

POLITICAL SCIENCE 1101 - AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

University of West Georgia, Spring 2009

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Course Web Page: www.westga.edu/~gdixon and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This is an introductory course in American National government and politics. This course serves two distinct purposes: 1) to provide college students with the knowledge of their national and state governments necessary to act as critical and effective citizens and 2) to prepare political science majors for future coursework. This course will cover the origin, development, and contemporary workings of the United States national government. It will also cover the development and contemporary institutions in the state government of Georgia. This course is divided into three broad sections: 1) the origins and design of the political institutions of the United States and their consolidation in the early years of the Republic 2) the evolutionary and revolutionary changes to the political system in the United States from the founding to the present day and 3) the contemporary workings of the US Federal government including taxation, provision of social services, national defense, etc. This course is intended to provide all students, regardless of their political beliefs, loyalties, or affiliations with the basic tools necessary to make informed judgments about political issues in the United States.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- O'Connor, Karen and Larry J. Sabato *Essentials of American Government: Continuity and Change, 2008 Edition, 8th Edition* (ISBN: 9780205526833)
 - This book is also available as an online eBook (ISBN: 9780205629510) directly from the publisher (<http://www.mypersonstore.com/bookstore/product.asp?isbn=0205629512&xid=PSED>)
- *Choices: Readings in American Government* (ISBN: 0558021557) This is a custom-published book designed for use in this class. This text must be purchased through the University Bookstore.
- Miller, Roger LeRoy, Daniel K. Benjamin, and Douglass C. North *The Economics of Public Issues, 15th Edition* (ISBN: 978-0321416100)

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- Compare the context of the design of the institutions of national and state governments
- Evaluate how these institutions have changed over time in response to changing circumstances
- Evaluate the workings of the contemporary political system including the following areas:
 - Elections, representation, and the role of parties and other interests in the process
 - Inter-branch relations in the contemporary period
 - The relations of the permanent bureaucracy to temporary elected officials
 - Policy formation, agenda setting, and control of the policy apparatus across the branches
 - Tax policy, sources of revenue and the basic structure of the contemporary tax system
 - The budgetary process
- Evaluate the role of the individual citizen in the contemporary political environment

GRADING:

Exams (4)	25% each (lowest exam grade dropped)
Quiz 1 (Amendments)	5 %
Quiz 2 (Presidents)	10%
Paper	10%

NATURE OF THE EXAMS:

The exams in this course will be a mix of multiple choice and short answer questions. Exams will be taken in class and will be completed during the class period. Students must bring the appropriate multiple choice form and a blue book to class on the day of the exam. There will be three exams in this course: two midterm exams and a final exam.

NATURE OF QUIZZES:

There will be two quizzes in this class:

- Quiz 1: The Amendments of the Constitution – students must accurately identify, in order, each of the 27 Amendments to the Constitution and list the year of ratification of each Amendment.

- Quiz 2: The Presidents – students are required to memorize all of the Presidents of the United States, the year of their election, the years in which they served as President, and their political party.

NATURE OF PAPER:

Students are required to complete a paper assignment for this course. The paper is a 4-5 page paper analyzing Barack Obama's Inaugural Address. The details of the paper assignment are posted on the course web site.

ASSUMPTION OF ADULTHOOD:

This is a college course. All students are assumed to be adults and will be held to adult standards of accountability and decorum. You are expected to familiarize yourself with the requirements of the course. You are expected to meet the requirements of the course without having to be reminded of such clearly posted things as exam due dates. It is expected that you will do the required reading for the course. It is expected that you will complete all required assignments. If you have questions, you are expected to ask the professor to seek clarification.

CLASS PARTICIPATION:

It is expected that students will participate in the discussion. Education is not simply a one-way process. Further, the subject matter in this course is complex at times and may require clarification. Students are encouraged to ask questions regarding material in the lectures and the readings.

MAKE-UP EXAMS:

Make-up exams and quizzes will be given only for truly extraordinary circumstances. Documentation of all such circumstances will be required. The professor reserves the right to refuse to administer a make-up exam for any reason.

ACCOMMODATION FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL ACADEMIC NEEDS:

Students with special needs as identified by the University will be accommodated in accordance with University policy. Please inform the instructor AS SOON AS POSSIBLE of any special needs that will require accommodation.

ATTENDANCE:

Attendance will not be taken and is not required as part of the course grade. However, this course will move very quickly and covers a large amount of material. Attendance is vital to success in this course. While the professor does not deduct points for missed classes, students are forewarned that missing lectures may significantly reduce their chances of success in the course. (As an example: One in five students in Fall 2008 failed POLS1101 in Dr. Dixon's classes. The average failing grade was below 50%. Of the students who failed, not one had regularly attended class. In other words, poor attendance = failure.) If it is necessary to miss a class, it is the responsibility of the student to get the notes from that day of class from another student in the class.

