

**American Government (POLS 1101)**  
**Fall 2009**  
The University of West Georgia  
Department of Political Science & Planning

**Course Information:** POLS 1101-15; CRN 81263

***Class meets Tuesday and Thursday 7:00 – 8:15 p.m. in Pafford 112***

**Instructor:** Adam Edge

**Office:** Pafford 115 **Hours:** by appointment

**E-mail:** edgeadam@yahoo.com

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***“Liberty Cannot Be Preserved Without General Knowledge Among the People.” –John Adams***

**OBJECTIVES:** The main objective of this course is to learn about the development of government in America and its institutional processes.

Conflict exists in society because people have different value systems and because resources—such as land, money, food, etc.—are finite. Given this, the principle role of government, in both democratic and non-democratic nations, is to manage societal conflict. This course is about how American government, through its institutions and democratic procedures, resolves conflict in our society.

To hold elected and non-elected officials accountable, the public must understand how our government functions. Representative government survives through an educated and active public. Therefore, in a representative democracy, we, as citizens, have a responsibility to understand issues of public concern. This course is intended to provide you with the tools that you need to fulfill your responsibilities as citizens of a representative democracy.

The course is an interactive one. Students will learn the important concepts and apply them critically through discussions, simulations, and other educational exercises.

Upon completion of this class, students should:

1. Understand the role of government and politics in human society
2. Understand the different forms of government that exist
3. Be able to explain the development of the US Constitution
4. Comprehend the federal system and the role of sub-national governments (state and local governments)
5. Understand the role and basic operations of the major federal institutions: Congress, Presidency, Judiciary, and Bureaucracy
6. Comprehend the development of civil liberties and civil rights in the U.S.
7. Be able to explain the impact of public opinion, political parties, elections, and interest groups on American government.
8. Understand how the American governmental system is similar to and different than governments in other countries in particular Great Britain’s system.

**TEXTBOOK:** Ginsberg, Benjamin, Theodore J. Lowi, and Margaret Weir. 2007. *We the People: An Introduction to American politics* – Shorter 6th edition. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

\*\*\*\*Students should follow the news regularly. The following websites are excellent sources for current events: [www.realclearpolitics.com](http://www.realclearpolitics.com), [www.foxnews.com](http://www.foxnews.com) or [www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com). We will occasionally discuss current events, and students should be prepared to participate in a classroom exchange concerning the political, social, and economical happenings in the world.

**GRADES:** Final course grades will be based on the following distribution:

- |                                     |                |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|
| a. Examination (2 <i>in-class</i> ) | 50% (25% each) |
| b. Final exam                       | 30%            |
| c. Class Project                    | <u>20%</u>     |
|                                     | 100%           |

\*\*\*\*A= 90 - 100; B= 80 – 89; C= 70 - 79; D= 60 – 69; and F= 0 – 59

\*\*\*\*Prior to mid-semester, you will receive feedback on your performance in this course.

## ASSIGNMENTS:

- **EXAMINATIONS (80%):** Students will have **two tests** and a **final exam** that will come from assigned readings, discussion, and in-class lectures. A majority of the questions on the exams will be taken from information covered in class lectures. Therefore it is imperative that students attend class regularly. The exams are comprehensive. **There are NO MAKE-UP EXAMS unless the student has an extraordinary excuse, which in most cases will require documentation. This rule is nonnegotiable.**
  - **CLASS PROJECT (20%):** Students will research an elected official from either the executive or legislative branch of the national government (meaning current or former Presidents, Vice Presidents, Senators, and Representatives). In turn, students will draft a well written 3-5 page paper on the elected official chosen, including the following information:
    - A brief overview of the elected official's early life (i.e. place of birth, college attended, early accomplishments);
    - Highlights of the elected official's career;
    - A brief conclusion on the lasting legacy of the elected official's accomplishments
- **EXTRA CREDIT:** Students wishing to improve their course grade can earn extra credit by analyzing a political film. Please contact the instructor for more information.

**REQUEST FOR MODIFICATION:** Students with disabilities for which accommodations may be required should notify the instructor during the first few days of class so the necessary arrangements can be made.

