

POLITICAL SCIENCE 111-601

AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

Fall 2015

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Mon & Wed (1:00-3:00pm) & by appointment

Textbook: American Government and Politics Today , Special Edition 2015-2016, by Bardes, Shelley, and Schmidt. Cengage Learning.

Meeting Location & Times: EAST 2305 | Fridays 5:00-10:00--10/30, 11/6, 11/13 | Saturday 9:00-5:00--10/31, 11/7, 11/14

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course asks the question: Is American democracy an adequate vehicle for achieving the good life? Our first goal will be to define what exactly American democracy is and how it has developed over time. You will then decide if American democracy works, if the political culture supports and promotes democratic institutions, and what changes can be made to improve the process. To answer these questions and others you will be introduced to the methods for evaluating American democracy and the skills to prepare you for participation in the system. To achieve these objectives we will focus on various political theories, institutions, and processes. This course includes the background of the U.S. Constitution; the philosophy of American government; general principles of the Constitution; federalism; civil rights and civil liberties; public opinion; citizen participation; political parties; the media; interest groups; and the branches of government. Current events will be used to illustrate how the political system operates. This course is premised on the belief that the study of politics prepares the individual for complete living.

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.

Participation /current issues	25	GRADING SCALE:	
In-class projects	30	90-99%	A
Attendance	10	80-89%	B
News Analysis (2 x 25)	50	70-79%	C
Final Exam	100	60-69%	D
Total:	215 pts	59% and below	F

Expectations (Things you already know)

You are expected to attend and participate in class. You are expected to keep up with the reading as assigned. You are also expected to turn in assignments when they are due. I encourage you to ask questions about anything that the text if I fail to make clear.

Required Readings (Reading is boring but necessary)

The required text for this course is: ***American Government and Politics Today , Special Edition 2015-2016, by Bardes, Shelley, and Schmidt. Cengage Learning.***

This book is available in the bookstore and on-line. In addition there is a website attached to the course through Desire2Learn.

Homework (Things that must BE DONE)

Homework assignments will be given throughout the semester. This is a “Paper-Less” class, therefore you will submit all assignment in the appropriate D2L dropbox. All due dates are listed in your syllabus, D2L calendar, and I will send reminders via school email accounts. No hardcopies or email attachments will be accepted. ☺

Respectful Classroom Standards (Let’s just get along)

Higher education classrooms may be thought of as laboratories for life. We can practice respect and tolerance of others from diverse backgrounds and learn from each other. To create a safe learning community, we hold each other to the standard of respect: treating others as we would like to be treated.

At RRCC, our basic code of conduct reflects the value for civility. Our student handbook says:

Students enrolling at Red Rocks Community College (Red Rocks) assume an obligation for conduct compatible with College objectives. College regulations are based on respect for the rights of others and observance of civil law and current moral standards. Red Rocks students have all the rights and responsibilities of other citizens and are subject to the same federal, state, and local laws as non-students. As members of the College community, students are also subject to the rules and regulations of the College.

Red Rocks exists for the transmission of knowledge, development of occupational skills, and growth of students. Freedom of inquiry and expression are indispensable to the attainment of

these goals. As members of the College community, students are encouraged to develop the capacity for critical judgment and to engage in a sustained search for truth.

Within a safe environment, freedom of expression is possible. Safety is the responsibility of each member of the community. A safe environment depends on each individual exercising respect and expecting the same from others. Respect is demonstrated by:

1. Being on time, prepared for class, and staying throughout the entire class period.
2. Keeping an open mind. Listening carefully without interrupting, with the goal of understanding the perspective of others.
3. Being willing to share your opinions and insights verbally and non-verbally in a manner that shows thoughtfulness about the cultural and social sensitivities of others.
4. Asking questions that are relevant to the topic and meant to elicit deeper understanding.
5. Keeping electronic tools that are not required for class participation turned off and put away.
6. Taking care of personal hygiene and dressing in a way that is not distracting to others.
7. Addressing problems or concerns in a timely and courteous fashion, offering solutions or ideas for change.

You can expect the same standards of behavior from this instructor as is expected of you!

Disruptive or Dangerous Behavior Policy (Just DON'T DO IT)

Persistent behavior that undermines a respectful classroom will be addressed promptly and in a fair and consistent manner. Depending on the level of disruption or danger, immediate action may be taken to restore the classroom to a productive and safe environment. This may include being asked to step outside to speak individually with the professor, being given a verbal warning, being asked to leave the classroom, a referral to the RRCC behavior intervention team, a call to campus police, or suspension from attending classes.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS (a.k.a. THINGS THAT ARE DUE)

News Analysis/Papers : 2 papers each worth 25 points (50 points total)

You will submit two news analyses to me as writing assignments throughout the semester, worth twenty-five points each. Keeping up with current events will enrich your understanding of the course, and 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.

