Introduction to American Government and Politics
Political Science 104:401 – Spring 2020

Professor Kathleen Dolan
Office: Bolton 672
Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday
10:00-11:30 or by appointment
E-mail address: kdolan@uwm.edu
Course Website Address: Canvas - https://uwmil.instructure.com/courses/261723

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Introduction to American Government and Politics is a survey course designed to acquaint you with the fundamental ideas, institutions, and actors that make up our governmental system. During the semester, we will examine the legal and structural basis of our government, evaluate the institutions that carry out its day to day functions, and analyze the role the individual citizen can play in influencing and affecting government. Also, since government and politics are things that go on around us all the time, we will follow the actions of the President, the Congress, the Courts, and the public.

This course fulfills the Social Science General Education Requirement (GER) through its focus on:

   a) the study of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and/or socio-cultural factors associated with individual behavior, collective action, or societal development.
   b) the study of human collectivities, organizations, institutions, and cultures, their infrastructures, and interrelationships.

This course meets these requirements through our examination of the varied personal, social, and cultural forces that shape individual and collective political behavior. We will also examine the institutions and organizations on which our political and governmental system is built and discuss the development of those systems. This 3-credit course meets for 3 hours of lecture/discussion per week during the semester. Students are expected to put in 6-8 hours per week studying and working on assignments to achieve the learning goals of this course.

**Required Materials:**


   Physical book – UWM E-Campus Bookstore or other vendor, including publisher. You can buy the physical book from any source you like, but please make sure you get the right version and edition of the book. **WE ARE USING THE CORE 12TH EDITION.**

   E-book - [https://digital.wwnorton.com/wethepeople12core](https://digital.wwnorton.com/wethepeople12core) and click “Purchase Options”
2) Daily Newspaper/News Site/News Program – Paying attention to the political world will be important this semester – and always!

Students are required to complete all readings PRIOR to each class meeting and be prepared to discuss them. Since the issues and occurrences of current political events will have relevance for this course, students are expected to keep themselves informed about what is happening in government and politics on a daily basis.

**Lecture:** The lecture for this course meets from 9:00 to 9:50 Mon/Wed in Lubar N146. Students must attend all class meetings. You are responsible for, and will be tested on, all materials and information regarding this course. This includes information from lectures, readings, and class discussions. Feel free to ask questions or make comments during class about class material or current political events. Exams will be given in lecture meeting.

**Classroom Policies:** The goal of our classroom is to maintain a respectful, non-distracting learning environment. To achieve that, we will do the following:

1) There will be a “no electronics” policy.
2) You should make sure you have a pen/pencil and a notebook every day.
3) Sit in the first 10-12 rows of the classroom. We will work in pairs or threes sometimes, so you need to be near other students.

**Discussion Section:** You should also be registered for one of the discussion sections that are part of this course. In section, you will be presented with new material, discuss your section assignments, and have an opportunity to ask questions and discuss the issues raised in lecture and discussion. Attendance at discussion section is as important as attendance at lecture and will part of your course grade. Because the discussion assignments are designed to foster discussion of the topics taken up each week, these assignments will only be accepted in discussion section. You will not get credit for discussion assignments handed in during lecture, by email, or after your section meets.

**Course Website:** This class will have a site on the Canvas system. The site will have the syllabus, assignments, grades, and important dates available for you. I may also put up announcements or media articles related to the class, so check the site regularly.

**Exams and Assignments:** Your work for this course will include three components: exams, discussion section assignments, and in-class exercises. **Exams** – There will be four exams. They will all be multiple choice, will be taken in the regular classroom, and WILL NOT be cumulative. **Discussion Assignments:** Throughout the semester, you will do eight discussion assignments that will be based on that week’s topic. There is more information on those assignments at the end of the syllabus. **In-class Assignments:** Over the course of the semester, we will do a series of short in-class assignments. These will not be scheduled in advance and will not require you to have any special materials or preparation beyond the reading and lecture information.
Grades: The grades break down as follows:

- Exams – 60 percent
- Discussion Assignments – 30 percent
- In-class Assignments - 10 percent

Grades will be calculated on a 100-point scale that breaks down as follows. There is no extra credit and no curve or adjustment applied to grades.

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<td>A-</td>
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If you miss a regularly scheduled exam, you will only be allowed to take a make-up if your absence was unavoidable and due to some medical problem, excused University absence, or other emergency situations. If you have a problem or miss an exam, get in touch with me immediately, beforehand if possible. If you miss an exam without giving me prior notice, you MUST contact me within 24 hours of that exam or you will not be allowed to take a make-up under any circumstances.

Any student who cheats on an exam, plagiarizes, or commits any other act of academic dishonesty will receive an F for the course and will be referred to the appropriate University authorities. I cannot stress this strongly enough. Plagiarism is defined by the American Heritage Dictionary as “stealing or using the ideas or writings of another as one’s own” (p. 524). You may view the University’s policy on academic misconduct at http://www3.uwm.edu/Dept/Acad_Aff/policy/academicmisconduct.cfm

Exam Dates: The following are the dates for the four exams in this class. If you have a legitimate conflict with any of these dates, let me know as soon as possible.

