Political Science 122Y
American Government
Fall 2015
MWF – 12PM

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Office Hours:
M 9-11, T-TH 2-3:30
And by appointment

COURSE OVERVIEW

This is an introductory course in American government and politics. As the semester progresses, we will examine the Constitutional basis of the American political system, the means of linking citizens and government, major political institutions, and concrete public policies.

Required Readings: The following are required:


Selected news articles and supplemental readings assigned through Westernonline. To access this, go to www.wiu.edu, and select Westernonline from the “myWIU” drop down menu at the top of the page. To login use your ECOM user name and password. Select Political Science 122.

Exams: There will be four exams, covering the lectures, class discussions, and reading assignments, including current events articles. Format of the exams will be discussed in class. Each exam will include an essay section.

Out of Class Paper: Each student will do an out-of-class paper. Details will be discussed in class.

In class written assignments: Periodically we will have individual or group exercises that student will do in class, based on out-of-class reading assignments. Details will be discussed in class, and dates will be announced in advance. You may drop your lowest score for these assignments.

Other in class assignments: A few times during class, we will conduct in-class simulations or other exercises. Specific dates/activities will be announced in advance.

Attendance: Periodically I will ask students to write a short commentary on something covered in class or an issue in the news. For each time a student misses, beyond one absence, one point is deducted from the attendance grade.

Class Participation: Although I do not include it directly in your grade, I will give students who participate the benefit of the doubt in borderline cases. I would also like to
encourage widespread participation, however, and hope that one or a few students do not dominate class discussions.

GENERAL COURSE POLICIES

Make-up Exams: All make-up exams will be given immediately after the final exam for this course. No student will be permitted to take a make-up exam without a written excuse. Exams in other classes do not constitute legitimate grounds for taking a make-up exam. No student will be allowed to take more than one make-up exam. Please do not plan any family vacations or other trips for finals week.

Late Papers: All late papers will be penalized one point per day regardless of excuse.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is a serious offense and will be treated as such. Make sure you do your own work. If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please see me.

Final Course Grades: All course grades are final and will not be changed except in cases of calculation error. There will be no individual extra credit assignments.

Class Decorum: I expect students to adopt at least minimal standards of courtesy/civility in class. This means coming on time, remaining for the entire class period, staying awake, keeping all cell phones put away, pretending like you are paying attention, and treating other students respectfully. Failure to observe these minimum standards is cause for reducing your final course grade.

Grading: Course activities are weighted as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st exam</td>
<td>55 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>2nd exam</td>
<td>55 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>3rd exam</td>
<td>55 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
<td>55 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Out-of-Class Paper</td>
<td>45 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>In-Class Written Assignments</td>
<td>15 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other In-Class Assignments</td>
<td>10 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>10 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>300 points</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Final course grades will be based on the following scale:

- 276-300 = A
- 270-276 = A-
- 264-269 = B+
- 247-263 = B
- 240-246 = B-
- 234-239 = C+
- 217-233 = C
- 210-216 = C-
- 204-209 = D+
- 187-203 = D
- 180-186 = D-
- 0-179 = F
COURSE OUTLINE

Part 1 -- Introduction, Constitution, Civil Liberties, Supreme Court (Approximately August 24 – September 18).

Readings – Essentials of American Government, Chs. 1 (pp. 1-15 only), 2, 4, 9
Alex Seitz-Wald, “The U.S. Needs a New Constitution: Here’s How To Write it.”*


Readings – Essentials of American Government, Chs. 10, 11 (pp. 280-296 only), Ch. 12 (pp. 326-343 only),
Ron Paul, “Protesting the Two-Party System by Voting for Third Party Candidates”*

Part 3 – Interest Groups, Congress, President, Bureaucracy (Approximately October 19 – November 11)

Readings – Essentials of American Government, Ch. 11 (pp. 296-307 only), Ch. 12 (pp. 318-323 only) Chs. 6-8
Lawrence Lessig, “Campaign Finance and the Politics of Nihilist Resignation”*

Part 4 – Civil Rights and Public Policy (Approximately November 13 – December 11)

Readings – Essentials of American Government, Chs. 5, 13 (pp. 354-371 only), 14, 3
David Rothkopf, “Tehran Trigger”*

*Articles are available on Western Online under “Supplemental Readings” section. (Click “Supplemental Readings,” and then click it again).

