**Introduction to American Politics**

PSC 101-006, Spring 2015

MWF, 11:00-11:50 Office-320 ten Hoor

Classroom: ten Hoor, 105

Instructor: Matt Millard

Contact: mcmillard@crimson.ua .edu or matthewcmillard@gmail.com

Office hours: Monday, 11:50-1:00 and Wednesday 11:50-1:00

Course Description

This course is designed to introduce students to the subfield of American Politics within the field of political science (and, more generally, to the field of political science). Students will thus learn about the fundamental principles of academic inquiry into the field of American politics, the political system, and relevant current events. In this course, students will learn about the history, perspectives, and the role of the various branches of government, the media, individuals, and other players in the American political process, as well as various theories within the discipline. There is no prerequisite for participation in this course.

Requirements

*Class participation/attendance (20%)*: Students are expected to attend class and are encouraged to participate in discussions. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class and occasionally at the end of class. Students who show up to class more than ten minutes late will be marked as absent. This will be deducted from the student’s final grade. Four points will be deducted per missed class from this total grade of 100. Legitimate excuses, such as family emergencies, sickness, or school-sanctioned events (such as participation in sports) do not constitute a missed class and will not be deducted from the student’s attendance. Students who miss class for one of these excused reasons will be REQUIRED to email me the reason why they were absent and should include in the subject line of the email “yourlastname-absence” if they wish it to count as excused. Students are also highly encouraged to speak with the professor before or after class regarding their absence. Students are allowed to miss three classes without a grade penalty.

*Tests 42% (3 at 14% each)*: There are three tests that are scheduled for this course.

These tests will each be worth 14% of your course grade. However, to accommodate those students whose strong-suit is not test-taking, multiple choice questions will also be accompanied by several short-answer questions. As a result, students should be prepared and bring an examination booklet for each of the three tests.

*Federalist Papers Summary* (10%): Students will summarize two of the three excerpts from *The Federalist Papers*, which are found in the back of the APT text, beginning on page A15. The three in this text are Number 10, Number 51, and Number 78. To be successful in this project, students must answer the following questions: What is the author arguing? Why does the author argue this? What do these arguments say about the current political situation in the United States? Does the author think that the Constitution can mitigate some of his concerns? How so? Given the arguments made in this excerpt, do you think the author would wish to see anything different about the American political process today? Why? STUDENTS MAY NOT CONSULT THE INTERNET, OTHER SOURCES, OR OTHER STUDENTS IN THE COMPLETION OF THIS PROJECT. Submissions will be put through plagiarism detection software.Word count max: 1000 words (entire project-approximately 500 words per excerpt).

*Final Exam (*20%): The final exam for this course will be given on Monday, 27 April, from 8:00 to 10:30.

*Pop Quizzes (8%):* In order to make sure students are following along with the required readings in the textbooks, students will be given periodic pop quizzes throughout the semester. Based on class participation, I may only give a few of these. However, if I feel that students are not following along with the readings (i.e., not participating), I will give pop quizzes more frequently.

Required Texts

Bianco, William T. and David T. Canon. *American Politics Today.* 4th ed. Norton:

2014.

*This will be our primary textbook and is referred to in the syllabus as “APT”.*

Ginsberg, Benjamin, Theodore J. Lowi, Margaret Weir, and Caroline J. Tolbert. *We the People:*

*An Introduction to American Politics.* 10th ed. Norton: 2014.

*A supplementary text, we will use this textbook for chapters 2, 4, and 5. It is*

*referred to as “WTP” in the syllabus.*

Readings

Students should read the pages listed in the text PRIOR to the date the class meets. In other words, for class on January 8th, students should already have read pages 1-24 in the *American Politics Today* textbook. This material is “fair game” for quizzes the day that the readings are covered.

Classroom Policies

As college students, you are expected to conduct yourself in a professional manner. Classroom policies are set for the benefit of not only yourself, but also the other students enrolled in this course. The policies set below are designed to facilitate the learning environment and to ensure that professionalism is maintained at all times. The following are some (though not all) of the things that are expected of you:

*Computers:* Students are **prohibited** from using their computers, tablets, or other similar devices in this class. Though these devices are indispensable tools in today’s world, I have come to find, more and more, that they serve more as a means to distract students instead of enabling them to get the most out of their classes. Students who have a documented learning disability approved by ODS (see below) or the note takers for students with documented learning disabilities are the only exception to this rule and, therefore, they are permitted to use computers, tablets, etc., solely to take notes for the student(s) with the disability. Students found to be using tablets, computers, cell phones, etc. (yes, I can tell when you are texting underneath your desk or behind a book) will be marked absent for class that day and be asked to leave the classroom.

*Cell phones:* Students are prohibited from using their phones for texting, browsing the internet, or making phone calls once class has begun. The use of cellular phones during a test/quiz in class, even if used only for the purpose of checking the time, will be considered cheating and will be referred to the dean’s office.

