

POLITICAL SCIENCE 111-601
AMERICAN GOVERNMENT
Summer 2015

Instructor: Mike Coste.
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Office Hours: Friday (4:00-5:00 pm) & by appointment

Class Time: REA 1153
July 17, 2015 to August 1, 2015
Friday 5:00-10:00: July 17, 24, 31
Saturday 8:00-5:30: July 18, 25, August 1

Required Text: Government in America: People, Politics, and Policy, Election Edition 2012, by Edwards, Wattenberg, and Lineberry.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Includes the background of the U.S. Constitution, the philosophy of American government, general principles of the Constitution, federalism, and civil liberties. Examines public opinion and citizen participation, political parties, interest groups, and the electoral process, and the structure and functions of the national government.

INITIAL OBJECTIVES:

- A. Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of various democratic theories.
- B. Demonstrate basic familiarity with the U.S. Constitution.
- C. Develop an understanding of “federalism” in the United States.
- D. Critique the role of the media and interest groups in American political life.
- E. Understand the importance of public opinion, political parties, and elections.
- F. Discuss the roles and responsibilities of the three branches of government.
- G. Critically evaluate the use of power, collaboration and judgment as well as the importance of values in the American political system.
- H. Examine how diversity is addressed in the American political system.
- I. Hold an informed dialogue on American politics.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING POLICY:

CAVAET: Student can only receive an A when all assignments are completed.

In Class Assignments	30%	GRADING SCALE:	
News Analysis (2 x 10)	20%	90-99%	A
Chapter Summaries (2 x 15)	30%	80-89%	B
Final Exam	20%	70-79%	C
Total:	100 pts	60-69%	D
		59% and below	F

Political Events/Extra Credit

You may receive extra credit for attending approved political events. You may attend on and/or off campus political lecture, films, debates, rallies, etc. You may also share information about events you think would be interesting and appropriate for your classmates to attend. Please double check with me before attending and I will let you know if the event in question merits extra points. Students can earn up to 5 points for each event.

**Caveat: Students may only collect extra points after all assignments are completed.*

Attendance

Your presence in class is extremely important. Everyone's participation is crucial to learning and to the success of group activities. I will provide direct information that will ensure your success in class, as well as draw upon your input concerning course relevance. You can't miss a class and expect to earn an A in this class. If you know you will miss class ahead a time or if you have a serious illness or emergency, please inform me immediately.

Miscellaneous

I will adhere to the College policy regarding Incompletes. In order to request an Incomplete, you must have 75 percent of the course completed with a grade of C or higher and demonstrate extenuating circumstances that justify an extension. The request must be made in writing, preferably by e-mail. If the Incomplete is granted, we will need to complete a contract by the end of the semester to determine how and when the work is to be finished.

Please remember to drop officially if you plan to drop the class. Failure to do so will result in an "F".

Cheating is defined as the practice of fraud or trickery, to violate rules dishonestly and to act deceptively. Plagiarism is defined as presenting ideas or words of another as one's own. As a college student it is your responsibility to fully understand the concepts of cheating and plagiarism. I am always available to clarify for students the exact definition of cheating and plagiarism. Failure to understand these concepts does not excuse you from potential reprimand. According to Red Rocks Community College policy, consequences of cheating or plagiarism can result in an F on the assignment or exam, an F in the course, and/or dismissal from Red Rocks Community College.

Please remember that my sole reason for existence as an instructor is your learning. Do not hesitate to ask if I can be of any assistance. I am always available during office hours and by appointment, but feel free to drop by my office or stop me in the hallways outside of those times. You can also e-mail me, and my usual response time is less than 48 hours, excluding weekends.

ADAAA (Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act of 2008) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973: Red Rocks Community College is committed to access for students with disabilities. If you are a student with a disability and need assistance or are interested in requesting accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS). Faculty is not obligated to provide accommodations without proper notification by the ODS. Students may

contact the ODS staff by telephone or email to make an intake appointment at 303-914-6733 or ods@rrcc.edu. The ODS is located in Suite 1182 at the Lakewood campus. More information is available at www.rrcc.edu/disabilityservices.

I strive to make my materials accessible to those with all abilities. Please let me know if you have any suggestions for making my materials more accessible.

The following actions have eligibility implications for financial aid recipients: non-attendance, dropping courses, withdrawing from courses, repeating courses, academic progress, and the number of credit hours attempted and completed. You are strongly encouraged to seek financial aid advising throughout the term if you have any questions about eligibility implications.

Chapter Summary

For each chapter, you should identify the five most important or significant facts from that chapter and explain in a short paragraph why each is important or significant. We will use this for in class exercises. You will be provided with an example from the first five chapters. The second five chapters will be due before the second Friday of class, and the final five chapters will be due before the last Friday of class. As we will be using these for class exercises, late assignments will not be accepted.

In Class Assignments

You will be given assignments to complete in class, either individually or as a group. Each assignment will be graded on a scale of check plus (10), check (8.5), or check minus (7.5). A lower grade may be given if the assignment is not completed properly. Assignments that are not completed or for which you are absent will be given a 0.