## CLASSROOM POLICIES:

1. In this class, we will discuss controversial issues. Students **MUST** respect the opinions and values held by others. If any student is disrespectful, he or she will be asked to leave class.
2. Put your cell phones on silent or vibrate
3. Laptops are encouraged, but do not use your computer for Facebooking.
4. There are **NO MAKE-UP EXAMS** unless the student has an extraordinary excuse, which most often will require documentation. Students will not be allowed to turn in late work unless previously approved by the instructor.
5. In this class, roll will be taken daily. Studies have shown that there is evidence to support the proposition that students who attend class regularly earn higher course grades (duh!). It is in your advantage to be in class. The material on the exams is taken from classroom lectures and discussions.
6. Do no cheat or plagiarize. The instructor strongly enforces the University's Honor Code.

**ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT:** Any form of academic misconduct will not be tolerated and procedures will be followed to discipline offenders. Students must adhere to the University's honor code, which is typed below:

**UWG Honor Code:** At the University of West Georgia we believe that academic and personal integrity are based upon honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. Students at West Georgia assume responsibility for upholding the honor code. West Georgia students pledge to refrain from engaging in acts that do not maintain academic and personal integrity. These include, but are not limited to, plagiarism\*, cheating\*, fabrication\*, aid of academic dishonesty, lying, bribery or threats, and stealing.

**Plagiarism is an especially heinous form of academic misconduct. Any form of plagiarism will result in an F in this course.**

## IMPORTANT DATES *(You should be aware that the exam dates are tentative and subject to change):*

August 13 <sup>th</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup> day of classes
August 14 <sup>th</sup> -19 <sup>th</sup>	Drop/Add Late Registration
September 7 <sup>th</sup>	No Class/Labor Day
<b>September 17<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Exam</b>
October 6 <sup>th</sup>	Last day to drop with a "W"
October 15 <sup>th</sup> -16 <sup>th</sup>	No Class/Fall Break
<b>October 29<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Exam</b>
<b>November 19<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>ALL PAPERS DUE!</b>
November 25-28 <sup>th</sup>	No Class/Thanksgiving Break
December 1 <sup>st</sup>	Last day of class
<b>December 7-11<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Final Exams</b>

**COURSE OUTLINE:**

<b>Week</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Topics</b>	<b>Other Assignments</b>
	8/13	First Day of Class: Cover Syllabus: Intro.	<b>BUY THE BOOK, READ, AND RELAX!</b>
1	8/18-8/20	Topic A: The importance of understanding government: an introduction to the course Topic B: Introduction to government; The necessity of government; What is democracy?; The basic forms of government; American political culture and ideology	
2	8/25-8/27	Topic A: The revolutionary period, Declaration of Independence, and the formation of the Constitution	Read the Declaration of Independence
3	9/1-9/3	Topic A: The Constitutional Convention	Read the U.S. Constitution and the Federalist Papers # 10 & # 51: ENJOY LABOR DAY!
4	9/8-9/10	Topic A: Federalism and state governance	
5	9/15-9/17	Topic A: Cont. federalism	<b>EXAM 1!!!! 9/17</b>
6	9/22-9/24	Topic A: Congress	Explore <a href="http://www.centeroncongress.org">www.centeroncongress.org</a>
7	9/29-10/1	Topic A: The presidency and national security policy	
8	10/6-10/8	Topic A: Cont. national security policy Topic B: Bureaucracy	<b>10/6-Last Day to Drop with a W</b>
9	10/13-10/15	Topic A: Cont. bureaucracy Topic B: The federal judiciary	<b>10/15-No Class!!!!</b>
10	10/20-10/22	Topic A: The federal judiciary Topic B: Civil rights	
11	10/27-10/29	Topic A: Cont. civil rights	<b>EXAM 2!!!! 10/29</b>
12	11/3-11/5	Topic A: Civil liberties	
13	11/10-11/12	Topic A: Cont. civil liberties	
14	11/17-11/19	Topic A: Public opinion and the media	<b>ALL PAPERS DUE ON 11/19!!!!!!!!</b>
15	11/24-11/26	Topic A: Political participation, political parties, and elections/campaigns	<b>NO CLASS 11/26: T-Giving Break</b>
16	12/1	Wrapping up...	
17		<b>Final Exam (8:00 – 10:00 pm.)</b>	

NOTE: Clearly, this syllabus is a general guideline and can be altered or changed during the course. You should understand that the dates on the above schedules, both for exercises and tests, are tentative and may change –within a narrow range.