*Newspapers/magazines, etc.:* Students are prohibited from reading non-course related materials during class.

*Missed assignments:* As college students, you are expected to conduct yourself in a professional manner, just as you would do for a job. THIS MEANS TURNING IN ASSIGNED WORK BY THE DEADLINE, SHOWING UP TO CLASS, AND, IN THE EVENT YOU CANNOT MAKE A DEADLINE OR MISS A TEST, YOU MUST INFORM ME BEFORE, NOT AFTER, THE FACT. This means you should meet with me face-to-face or send me an email with ADEQUATE prior warning for me to either approve or deny your request. Failure to do so means that the student will not be permitted to make-up the missed assignment. Quizzes cannot be retaken. However, for students who miss a quiz but have an excused absence, will have that grade dropped for them.

*Cheating:* As with all classroom policy, the university’s policy with regards to submitted work by students will be followed to the letter. All work that is submitted will be checked for plagiarism. The following text is taken from the student handbook of the University of Alabama, Codes of Conduct, Section B (Code of Academic Conduct):

*Academic misconduct by students includes all acts of dishonesty in any academically related matter and any knowing or intentional help or attempt to help, or conspiracy to help, another student commit an act of academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to, each of the following acts when performed in any type of academic or academically related matter, exercise, or activity.*

*Cheating-using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, study aids, or computer-related information.*

*Plagiarism - representing the words, data, pictures, figures, works, ideas, computer program or output, or anything not generated in an authorized fashion, as one's own.*

*Fabrication presenting as genuine any invented or falsified citation or material.*

*Misrepresentation - falsifying, altering, or misstating the contents of documents or other materials related to academic matters, including schedules, prerequisites, and transcripts.*

If you have any questions about plagiarism (intended or unintended) or if you suspect a student of committing plagiarism or cheating, please inform me as quickly as possible, as I take academic integrity very seriously.

Severe Weather Protocol

Students should be prepared to observe all of the university’s policies regarding severe weather. If students receive notification that classes and all academic activities will be suspended from the university’s notification system, they should follow these guidelines. Any required academic material that is to be submitted during a canceled class can wait and be submitted the next time the class meets (or other arrangements can be made with the instructor).

Students with Disabilities

Students who have disabilities are encouraged to contact the professor and inform him at the beginning of the semester (or give adequate prior notice before any academic activity this may affect) so that arrangements can be made for the student’s benefit. (I do not need to know what the disability is, just need notification from the Office of Disability Services!) If a student is unsure if they have a disability that may possibly affect their academic performance, they should contact the Office of Disability Services at 133-B Martha Parham East.

Schedule

January 7-Introduction to Course

January 9-APT-pg. 1-24

January 12-WTP-pg. 41-60

January 14-WTP-pg. 61-70

January 16-No Class (Conference)

January 19-No Class (MLK Day)

January 21-APT-pg. 67-95 (to “Assessing Federalism”)

January 23-APT-pg. 95-100 and WTP-117-134

January 26-WTP-pg. 134-150 and WTP-pg. 159-178 (to “Extending Civil Rights”)

January 28-WTP-pg. 178-199

January 30- APT-pg. 200-212 (to “Measuring Public Opinion”)

February 2-APT-pg. 212-232

February 4- Review/catchup

February 6-Test 1

February 9-APT-pg. 238-258 (to “Assessing Media Coverage of American Politics”)

February 11- APT-pg. 270-285 (to “The Role of Political Parties in American Politics”)

February 13-APT-pg. 285-300

February 16-APT-pg. 306-318 (to “Electoral Campaigns”)

February 18-No Class (Conference)

February 20-No Class (Conference)

February 23-No Class (Conference)

February 25-APT-pg. 318-346

February 27-APTpg. 352-365 (to “Interest Group Strategies”)

March 2-APT-pg. 365-382

March 4-APT-pg. 386-407 (to “The Structure of Congress”)

March 6-APT-pg. 407-429

March 9-Review/catch up

March 11-Test 2

March 13-APT-pg. 434-455 (to “The Executive Branch”)

March 16-Spring Break

March 18-Spring Break

March 20-Spring Break

March 23-APT-pg. 455-468

March 25 –APT-pg. 472-487 (to “The Modern Federal Bureaucracy”)

March 27- APT-487-504

March 30- APT-pg. 508-528 (to “Access to the Supreme Court”)

April 1- APT-pg. 528-548 (to “Tools and Theories of Economic Policy”)

April 6-APT-pg. 572-590

April 8- APT-pg. 597-610 (to “Social Policy Today”)

April 10-APT- pg. 610-630

April 13-Review/catch up

April 15-Test 3

April 17-APT-pg. 637-657 (to “The Tools of Foreign Policy”

April 20-APT-pg. 657-668

April 22-Catch up

April 24-Last Class

April 27-final exam (8:00 a.m.)