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| **Course Information** | |
| Course Number: PS 101-011 | Instructor: Dakota Thomas, M.A. |
| Time: Tuesday and Thursday at 2:00 PM | Email: [dth228@g.uky.edu](mailto:dth228@g.uky.edu) |
| Location: Whitehall Classroom Building, Room 231 | Office: 1602-01 Patterson Office Tower |
| Course Website: Canvas (<https://uk.instructure.com/>) | Office Hours: Tuesday from 3:30 to 5:00 PM (please email beforehand if possible) or by appointment |

**Required Text(s):**

“We the People: An Introduction to American Politics” by Ginsburg, Lowi, Weir, Tolbert and Spitzer, *9th Essentials Edition*. ISBN: 0393921107

Weekly assigned readings, if any (see Course Schedule; materials available on Canvas unless otherwise noted).

**Course Description:**

This course provides a broad introduction to the workings of American government and politics, through a *scientific* lens (rather than a historical or philosophical one). The intent is to teach you how to think critically about our political system and use analytical skills to understand the fundamentals of American politics today. The study of American politics by political scientists is founded on the observation that there are a broad array of diverse people, interests, institutions, and ideas at work in American politics at any given time. The goal of this class is to understand the political diversity that exists within the American system, the ways that politics and policy shape people’s opportunities to lead fulfilling prosperous lives, and to place the United States into a broader comparative perspective with a critical eye towards the role of the US in influencing international politics.

Secondarily, this course is meant to facilitate and encourage active citizenship on your part. As such, we will often do activities in and out of class that involve student leadership and engagement with broader society, particularly in the political arena. Active engagement by the public, and especially young people, is critical to the functioning of any democracy. These two primary goals of the course are natural complements, and should serve to reinforce one another.

In sum, this class is a seminal introduction to American politics. It is designed to expose you to many of the central questions in the study of American politics and the key theories that scholars have developed to answer these questions. More specifically the class will address questions regarding American political behavior, its political institutions, identity politics, advocacy, and collective action. It has four fundamental goals: 1) To introduce you to the major questions in American politics. 2) To acquaint you with the field’s best answers to those questions. 3) To give you the tools to think critically about those answers, to refute or improve upon them. And finally, 4) To send you out into the world prepared to understand and influence politics yourself.

**Class Policies**

**Grades:**

This course uses a point based system for grading (rather than a raw or weighted average system). For those unfamiliar with this type of grading system, this means that grades are *not averaged together*. Rather, points that you earn on assignments or exams are added together to determine your total points for the class. You will need to earn 800 out of 1000 points in order to receive an A in this class. Given that this is already a relatively generous standard, it is highly unlikely that any extra credit will be given in this class. *See section labelled “Course Grades”, below, for more details about grading in this class.*

**Lecture:**

Students should note that while this class has a lecture component, self-direction and self-discipline is necessary for success in this class. Class time will often heavily rely on discussion and activities, for which students may earn a large portion of their grade. Students who attend class are expected to have read all assigned materials **beforehand** and be prepared to discuss them, ask questions for clarification, and to question the material itself and delve deeper into the subject at hand. In other words, students should not expect to merely attend class and be able to succeed in this course. If it is apparent that few to none have read for the class, the instructor reserves the right to dismiss class early and no students will receive credit for discussion that day.

**Attendance Policies & Excused Absences:**

This course does not have a formal attendance requirement for lectures. I do not enforce a “hard” rule on how attendance relates to your grade (i.e. you do not fail simply because you missed a certain number of days of class). In other words, attendance at lecture is *strictly optional*. Students are free to determine their own level of engagement with the class. However, students are *encouraged* to attend lecture because it will help their performance on Midterm and Final Exams, not to mention reinforce their learning outside of class and provide further insight into the field of American politics. While attendance is optional, students must be in class during course activities to earn points for discussion and for completing said in-class activities (naturally, students must also *actively participate* in those activities). As such, any pre-planned in-class activities are marked on the course schedule.