Exam : 1 test each 100 points (total of 100 points)

There will be 1 exam given during this weekend course. They will consist of problems based on the readings and discussions, and is a take-home. Exams may not be taken late unless arrangements are *made ahead of time* with the instructor. Each exam will be posted on D2L and will be completed on D2L.

In Class Group Project (Group) 3 mini discussion points worth 10 points each

Each group will be responsible for evaluating a public policy and reviewing public opinion polls. You Each group will prepare a presentation/discussion for the class.

Class Participation & Attendance & Discussion worth 25 points

Students are encouraged to bring current events to each class. We will start each class with a political discussion. Each student is expected to introduce at least 1 political event for discussion throughout the course.

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 should not miss an entire class during a weekend session. If you know you will miss class ahead a time or if you have a serious illness or emergency, please inform me immediately. It is also the instructor's responsibility to guarantee that you are able to learn in an environment as free from distraction as possible. For this reason, coming to class late is unacceptable. If you are habitually tardy, your participation grade will be negatively impacted.

Grades (How your final grade is earned—your final grade shouldn't surprise you)

- *Exams: 1 tests each worth 100 points
- *News Analyses: papers each worth 25 points (50 points total)
- *In Class Projects: 3 group presentation 30 points total
- *Political Participation worth 25 points

Political Events/Extra Credit (YAY!!)

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. Each student can attend 1 extra credit event. Students can earn up to 5 points for the event.

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

Miscellaneous (additional warnings and disclosures)

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 Accessibility Services Faculty is not obligated to provide accommodations without proper notification by the Accessibility Services. More information is available at www.rccc.edu/disabilityservices.

News Analysis | Assignment Description

Overview:

You will submit two news analyses to me as writing assignments throughout the semester, worth twenty-five 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. You may earn additional two points per assignment (a total of ten bonus points throughout the semester) if you have each analysis reviewed by the Writing Center before submission. <http://www.rccc.edu/writing/>

Format:

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

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.

Summary only/opinion paper: 16-18

Blatant/consistent error, no analysis, no organization: 10-15

Mostly summary/a few weak analyses: 18-20

Clear and concise summary/ analyses with support: 20-25

Paper without citation/work cited: minus -2

Writing Center: + 2 points

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.

READING & LECTURE SCHEDULE (Instructor reserves the right to alter the schedule)

WEEK 1 (Friday)

Introduction Review Syllabus

Who Gets What, When and How?

Readings: Chapter 1: The Democratic Republic

Class Project: *American Citizenship Test*

WEEK 1 (Saturday)

The Constitution

Readings: Chapter 2: The Constitution
The US Constitution (appendix)

Federalism

Readings: Chapter 3: Federalism
Federalist No.10 and/or No. 51 (appendix)

Civil Liberties

Readings: Chapter 4: Civil Liberties
Chapter 5: Civil Rights

Film: *Fighting Back (1957-1962)*

Class Project: *Civil Liberty Cases*

WEEK 2(Friday) NEWS ANALYSIS 1 DUE Friday November 6th BY MIDNIGHT on D2L

Public Opinion and Mass Media

Readings: Chapter 6: Public Opinion and Political Socialization
Chapter 7: Interest Groups

Class Project: *Look at public opinion sites*

Homework: *Take Political Ideology Tests*

WEEK 2 (Saturday)

Political Parties

Readings: Chapter 8: Political Parties

Class Project: *Visit different Political Party Websites.*

Campaigns and Voting Behavior

Readings: Chapter 9: Campaigns Elections

Interest Groups

Readings: Chapter 10: The Media

Class Project: *Investigate Media Bias*

WEEK 3 (Friday) NEW ANALYSIS 2 DUE Friday November 13th BY MIDNIGHT on D2L

Congress and Collaboration

Readings: Chapter 11: Congress

Presidency and Power

Readings: Chapter 12: The Presidency

Class Project: Pin the Candidate on the Ideology Chart ☺

WEEK 3(Saturday)

Readings: Chapter 13: Bureaucracy

Class Project: Poverty in America

The Courts and Judgment

Readings: Chapter 14: The Courts

Film: *Of Civil Rights and Wrong: Story of Fred Korematsu*
Where does Democracy in America stand today?

