POLS 122Y: American Government and Politics
First Year Experience (FYE) Course
Fall 2015

Instructor: Jongho Lee, Ph.D.
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Email: J-Lee6@wiu.edu

Meeting Time: T & TH 9:30 – 10:45 AM
Meeting Place: Morgan 312
Office Hours: T & TH 11 AM – 12 PM
W 9:30 – 11:30 AM

Course Overview

This course is an introduction to the study of American government and politics. We will critically examine the institutions, processes, functions of and actors in our political system. The course is divided into three main parts:

Part One surveys the historical and constitutional foundations of American government. We will explore the evolution of the Constitution along with key political developments in our history.

Part Two analyzes the politics of ordinary citizens. We will assess how ordinary citizens form opinions about politics and participate in the political process.

Part Three focuses on the major institutions of the U.S. national government. We will examine the structure and function of national political institutions.

Course Objectives

The goal of this class is to help you better understand the forces that have shaped American government and politics so that you may become a more informed, sophisticated, and engaged participant in the American political system. More specifically, it aims to help you:

- Understand the origin and constitutional underpinnings of our form of government;
- Comprehend the process by which ordinary citizens learn about politics and public affairs, develop political attitudes and preferences, and arrive at political decisions;
- Identify the impetus behind the participation of ordinary citizens in the political process;
- Appreciate the multifaceted structures and roles of our national political institutions;
• Critically and independently evaluate a variety of political issues facing our nation and the world; and
• Develop the capacity and skill to better communicate and exchange ideas and opinions about the political world.

As an FYE course, this class is also intended to help you explore and become familiarized with the academic life and campus community.

**Course Materials**

A book required for the course is:


* Occasionally, additional readings may be assigned. Additional readings will be announced at least one week in advance and posted on the class website at Western Online.

* Class information and materials will be posted and regularly updated on the class website at Western Online: Go to [https://WesternOnline.wiu.edu](https://WesternOnline.wiu.edu) and log in with your ECOM user name and password.

**Course Requirements and Grading**

**Attendance (50 points)**

Class attendance is required. Attendance will be taken by way of circulating a sign-up sheet at the beginning of the class period. It is your responsibility to make sure that you have signed the attendance sheet if you are in class. Each class attendance (or each excused absence) will be counted as 2 points for a total of up to 50 points (You will be allowed up to three unexcused absences during the semester without affecting your grade).

**Exams (300 points) — 100 points each for Exam 1, Exam 2, and Exam 3**

Over the course of the semester, there will be three in-class exams. The exams will primarily include multiple choice questions. Each exam will be based on lectures, readings and class discussions, and worth a total of 100 points. Exam 3—a final—will not be cumulative.
Essay Assignment (or In-class Presentation) (50 points)

You are expected to write an essay on either a specific issue closely related to any of the topics covered in the course or a particular question selected from a list of questions posted on the class website at Western Online under “Essay Assignment.” The essay will be three to four typed, double-spaced pages long (exclusive of a title page and bibliography/references). It is due on Sunday, November 22. A late submission will be penalized three points.

Alternatively, in lieu of writing the essay, you may choose to make an in-class presentation on an issue closely related to any of the topics covered in the course. Or you may choose and react to a particular question from a list of questions posted on the class website at Western Online under “Essay Assignment” in your presentation. The presentation will be about 10 minutes long and you are expected to use and submit to me a set of PowerPoint presentation slides for your presentation (prior to your presentation). You are encouraged to present early in the semester and pair with another student in class to present as a group of two (Both of you will then receive the same grade on the essay assignment/presentation portion of your final grade). You are also expected to inform me of a preferred date of your presentation at least one week prior to the date you want to present.

Your essay, or your presentation (if you choose to make an in-class presentation in lieu of writing an essay), will be graded according to the following criteria.

- **Development (15 points)** – How clearly, logically, and coherently have you developed and stated the main idea and arguments?
- **Exposition (20 points)** – How much have you provided informed reasons and evidence to support the main idea and arguments?
- **Fair acknowledgement of alternative explanations and/or opposing views (15 points)** – How well have you considered and reacted to alternative explanations and/or counter arguments?
Grading Scale

370 – 400 points (93-100%) = A
354 – 369 points (89-92%) = A-
342 – 353 points (86-88%) = B+
330 – 341 points (83-85%) = B
314 – 329 points (79-82%) = B-
302 – 313 points (76-78%) = C+
290 – 301 points (73-75%) = C
274 – 289 points (69-72%) = C-
262 – 273 points (66-68%) = D+
250 – 261 points (63-65%) = D
234 – 249 points (59-62%) = D-
Below 233 points (Below 59%) = F

Course Policies

Course Rules

● Make-up exams will only be permitted in cases of documented medical or personal emergencies.

● Please come to class on time and stay for the entire class period. Cell phones should be turned off before arriving in class.

● Please treat your fellow students with respect.

Academic Honesty

Please refer to the WIU Student Academic Integrity Policy at http://www.wiu.edu/policies/acintegrity.php. It is your responsibility to strictly follow this policy.

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.”
Course Outline

* Please note that the following schedule is subject to change.

Ginsberg: Ginsberg, Lowi, Weir, and Tobert’s “We the People (Core 10th Edition)”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading Assignments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>8/25</td>
<td>Course introduction</td>
<td>Ginsberg Ch 1</td>
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<td></td>
<td>8/27</td>
<td>The Foundations of American Government</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>9/1-3</td>
<td>The Constitution</td>
<td>Ginsberg Ch 2</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>9/8</td>
<td>Constitution (cont.)</td>
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<td>9/10</td>
<td>Federalism</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>9/15</td>
<td>Federalism (cont.)</td>
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<td>9/17</td>
<td>Civil Liberties</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>9/22</td>
<td>Civil Liberties (cont.)</td>
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<td>9/24</td>
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<td>9/29-10/1</td>
<td>Civil Rights</td>
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<td>10/6-8</td>
<td>Public Opinion</td>
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<td>10/13</td>
<td>Media</td>
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<td>Political Participation &amp; Voting</td>
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<td>10/20</td>
<td>Participation &amp; Voting (cont.)</td>
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<td>10/22</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>10/27</td>
<td>Campaigns &amp; Elections (cont.)</td>
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<td>10/29</td>
<td><strong>Exam 2</strong></td>
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<td>11/3-5</td>
<td>Political Parties</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>11/10-12</td>
<td>Interest Groups</td>
<td>Ginsberg Ch 11</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>11/17-19</td>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>Ginsberg Ch 12</td>
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<td><strong>Essay is due on Nov 22</strong></td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>11/23-27</td>
<td>Thanksgiving Break (No Classes)</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>12/1-3</td>
<td>The Presidency</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>12/8-10</td>
<td>The Judiciary</td>
<td>Ginsberg Ch 15</td>
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* Final exam is scheduled for Thursday, December 17, at 8 AM.