Take Home Final

On the last day of the class, you will be given a take-home final that will draw on material from throughout the course. You will have one week to complete it. You will lose a half of a grade for each day it is late after that.

News Analysis

Overview:

You will submit two news analyses to me as writing assignments throughout the semester, worth ten points each. Keeping up with current events will enrich your understanding of the course, as well as the world around you. The purpose of this assignment is to follow the news throughout the semester, in order to connect what you are learning in class to your everyday life.

Requirements:

- 1) Your analysis **MUST** address a topic that is being covered in class or is political in nature. You can use any news topic that has to do with national and/or international politics/government.
- 2) Locate an article from a reputable source on approved news topic (see above). Publications like the Washington Post, New York Times, Newsweek and/or Time are excellent sources. I also encourage you to find sources that add viewpoints beyond the mainstream, such as The Nation, Mother Jones, The Guardian, The National Review, and The American Conservative. You may not use on-line search engine articles, on-line network articles (e.g. Fox News, CNN News, MSN News etc.). You can find most of these magazines and newspaper sources in the library's resource center.
- 3) **Summarize the article:** Begin with a short overview (summary) of the article you are analyzing. A summary is written in your own words and captures the article's main point(s) or argument. (A reader who has not read the article should understand its overall point from your summary.) A summary is objective, meaning it does not include your opinion. Include the title and author of the article in the summary.
- 4) **Analyze the article:** After summarizing, analyze the article. Analysis involves thinking critically about the purpose, ideas, evidence, and presentation of the article. Be careful not to include your opinion of the issue addressed in the article.* **Instead, focus on *how* and *why* the article was written.** Some questions you may ask yourself are:
 - *Why was the article written? What is the purpose of the article?*
 - *What is the context of the article? In other words, why was this article written now?*
 - *How is the article written? What type of evidence is presented? How is it organized?*
 - *What is the effect of the information presented? Does it evoke emotion? Does it appeal to logic and reasoning?*
 - *Do you detect bias? What is the agenda behind the article? Who wrote the article? What is their affiliation? What is the bias of the publication? (You may need to do some Googling to find out the answers to these questions.)*
 - *How does the article inform your understanding of the issue? How does the article connect to what you are learning in class?*

*A response that merely states your opinion on the issue will not be given credit.

- 5) Provide evidence from the article to support your analysis. Focus on the article itself in your analysis, and support your responses with examples and evidence from the article.

- 6) You may rewrite one news analysis with the help of the Writing Center for a better grade. <http://www.rccc.edu/writing/> Please let me know if you choose to re-write. Rewrites are due one week from the time the original assignment was due.

Format:

- News analyses should be typed, proofread, and two to three pages long.
- Cite the source of your article.

Grading:

Your grade is based on your ability to provide thoughtful analysis, connect the article to course material, and upon style and the proper use of grammar. I will also provide a rubric for this.

Course Schedule

We will cover the material, as time allows, in the following order. Material may be added to or subtracted from each section, as time allows.

WEEK 1 (Friday)

Introduction Review Syllabus
Who Gets What, When and How?
Readings: Chapter 1: Introduction
Class Project: *Knowledge Assessment*

WEEK 1 (Saturday)

The Constitution
Readings: Chapter 2: The Constitution
 The US Constitution
Federalism
Readings: Chapter 3: Federalism
 Federalist No.10 and/or No. 51
Civil Liberties
Readings: Chapter 4: Civil Liberties
 Chapter 5: Civil Rights
Film: *Fighting Back (1957-1962) or Selma*

WEEK 2(Friday)

Assignment Due: Chapter Summaries (6-10) due in D2L by Midnight July 30- bring a copy to class

Public Opinion and Mass Media

Readings: Chapter 6: Public Opinion and Political Action
 Chapter 7: Mass Media and the Political Agenda
Film: *Bill Moyer Interview with Jon Stewart*
 And at least 1 episode of The Daily Show

WEEK 2 (Saturday)

Assignment Due: News Analysis due in D2L by Midnight July 24- bring a copy to class

Political Parties

Readings: Chapter 8: Political Parties

Campaigns and Voting Behavior

Readings: Chapter 9: Campaigns and Voting Behavior

Interest Groups

Readings: Chapter 10: Interest Groups
Film: *The Candidate*

WEEK 3 (Friday)

Assignment Due: Chapter Summaries (11-15) due in D2L by Midnight July 30- bring a copy to class

Congress and Legislation

Readings: Chapter 11: Congress

WEEK 3 (Saturday)

Assignment Due: News Analysis due in D2L by Midnight July 31- bring a copy to class

The Presidency

**Readings: Chapter 12: The Presidency
James David Barber on Presidential Leadership**

The Budget

Readings: Chapter 13: The Budget

The Bureaucracy

Readings: Chapter 14: The Bureaucracy

The Courts and Judgment

Readings: Chapter 15: The Federal Courts

Film: TBA

Class Project: Knowledge Assessment

FINAL EXAM IS DUE BY SATURDAY August 8 on D2L