FINAL EXAM IS DUE BY Sunday November 15th in D2L by Midnight

FILM: PBS. *Eyes on the Prize: "Fighting Back 1957–1962"* (1987)

Central High School: Little Rock Nine

James Meredith at the University of Mississippi

1. Madison's model of democracy
 - a. Federalism: the Federal and State governments,
 - b. Compromise: the Northern and Southern states
 - c. Factions: Ethnic and racial groups
 - d. Tyranny: representing the majority while protecting the interest of the minority

Terms you should know:

- a. Amendment 14
 - b. NAACP
 - c. ACLU
 - d. Plessy v. Ferguson (1896)
 - e. Brown v. Board of Education (1954)
 - f. Civil Rights Act 1964
- Were the segregated schools and states in violation of the Constitution?
 - List three political outcome of the Supreme Court Case *Brown v. Board of Education 1954*.
 - Why did it take so long to implement the policy of integration?
 - What did the President(S) do to enforce the Supreme Court ruling?

How is Civil Rights America's Unfinished Business?

- Racial discrimination: The practice of racial discrimination is illegal. But how is our country still practicing racial discrimination? Give some examples of public and private life where racial discrimination is practiced?
- Do you think Civil Rights Act (a Federal mandate) was necessary or would our country extended the rights of citizens to be more inclusive regardless?

Film: Of Civil Rights and Wrong: The Fred Korematsu Story (2000)

Define and identify the political significance:

American Civil Leagues Union: the purpose of the group

Executive Order 9066: impact of Presidents on civil liberties

Internment Camps: the impact on American social contract

Supreme Court Rulings: the impact of Korematsu's precedent

Federal Courts of Appeal: the significance of Korematsu's appeal

1. What is an executive order? In your opinion was President Roosevelt justified in his use of executive order?

2. Should citizen liberties be limited during wartime? Use examples from the film and other sources to make your arguments. Can discrimination ever be justified?

3. What does this film say about the government's ability to deny a group of people their civil rights and liberties based on race?

4. Should the power of the President be limited to prevent such a discriminatory action?

5. Can you think of other groups that have been denied full rights and citizenship based on race/ethnicity?

6. How can internment legally happen again?

Life on a Budget

You will be assigned a character and scenario to research and write a budget for. Regardless of your character and scenario, you must figure out how to pay for rent (or a mortgage if your scenario specifies that you are a homeowner), food, childcare (if appropriate), utilities, phone, medical care, car payments, taxes, and other normal living expenses. Your character is not allowed to live with family or friends rent-free nor have more than a few hours a week of their childcare provided free by friends or family members. Your character has to function on their own, with little or no social or governmental support.

You will turn in your budget, along with mini class presentation of your

- A description of your budget making process.
- A critique of the poverty line as designated by the U.S. Census Bureau.
- A discussion of whether or not government support to poor families is adequate.
- Ideas/solutions that would prevent/ease poverty.

Scenarios

1. You are a twenty-four year old single mother of two living in Detroit, Michigan. You had your first child at fifteen and your second child at seventeen. You have a GED and currently work full time (32-40 hours per week) at Wal-Mart. Your hourly pay is \$10.50. You do not qualify for healthcare benefits.
2. You are a full time college student living away from home. You attend the University of Colorado in Boulder. You have a scholarship that provides 50% of your tuition costs and books. You are on your own for the rest. Your parents are unable to offer much assistance, but do make your car payment. You pay the balance of tuition, insurance, gas, rent, and living expenses. You have a part time job as a waiter and you make roughly \$300 per week.
3. You are a twenty-two year old single mother of a two year old boy. You started college, but were unable to continue to afford tuition. You currently wait tables at a diner in Atlanta, Georgia. You make about \$400 per week. You have a mental illness that requires daily medication that costs \$200 per month.
4. You are an elderly single woman living in Bismarck, North Dakota. Your pension provides you with \$1200 per month. You have Medicare to pay for your healthcare costs.
5. You are a widowed mother with two children ages one and four. You live in Boston, Massachusetts. You have a college degree and job skills. Your younger child has major health problems and you often miss work and have trouble holding down a job. You

make \$35,000 per year. However, you have health insurance through but your medical costs can run up to \$500 per month.