While there is no formal attendance requirement, students with an excused absence on non-exam days in which there was an activity and/or participation grade are allowed to “make-up” that day’s grade. Note that not all days of class will have an activity or participation grade assigned. The following are acceptable reasons for excused absence from class: serious illness; illness or death of family member; University-related trips; major religious holidays; and other circumstances I find to be "reasonable cause for nonattendance".

Students who miss a graded activity on the day it is given without prior notice will only be granted a make-up opportunity if they miss because of a *documented* medical emergency involving themselves or an immediate family member or a comparable emergency. Such arrangements *must* be made within one week of the student’s return for class. Students are responsible for making arrangements with the instructor on the form of this make-up assignment, and students must inform the instructor of their excused absence *within one week* of that absence in order to receive a “make-up” opportunity. For further information, see [University Senate Rule 5.2.4](https://dib.uky.edu/universitysenate/sites/www.uky.edu.universitysenate/files/Rules/Current_SRs/MASTER%20RULES%20from%20September%202014_clean.docx). “Unexcused” absences do not merit a makeup opportunity for participation grades.

**Exam Makeup Opportunities:**

Students who anticipate missing an exam for an excused reason can make arrangements by at least 48 hours in advance for an alternative exam time/date. The following are acceptable reasons for excused absence from an exam: serious illness; illness or death of family member; University-related trips; major religious holidays; and other circumstances I find to be "reasonable cause for nonattendance". Students who miss the exam on the day it is given without prior notice will only be granted a make-up opportunity if they miss because of a *documented* medical emergency involving themselves or an immediate family member or a comparable emergency. Such arrangements *must* be made within one week of the missed exam. Again, for further clarification, see [University Senate Rule 5.2.4](https://dib.uky.edu/universitysenate/sites/www.uky.edu.universitysenate/files/Rules/Current_SRs/MASTER%20RULES%20from%20September%202014_clean.docx).

**Late Assignments:**

Students are expected to turn any out-of-class work in on the date that it is due by 5:00 PM unless otherwise instructed. Late assignments will not be accepted without a documented university excused absence (again, see [University Senate Rule 5.2.4](https://dib.uky.edu/universitysenate/sites/www.uky.edu.universitysenate/files/Rules/Current_SRs/MASTER%20RULES%20from%20September%202014_clean.docx)). Students must turn in such excused late assignments within one week of their return to class.

**Canvas:**

Canvas will be used to post course announcements, course materials, and grades, along with any other course related materials. Students should access this course on Canvas as soon as possible, so that problems with this system do not compromise performance in the course, and make sure they have a current email address on file so they will receive any emails or announcements sent through Canvas. Students who have problems accessing Canvas are encouraged to consult technical support areas on campus.

**Academic Accommodations:**

If you have a disability or other condition that requires academic accommodations, please see me as soon as possible. In order to receive accommodations in this course, you must provide me with a Letter of Accommodation from the Disability Resource Center (725 Rose Street, Multidisciplinary Science Building, Suite 407; 859-257-2754; [susan.fogg@uky.edu](mailto:susan.fogg@uky.edu)) for coordination of campus disability services available to students. We will then collaborate for the best solution for each individual situation.

**Academic Integrity, Cheating, and Plagiarism:**

Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. Students who are caught engaging in plagiarism or cheating will receive an automatic failure on the assignment in question. Offenses may be referred to the Ombud for further action. For the definition of what constitutes plagiarism, see the guidelines posted by the Office of Academic Ombud Services (available here: <http://www.uky.edu/Ombud/Plagiarism.pdf>). This document also includes information for how to avoid plagiarism. If you are unsure, you are welcome to consult the numerous campus resources (i.e. the Writing Center) or myself.

See also UK’s academic offense policy for information on what constitutes academic misconduct and the potential consequences (available here: <http://www.uky.edu/Ombud/ForFaculty_AcademicOffenses.php>). Also read the Students’ Rights and Responsibilities, Part II, Section 6.3 for UK’s policy on academic integrity (available here: <http://www.uky.edu/StudentAffairs/Code/part2.html>).

