

Course Syllabus
Mississippi Valley State University
Department of Social Science
American National Government (PS 201-01)

Instructor: Cassie Osborne, Jr., PhD
Office Location: W. A. Butts Social Science Building
Class Time/Place: Monday Evenings 6:00 – 8:40 pm; W. A. Butts SSB; Room #8
Office Hours: Mondays 10:00 am – 12:00 noon & 2:00 pm – 5:00 pm
Wednesdays 10:00 am – 12:00 noon & 2:00 pm – 5:00 pm
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REQUIRED TEXT

American Government, 15th Ed.; Wilson, James Q., Dilulio, John J., Bose, Meena and Levendusky, Matthew

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course surveys the basic structures and processes of American National Government and Politics the course covers institutions such as Congress, the Presidency, the court system, federalism, political parties and pressure groups, campaign and elections, public opinion, public policy, and the United States political and global elites.

This course will use the discussion and lecture approach. Grades will be based upon written and oral reports, class participation, and performances on mid-term and final examinations.

EXPANDED COURSE DESCRIPTION

American National Government familiarizes students with the structures and processes of the national government, and also the acquisition of political power and policy outcomes. Towards that goal, the course will do a thorough study of the historical background of the US Constitution, political institutions and practices at the national level, elections, political parties, interest groups, the Congress, the Executive branch, the Court systems as well as the relationships between and among these.

Learning the mechanics of government is an indispensable prerequisite for practicing good citizenship. The demands of good citizenship pervade all aspects of our public lives. Teachers and students need to understand their rights and how to protect them. They must understand how to respect the rights of others. Protecting and respecting rights and interest require us all to be aware of our constitutional structures and history as well as operations of power within and against those structures. This course provides students with the baseline information needed to navigate our system of government and the political practices it involves.

A post-test will be administered two (2) weeks prior to the final examination!!!

Student Learning Outcome (SLO #1)

Students will understand the basics of American National Government and Politics *Means of Assessment for SLO #1* – During the semester, multiple sections of American Government will use a common, validated test bank to measure gains in knowledge of American Government & Politics. Both the pretest and the comprehensive final examination will use items that are selected randomly and by blind draw. The instructor will not review the exams prior to administering them. Scores will be recorded by a unique number for both the pretest and posttest to retain continuity and comparability in the cohorts.

Describe Data Collection Plan

The scores of the Pre-Course test and Post-Course Test will be compiled by each instructor and aggregated and analyzed by the unit at the end of the semester.

Define Criteria for Success

There will be at least 60% average gain in all content sub-areas over the pretest for students who remain in the numbered cohort on the comprehensive exam.

Student Learning Outcome (SLO #2)

Students will write essays in political science proficiently.

Means of Assessment for (SLO #2)

The writing proficiency of students in all political science classes will be measured on locally designed and validated rubrics. All students will be measured for their proficiency taking the following factors into consideration: grammar, logic, organization, evidence, citations, quality of claims, and control of language.

Data Collection Plan

The instructor will establish a baseline for writing proficiency on all essays for all courses for both aggregates scores and sub-scores. Those scores will be recorded by number for all students and stored in a manner that eliminates the possibility of identifying students by name. The scores will reflect achievements on final, written essays.

Examination

Examinations are given after we have covered two chapters. The questions will be from topics and chapters covered. If students are not going to be able to be present on the test/exam day, they will need to inform the instructor prior to the day.

Make-up Policy

Students should make all efforts to be present during all examinations. No make-up examinations will be given unless genuine and bonafide reasons are provided. When and if a decision is made to give make-up examinations, students should be present on the set date and time and take their make-up examination.

Class Attendance

Consistent and punctual class attendance is required. Tardiness is not acceptable unless bonafide excuses are provided. Absences more than one-fourth (1/4) of the class sessions results in an automatic “F” grade unless the circumstances are deemed extenuating by the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

Grade Computation

The final course grade will be computed as follows:

Class Participation:	15%
Quizzes:	5%
Mid-Term Examination:	30%
Bibliographical Essays/Critiques:	20%
Final Examination:	30%

Assignments

The instructor will give assignments on current events of the time. **Papers must be typed and double-spaced with one-inch margins.** A well written paper successfully conveys your message. Poor grammar, bad sentence structure, bad organization, and spelling errors often make it difficult for your instructor to understand your intended message, and therefore could affect your grade. The grades for these papers will be specified in due course. **There is a penalty for failing to meet deadlines, five (5) points will be deducted from the assignment grade each ay the assignment is handed in late.**

Technology Infusion

Students have ample opportunities to use technology – in this case computers – are available in the Social Science Reading Room. The assignments will require the use of this technology. Students may use the internet to do their research.