Note: We will have an exam after each part of the course. Exam dates will be announced at least one week in advance.

Another Note: On September 16, the class will attend the Constitution Day program held at noon in Malpass Library.
ADA STATEMENT

Students with disabilities: In accordance with University values and disability law, students with disabilities may request academic accommodations where there are aspects of a course that result in barriers to inclusion or accurate assessment of achievement. To file an official request for disability-related accommodations, please contact the Disability Resource Center at 309-298-2512, disability@wiu.edu or in 143 Memorial Hall. Please notify the instructor as soon as possible to ensure that this course is accessible to you in a timely manner.

STUDENT RIGHTS/RESPONSIBILITIES AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY LINKS

http://www.wiu.edu/provost/students.php

http://www.wiu.edu/policies/acintegrity.php
Political Science 122
Out of Class Paper -- Option 1

Your assignment is to attend the mock presidential election for at least three nights, including the final night, November 2. The other nights are October 20, October 22, October 27, and October 29. You may attend either Republican (5-7) or Democratic (8-10) sessions (or the Green or Libertarian sessions on night four).

Your paper should include the following:

1) A description of the events that occurred during each night you attended the simulation. What happened, who were the main actors, and what was your role?

2) A discussion of what you learned about the political process from participating in each night’s event. How did it connect with what we had covered in class about the presidential election process?

3) An evaluation of how effective each night’s event was in helping students understand parties, elections, and the political process. What were the strengths and weaknesses of the simulation? What would you recommend to change it?

4) A concluding section describing your overall experience with the Mock Presidential Election over the three nights. What was your impression of the event in the end and why? What would you change or keep the same, if you were in charge of designing the simulation? Explain your reasoning.

I will grade your paper according to how completely and thoughtfully it addresses the issues listed above. It is also important that your paper is well-organized with an introduction and conclusion, and avoids grammar and spelling mistakes. Papers are due by November 20, and should be about 7 pages long.
Your assignment is to compare and evaluate how various media outlets cover major national political and governmental events.

For at least three days during a one week period, examine two of the following media each day.
(You should choose from two separate categories).

1. A major big city or national newspaper. Examples of acceptable newspapers include the New York Times, Washington Post, Chicago Tribune, Chicago Sun-Times, Wall Street Journal, USA Today, Christian Science Monitor, etc. The library has a large collection of daily newspapers, but you should avoid small town papers, such as the Macomb Journal. You may also use the on-line versions of national newspapers.

2. A national network (not local) news program (usually on at 5:30 PM).

3. A “specialized” news program, such as “Nightline” (ABC), O’Reilly Factor (Fox News Channel), “The Situation Room” (CNN), Daily Show (Comedy Central), Rachel Maddow Show (MSNBC).

4. A radio show dealing with current affairs (e.g., Rush Limbaugh or a variety of programs on National Public Radio).

5. A politics/current events web site. You may also use political blogs as part of this but if you do, you should look at multiple postings. Most major news outlets have associated blogs, and there are also a number of independent outlets (e.g. www.politico.com). If you have any doubts about what is appropriate on this score, let me know.

You should write a paper that…

- **Describes** what you saw/read/heard in the two media outlets. What political and governmental stories were covered and how were they covered? You should explain and support your descriptions using examples.

- **Compares and contrasts** the styles and approaches of the two media outlets. What similarities and differences did you see in what stories were covered and how they were covered? Did content and/or style differ? Again, you should support your points using examples.

- **Evaluates** the effectiveness of the various media. Did each of the media you discuss do a good job or poor job of covering major news stories? Which was most and least effective? Why? Did you see evidence of bias in the media? Explain and support with examples.

I will grade your paper based primarily on your ability to make a convincing argument based on evidence. Make sure you include the names and dates of the media outlets you use in your paper. It is also important that your paper is well-organized, with an introduction and conclusion, and avoids grammar and spelling mistakes. Papers are due by November 20, and should be about 7 pages long.