**Classroom Decorum:**

Be respectful to others in this class and engage in civil discourse when we discuss topics with a diversity of perspectives. In this course we will respect others, and during discussion students will not engage in ad hominem attacks against other students nor attacks based on gender, race, creed, religion, sexual orientation, age, national origin, or other personal matters be tolerated at any level. We will talk about “touchy” subjects in this class, so please remember civility and kindness at all times. Students are allowed to respectfully disagree both with their instructor and with one another.

Secondarily, please minimize distractions by not texting, Facebooking or Twittering, or carrying on conversations during regular class time or during exams. Please turn mobile phones off or on silent mode during class. Students who disturb the learning of other members of the class will be asked to leave for the day and receive no credit for attendance, participation, or any activities of that day.

**Syllabus Modifications Disclaimer:**

As the class proceeds, I reserve the right to modify the syllabus, assignments, and the grading structure as I see fit to better accommodate the goals of this course. Modifications will be communicated via email, Canvas, and/or in class. For the most recent version of the syllabus, always consult Canvas. I promise that ***the course will not grow in difficulty as we go on*** (e.g. no exams will be added to the schedule), but some exchanges or cuts may be made, particularly in regards to snow schedule and/or missed days.

**Course Grades**

**Grading Scale:**

There are 1000 points possible in this course. Note, again, that grades are *not averaged together* to determine your final grade. Rather points earned on each component of the course are added to determine the Total Points on which final grades are based. You only need to earn 800 points to get an A in my course. How you choose to do so is entirely up to you. All assignments are optional, but I suggest a cautious strategy of balanced effort in multiple areas. Here is the breakdown of how the points add up to earn your grade.

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| **Points** | **Letter Grade** |
| 800 or more | A |
| 700-799 | B |
| 600-699 | C |
| 500-599 | D |
| 499 or fewer | E |

**Earning Your Grade:**

The grading and assignments for this course have been designed to offer you *many ways to succeed*, or something of a menu for the way you’d like to pursue a given grade*.* Below is a breakdown of how your grade for this course will be assessed.

* **In-Class Participation and Activities** (400 points):
  + On most days, the time spent in class will be heavily discussion driven. On such non-activity days, no participation grades will be given. Keep in mind that while there is no formal attendance requirement for this course (i.e. you will not be explicitly punished just for missing class), students will naturally find the exams much easier if they attend regularly.
  + On some days, there are opportunities to participate in pre-planned activities. The course schedule below notifies you of those planned activities. Activities are worth 50 points each. Note that points are awarded for *participation*; attendance alone on those days is not sufficient to earn a good grade. Taking part in these activities is one simple way to earn points in this class.
* **In-Class Exams** (300 points):
  + Students take two in-class exams during our regular class meetings throughout the semester - listed as Exam I and Exam II in the course schedule. These exams are multiple choice, and worth 150 points each.
  + **Exam I** will cover material in chapters 1, 2, 3, 9, and 10; and takes place on Thursday, March 2nd.
  + **Exam II** will cover material in chapters 5, 6, 7, 8, and 12; and takes place on Tuesday, April 11th.
* **Final Exam** (300 points):
  + Students may opt to take a written segment of their Final Exam, a multiple-choice segment, or both. Students are not penalized for opting for one or the other, and may take both if they desire.
  + **Written Portion** (100 points): Due by 5:00 PM on Tuesday, May 2nd. The prompt and instructions for this part of the exam will be distributed no later than April 20th.
  + **Multiple Choice Portion** (200 points): Begins at 3:30 PM on Tuesday, May 2nd in the regular classroom. Covers material from *all chapters and assigned readings*. This part of the exam is a bit longer than previous exams in this course. Students will have the full two hours to complete this portion of the exam.