Observation of the Rule of Honesty

Students should observe the academic rule of honesty. ***Plagiarism, falsification of data, and cheating on examinations are grounds for an “F” grade in the course!***

Class Schedule and Reading Assignments

This plan is tentative; amendments are possible due to unforeseen events, interesting topics that become especially newsworthy, new publications, etc.

- Monday, August 20, 2018: “Introduction and Historical Overview of American National Government.”
- Monday, August 27, 2018: Chapter 1: “The Study of American Government.” Readings: The American Constitution, de Tocqueville’s, “Origins and Democratic Social Conditions of Anglo-Americans.” Magleby et. al., “Government by the People.” 2006, Chapters 1, 2, and 3.

- Monday, September 10, 2018: Chapter 2: “The Constitution.” The Challenge of Leadership and the Problem of Liberty.
- Monday, September 17, 2018: Chapter 3: “Federalism.” “Intergovernmental Conflict.” “Governmental Structure.”; “*The Founding: A Bold New Plan, Elastic Language*,”; “The History of Federalism,”; *The Supreme Court Speaks, Nullification and War; Dual Federalism*. Chapter 4: “Civil Liberties.” Making Constitutional Rights Apply to the States. Why are Americans so Preoccupied with Rights?
- Monday, September 24, 2018: Chapter 5: “Civil Rights.” “Race and Strict Scrutiny.” “Sex and Reasonable Classifications.” “Sexual Harassment.” “Privacy and Sex.”
- Monday, October 1, - Friday, October 5, 2018.....Mid-Term Examinations
- Monday, October 8, 2018: Chapter 6: “Public Opinion and the Media.” Public Opinion and Representative Democracy, The Media and Representative Democracy, Why do we Distrust the Federal Government? The Origins of Political Attitudes, *The Role of the Family, Effects of Religion, Education, the Gender Gap*.
- Monday, October 15, 2018: Chapter 7: “Political Parties and Interest Groups.” Parties – Here and Abroad, *Decentralization, Political Culture, the Rise and Decline of American Political Parties*; The National Party Structure today, National Conventions; State and Local Parties, *The Machine, Ideological Parties, Solidary Groups, Sponsored Parties, Personal Followings*. Chapter 8: “Elections and Campaigns.” Elections and Democracy; Political Participation; *Forms of Participation, Why People Participate, Who Participate?* Historical Voting Patterns; *The Rise of the Electorate and Voter Turnout*.
- Monday, October 22, 2018: Chapter 9: “Congress.” Congress v. Parliament; The Evolution of Congress; Who is in Congress; *Years of Service Party*; Getting Elected to Congress; the Organization of Congress: *Parties and Interests, Party Organizations, Party Voting, Caucuses*.
- Monday, October 29, 2018: Chapter 10: “The Presidency.” Two Perspectives on the Presidency; Presidents and Prime Ministers; The Powers of the President; *Powers of the President Alone, Powers of the President Shared with the Senate, Powers of the President Shared with Congress as a Whole*; The Evolution of the Presidency; *Establishing the Legitimacy of the Presidency, the Jacksonians and the Reemergence of Congress*.
- Monday, November 5, 2018: Chapter 11: “Bureaucracy.” Distinctiveness of the American Bureaucracy; The Growth of the Bureaucracy; *Bureaucracy before the New Deal Era, A Change in Role, The Federal Bureaucracy Today, Recruitment and Retention, Personal Attributes, Roles and Mission, Outside Forces*; Congressional Oversight; *Bureaucracy: Private v. Public; the Appropriations Committee and Legislative Committees; Congressional Investigations*.

- Monday, November 12, 2018: Chapter 12: “The Judiciary.” The Development of the Federal Courts; *National Supremacy and Slavery*; *Government and the Economy*, *The Protection of Political Liberty and Economic Regulation*; The Structure of The Federal Courts; the Jurisdiction of the Federal Courts; Getting to Court; *Fee Shifting*; *Standing*; *Class-Action Suits*.
- Monday, November 19 – Friday, November 23, 2018.....Thanksgiving Break
- Monday, November 26, 2018: Chapter 13: “Domestic Policy.” Deficit Policy; Politics and the Economy; *What Economic Numbers Hurt the President?* How the Government Tries to Manage the Economy? *Fiscal Policy*. Chapter 14: “Foreign and Military Policy.” Kinds of Foreign Policy; The Constitutional and Legal Context; *Checks on Presidential Power*; Foreign and Public Opinion; *Backing the President*, *Mass v. Elite Opinion*, *Political Polarization*; The Use of Military Force; The Defense Budget; *Total Spending*, *What Do We Get with Our Money?*
- Monday, December 3, 2018.....TBA by the Instructor
- Monday, December 3 – Friday, December 7, 2018.....Final Examination