1st exam – Monday, February 24
2nd exam – Wednesday, March 25
3rd exam – Monday, April 20
4th exam – Wednesday, May 6

Course Outline:

January 27 and 29 – Current Political Events

To do for January 27 – two readings on Impeachment:
To do for January 29 – reading on Democratic primary process

The Foundations of American Government

February 3 and 5 - The Founding and the Constitution
To do:
1) Readings: Ginsberg, Chapter 2 and the Constitution, Ginsberg Appendix
2) Discussion Section Assignment – Constitution - Due in Section during the week of February 3

February 10 and 12 - Federalism
To do:
1) Readings: Ginsberg, Chapter 3
2) Discussion Section Assignment – Federalism - Due in Section - week of February 10

February 17 and 19 - The Bill of Rights and Civil Liberties
To do:
1) Readings: Ginsberg, Chapter 4
2) Discussion Section Assignment – Civil Liberties - Due in Section - week of February 17

Exam 1 – Monday, February 24

Forming and Expressing Beliefs

February 26 and March 2 - Public Opinion
To do:
1) Readings: Ginsberg, Chapter. 6
2) Discussion Section Assignment – Public Opinion - Due in Section - week of March 2

March 4 and 9 - Political Participation and Voting
To do:
1) Readings: Ginsberg, Chapter 8
2) Discussion Section Assignment – Political Participation - Due in Section - week of March 9

March 11 and 23 - Political Parties
To do:
1)Readings: Ginsberg, Chapter 9

Exam 2 – Wednesday, March 25
March 30 and April 1 – Campaigns and Elections
   To do:
   1) Readings: Ginsberg, Chapter 10
   2) Discussion Section Assignment – Political Parties – Due in section – week of March 30

April 6 and 8 – Congress
   To do:
   1) Readings: Ginsberg, Chapter 11
   2) Discussion Section Assignment – Election Prediction – Due in Canvas by 11:59 PM on Monday, April 6 AND bring copy to Discussion Section this week

April 13 and 15 – Congress
   To do:
   1) Readings: Ginsberg, Chapter 12
   2) Discussion Section Assignment – Congress - Due in Section - week of April 13

Exam 3 – Monday, April 20

April 22 and 27 – The Presidency
   To do:
   1) Readings: Ginsberg, Chapter 13
   2) Discussion Section Assignment – Presidency - Due in Section - week of April 27

April 29 and May 4 – The Courts
   To do:
   1) Readings: Ginsberg, Chapter 15

Exam 4 – Wednesday, May 6

Discussion Section Assignments

Over the course of the semester, you will complete several short assignments that will serve as the basis for discussion in section meeting for a particular week. These assignments relate to the topic of the lecture and discussion for that week and need not be more than 1-2 typed pages in length. There are several goals for these assignments – 1) to get you writing, 2) to get you to think about the various topics we will take up each week, and 3) to serve as a basis for discussion section each week. The material you need to write these assignments is contained within your text, the lecture notes, and your brain. There is no need to do research beyond these sources.

For most weeks of the semester, you will need to complete the assignment for a particular week’s topic before you meet section that week and bring it to section with you. The questions for each week will be posted on the Canvas site under the Assignments section. Keep in mind
that the dates below are for the week the assignment is DUE, so you will have to be working on these assignments before the due date and have them ready when you have section that week. 

No assignments will be accepted in lecture, by email, or after your discussion section has met. If you have a problem during a particular week, you are welcome to attend one of the other assigned sections and participate that way. If you attend a different section, you will get credit for your assignment.

A word about plagiarism – Plagiarism is the use or close imitation of the words, thoughts, or ideas of another person and representing them as your own. Plagiarism can take many forms, but the most common are buying pre-written essays, cutting and pasting from an internet source, or copying text from a book. I feel very strongly that these assignments should reflect your thoughts and your work. As I say, there is no need for you to find additional sources for these assignments, so make sure the work is your own. If we suspect that an assignment is plagiarized, I will follow the campus academic misconduct policies to prosecute any offenders. The penalty I recommend in these circumstances is an F for the course, so you can pay a pretty high price for plagiarizing a two-page assignment.

Assignment Schedule

Week of January 27 – Introduction to discussion section

Week of February 3 — The Founding and the Constitution

Week of February 10 - Federalism

Week of February 17 – Civil Liberties

Week of February 24 – No written assignment this week.

Week of March 2 – Public Opinion

Week of March 9 – Participation and Voting

Week of March 23 – No section this week.

Week of March 30 – Political Parties

Week of April 6 – Elections Predictions

Week of April 13 – Congress

Week of April 20 – No written assignment this week.

Week of April 27 - President

Week of May 4 – No section this week.