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| **Course Schedule** | | | | | |
| **Day:** | **Date:** | **Topic** | **Chapter** | **Reading(s)** | **Activity** |
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| Thursday | Jan. 12th | **NO CLASS**: Due to Southern Political Science Conference | NA | NA | NA |
| Tuesday | Jan. 17th | FIRST DAY OF CLASSES: Syllabus and Course Outline |  |  |  |
| Thursday | Jan. 19th | COURSE INTRODUCTION: What is Politics and why care? | Ch. 1 – Intro |  |  |
| Tuesday | Jan. 24th | COURSE INTRODUCTION: What is Political Science? | Ch. 1 – Intro |  | The Prisoner’s Dilemma |
| Thursday | Jan. 26th | COURSE INTRODUCTION: What is American Politics? | Ch. 1 – Intro |  | The Comparative Method |
| Tuesday | Jan. 31st | HISTORY: Pre-Independence and the American Revolution | Ch. 2 – Founding | The Declaration |  |
| Thursday | Feb. 2nd | HISTORY: The Constitution | Ch. 2 – Founding | The US Constitution |  |
| Tuesday | Feb. 7th | INSTITUTIONS: What is Federalism? | Ch. 3 – Federalism | The Articles of Confederation |  |
| Thursday | Feb. 9th | INSTITUTIONS: Federal, State, and Local Government | Ch. 3 – Federalism | Federalist #10 |  |
| Tuesday | Feb. 14th | INSTITUTIONS: What is Congress? | Ch. 9 – Congress |  | Letter to your Representative |
| Thursday | Feb. 16th | INSTITUTIONS: Fenno’s Paradox | Ch. 9 – Congress |  | The Budget Game |
| Tuesday | Feb. 21st | INSTITUTIONS: Why have a President? | Ch. 10 – The Presidency |  |  |
| Thursday | Feb. 23rd | INSTITUTIONS: What does a President Do? | Ch. 10 – The Presidency |  |  |
| Tuesday | Feb. 28th | **EXAM REVIEW** |  |  |  |
| Thursday | Mar. 2nd | **EXAM I**: Chapters 1, 2, 3, 9, and 10 |  |  |  |
| Tuesday | Mar. 7th | INSTITUTIONS: The Supreme Court | Ch. 12 – The Judiciary |  |  |
| Thursday | Mar. 9th | INSTITUTIONS: Lower Courts and the Legal System | Ch. 12 – The Judiciary |  |  |
| Tuesday | Mar. 14th | **SPRING BREAK**: NO CLASS | NA | NA | NA |
| Thursday | Mar. 16th | **SPRING BREAK**: NO CLASS | NA | NA | NA |
| Tuesday | Mar. 21st | COLLECTIVE ACTION: The Collective Action Problem | Ch. 7 – Political Parties |  | Collective Action |
| Thursday | Mar. 23rd | COLLECTIVE ACTION: Political Parties, “why two?” | Ch. 7 – Political Parties |  | The “Pizza Election” |
| Tuesday | Mar. 28th | COLLECTIVE ACTION: Interest Groups and Movements | Ch. 8 – Interest Groups | Washington’s Farewell |  |
| Thursday | Mar. 30th | COLLECTIVE ACTION: Do we get what we want? | Ch. 5 – Public Opinion | Lax and Phillips (2011) | “Millennials” Discussion |
| Tuesday | Apr. 4th | COLLECTIVE ACTION: Media | Ch. 6 – Media |  | Letter to the Editor |
| Thursday | Apr. 6th | **EXAM REVIEW** |  |  |  |
| Tuesday | Apr. 11th | **EXAM II**: Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8, and 12 |  |  |  |
| Thursday | Apr. 13th | **NO CLASS**: Due to Midwest Political Science Conference | NA | NA | NA |
| Tuesday | Apr. 18th | POLICY: The Evolution of Liberties in the US | Ch. 4 – Civil Liberties |  |  |
| Thursday | Apr. 20th | POLICY: Civil Liberties, cont. | Ch. 4 – Civil Liberties |  |  |
| Tuesday | Apr. 25th | POLICY: Domestic Policy | Ch. 13 – Domestic Policy |  |  |
| Thursday | Apr. 27th | POLICY: Foreign Policy | Ch. 14 – Foreign Policy |  |  |
| Friday | Apr. 28th | **LAST DAY OF CLASSES** | NA | NA | NA |
| Tuesday | May 2nd | **FINAL EXAM** @ 3:00 PM |  |  |  |
| Friday | My 5th | **END OF FINALS WEEK** | NA | NA | NA |