grade TBA

(Make-up exams will only be granted to students who provide a documented medical excuse or a have a University-excused absence. In order to qualify for a make-up exam, students must provide documentation AND must contact me within 24 hours of the missed exam. No exceptions will be made to this rule.)

Weekly reading reaction papers (15% of final grade):
Each chapter of the textbook poses multiple “for critical analysis” questions that prompt the reader to expand upon the themes, ideas, and arguments presented in that chapter. Each week, students are required to turn in a 1-to-2-page typed response to a question from that week’s reading at the beginning of class. Only hard copies will be accepted. A style sheet covering how these papers are to be formatted will be provided to students and posted on D2L.

Class attendance/participation (10% of final grade):
Students are expected to attend lectures and participate in class discussions during those lectures. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of class, and participation will be tracked. I reserve the right to implement assigned seating to aid tracking attendance and participation if necessary.

Grading scale:

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<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-76</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92</td>
<td>C-</td>
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<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>83-86</td>
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<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82</td>
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<td>60-62</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79</td>
<td>F</td>
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**GRADING CONCERNS**

All grades are final and not subject to appeal. Exceptions will be made for errors in the grading of multiple choice questions only (if the correct answer provided does not match the answer key; the answer key itself will not be up for debate). Students wishing to dispute their grades must do so during my office hours within 1 week of the date exams are handed back.
ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Any form of plagiarism, cheating on examinations, or other form of academic misconduct will result in the student receiving an “F” grade for the course. I will follow all academic misconduct and reporting policies of the University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee regardless of the circumstances.

DROPPING THE COURSE/INCOMPLETES

It is the student’s responsibility to become familiar with all relevant drop dates/deadlines. The university defines an incomplete as a notation given in lieu of a final grade to a student who as carried a subject successfully until the end of a semester but who, because of illness or other unusual and substantiated cause beyond the student’s control, has been unable to take or complete the final examination or to complete some limited amount of term work. An incomplete may be given to a student who is unable to complete the course requirements due to extenuating circumstances (e.g., serious illness, injury, family emergency, etc.) but supporting documentation is necessary to receive an incomplete.

GENERAL CLASS CONDUCT

The classroom environment will be one of mutual respect, and students are expected to conduct themselves in a professional and courteous manner. Avoid entering the classroom late or leaving early. Do not interrupt the lecture or other students who are granted the floor.

MOBILE PHONES MUST BE SET TO SILENT BEFORE ENTERING THE CLASSROOM. Students taking calls or distracting others with the use of their mobile phones during class will be asked to leave. The use of laptop computers or tablets for note-taking purposes is permitted; however, students using their computers for playing games or accessing media that may distract other students will be asked to leave.

SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS AND MILITARY CALL-UPS

Students with special needs should contact me at the beginning of the semester to work out any necessary arrangements. Accommodations for absences due to religious observance and/or call-up of reserves to active military duty will be given, but students must inform me prior to the classes that are to be missed.
CLASS SCHEDULE & ASSIGNED READINGS

Part 1: Foundations

9/3:  
Course Overview/American Political Culture
Reading: None

9/10: Founding of American Political Institutions
Reading: We the People Ch. 1-2

9/17: Federalism
Reading: We the People Ch. 3

9/24: Civil Liberties
Reading: We the People Ch. 4

10/1: Civil Rights
Reading: We the People Ch. 5
MIDTERM 1 (20% of your final grade; to be held during second half of class on 10/1)

Part 2: Politics

10/8: Public Opinion
Reading: We the People Ch. 6

10/15: The Media
Reading: We the People Ch. 7

10/22: Political Participation and Voting
Reading: We the People Ch. 8

10/29: Political Parties
Reading: We the People Ch. 9

11/5: Campaigns and Elections
Reading: We the People Ch. 10

11/12: Interest Groups
Reading: We the People Ch. 11
MIDTERM 2 (25% of your final grade; to be held during second half of class on 11/12)
Part 3: Institutions

11/19:  Congress
       Reading:  We the People Ch. 12

11/26:  THANKSGIVING RECESS (no class)
       Reading:  none

12/3:   The Presidency
       Reading:  We the People Ch. 13

12/10:  The Federal Bureaucracy/The Judiciary
       Reading:  We the People Ch. 14 & 15

FINAL EXAM:  Date/Time TBA (non-cumulative; 30% of your final grade)