ACTS OF THE GODS, AND OTHER VERY BAD THINGS:

On very rare occasions truly terrible things happen to students that severely interfere with the ability to function in the class. If such an event happens to you, don't wait until the last day of the semester to bring it to the professor's attention. While the professor is strict, he's not inhuman and accommodations for students who experience *truly exceptional* life events may be made if the circumstances warrant. The nature of such modifications will be determined solely by the professor and will vary on a case-by-case basis. The professor reserves the right to offer accommodation, or to refuse accommodation based solely on his personal discretion.

PRIVACY RIGHTS AND EMAIL CONTACT

Federal law (FERPA) protects the privacy rights of students. This law was written before the age of email and the interpretation of student privacy over email remains unclear. As a result, the professor is very limited as to what can be discussed over email and also very limited in which email accounts he can correspond with regarding the course. Nothing related to grades, exams, or any other course information specific to a student will be discussed via email. Exam grades, course grades, or any other grade related information will only be discussed in person during office hours or after class. General questions about the course material, lectures, etc. may be asked via email, but only through the student's official university accounts or through the WebCT interface. Gmail, hotmail, Yahoo, etc. accounts cannot be used for the purposes of this class.

EXTRA CREDIT:

Students may earn up to two points of extra credit to be added to their final grade in the course. This extra credit can be earned by attending Excel Center courses related to study skills and academic success. The Total Success Live series of courses are offered on specific dates throughout the semester. Each class a student attends will add 1/3 of a point to the

student's final grade in the course up to a maximum of 2 points. The Excel Center has a sign out sheet for these seminars. To receive the extra credit, a student's name MUST appear on the relevant sign out sheet. For individuals who cannot attend these courses due to work, school, or other constraints, individual tutoring in these subjects can be substituted. The extra credit will be given at the rate of 1/4 of a point for every hour of individual tutoring a student receives up to the maximum of two points. Documentation from the Excel Center is required to receive the extra credit.

CLASSROOM DECORUM, CELL PHONES, LAPTOPS, AND OTHER CURSES OF MODERN TECHNOLOGY:

Please arrive on time. Please turn off any device that makes noise. Cell phones should be turned off during class. Laptops should be muted if they are to be used during class. Please do not read the newspaper, sleep, send text messages (your phone should be off), or work on material for other courses during the class time. Absolutely no personal entertainment devices (I-pods, Zoons, or other music or video players, video games, etc.) are to be used during class time. Students are required to remove all earbuds, headsets, or other forms of listen devices from their ears during class. If you would rather listen to music, do so someplace other than the classroom (see attendance policy above). Anyone using such infernal devices is subject to punishment ranging from being cruelly mocked by the professor to expulsion from the course.

At various times during the course we will be discussing highly controversial topics. Students may have strong feelings that conflict with the feelings of others on these issues. Mutual respect and politeness are required in the classroom at all times. Violations of appropriate classroom decorum will result in penalties including, but not limited to reduction in the student's grade in the course, expulsion from the course, and/or reporting the student's behavior to the University for further action under the Conduct Code.

ACADEMIC HONESTY:

All students should be aware of the University rules regarding academic honesty. Cheating, fabrication, and/or plagiarism of any kind will not be tolerated. Any student caught committing any violation of the Honor Code on any assignment will receive an F in the course (regardless of the relative value of the assignment in question) and will be reported to the University for further action as per University policy. **The professor reserves the right to seek the harshest possible penalty (expulsion from the university) for any and all violations of the University of West Georgia Honor Code regardless of the value of the individual assignment.** If you are unsure as to what constitutes academic dishonesty, please consult the University of West Georgia Student Handbook. Ignorance of the Code will not be accepted as an excuse for violations of it.

MODIFICATIONS TO THIS SYLLABUS:

The professor reserves the right to make changes to any and all elements of this syllabus as necessary for the success of the course as defined by the professor. Such changes will be announced verbally in class. Such changes may only be announced once. Such changes may include modifications to any and all aspects of this syllabus.

ACCEPTANCE OF TERMS OF SYLLABUS AND INTERPRETATION OF TERMS

By remaining enrolled in the course after the first class day, the student agrees to accept the terms and conditions of the course as set forth in the syllabus. Further the student accepts full, personal responsibility for compliance with all course rules, regulations, exam dates, assignment due dates, and all other aspects of the course. The student acknowledges that the student is fully and wholly responsible for remaining informed of changes to any and all aspects of the course.