6. You are a full time college student at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. You have a child who is fourteen years old. You have a student loan that pays for your tuition. You receive no other help with your living expenses. You work part time, but only make about \$15,000 per year.
7. You are a middle-aged man who was recently laid off after working in a chicken-processing plant for 25 years in rural Colorado. Your income last year was \$28,000. Due to the repetitive nature of your job, you have chronic pain in your hands and arms and cannot do work that involves using your hands and arms. You and your wife, who has multiple sclerosis, do not have health insurance. You have a tenth-grade education and no experience with computers.
8. You are a recently divorced mother of two young children in Dallas. You make \$60,000/year. The divorce court ordered you to pay half of your ex-husband's debt of \$140,000 and make spousal support payments to him of \$1000/month. Your two-year-old has a severe learning disability, so you send her to a special daycare that costs \$1200/month.
9. You and your wife are both 27-year old high school teachers in Longmont, Colorado, where you both make \$32,000/year with health insurance benefits. Together you have student loans totaling \$42,000. You have three-month-old twin boys and your wife's maternity leave is about to end. You just found out that the small house you own needs to have the furnace and plumbing replaced. Your father-in-law, who is elderly and in poor health, will be moving in with you next month. His only income is from social security (\$850/month), and most of that goes toward non-traditional pain relief treatments not covered by Medicare.

Civil Liberties Debates

Groups will be assigned one of the following scenarios. Group members will decide which position they want to defend. Each group will have 15 minutes to debate or present their scenario. Group members should find sources that will strengthen their chosen argument, as well as sources that give contrary viewpoints

Group One:

During the U.S. war in Afghanistan, some Middle Eastern students reserve a table in the Student Center at which they give out literature critical of the war. They put up a large banner that reads: "U.S. Troops Out of Afghanistan!" A crowd of angry students gathers and tries to rip down the banner. Some pushing takes place. Campus police arrive on the scene. The crowd demands that the banner be taken down. The students at the table demand that the police remove the crowd. **What should the campus police do?**

Group Two:

A college Art Department holds an annual contest for the best student art work; pictures by the winning artist are displayed in the outer lobby to the President's Office, where four secretaries work. This year the winning artist is a female student who uses partially realistic but partially bizarre images to tell a story. Among her works is a picture of a nude woman; the picture shows a mask covering her genital area and she has no head. Some of the secretaries object to the picture, saying they shouldn't have to work in an area where that offensive picture is on display. The President and the Art Department say this is a matter of free speech. **Should the picture be removed?**

Group Three:

According to the Surgeon General of the United States, cigarettes are the most serious preventable cause of death in the United States. The Surgeon General believes that Camel's advertising campaign is intended to increase cigarette smoking among young people. Studies show that smoking among young people has been increasing. Furthermore, when asked if they can identify a brand, they more often than not recall Camels. **Should Congress be allowed to pass a law prohibiting the use of cartoon characters in cigarette ads?**

Group Four:

Two men are fired from their jobs with the Oregon state government because while they were off the job they used peyote, a mild, naturally occurring hallucinogenic. The men are charged with violating the state's drug laws. The men, who are Native Americans, claim that peyote has been part of traditional Indian religion for thousands of years and that their firing violates their freedom of religion. **Should the men be reinstated?**

Group Five:

A school board passes a resolution saying that all biology teachers in the school system must teach that evolution is only one possible theory, the other being creationism, the view that says that the Biblical account of creation is literally true. Biology teachers in the schools protest that they are being made to teach things that are contrary to their scientific understanding. **Does the school board resolution violate the separation of Church and State?**

Public Opinion and the Media

You are required to use at least two sources to make your arguments to the class.

Option One:

Choose a controversial issue, such as affirmative action or gay marriage, and design a survey that measures public opinion. Administer your survey to ten people. Use the results to present information to the class about problems that may arise from the use of improperly administered surveys.

Option Two:

Visit the internet sites run by Gallup, the National Election Survey, or the General Social Survey to find public opinion data on a question of interest. Present your findings to the class about wording of questions, the response distribution, and how the data was interpreted.

Option Three:

Recent polls suggest that many 18-30 year olds claim that *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* is their only source for political news. Watch two episodes of *The Daily Show* and reflect on the following question: Is *The Daily Show* a positive tool for shaping public opinion?

Option Four:

Go to www.propagandacritic.com and print out the articles about WWI. Answer the following questions and present your information to the class: What are your general reactions to the articles? Did anything in the articles surprise you? What parallels do you recognize in our current information environment to what was occurring in WWI?

Option Five:

Read the texts of both George W. Bush's address at the start of the current conflict in Iraq and Saddam Hussein's rebuttal. After reading the provided speeches answer the following questions: What are some of the similarities and/or differences between George W. Bush and Saddam Hussein's rhetoric? How are speeches, in general, used as tools of propaganda?

Option Six:

Has news coverage become more partisan? Present information to the class about the viewership patterns of Fox News and CNN.

Public Opinion Polls:

What are they?

What do they tell us?

Terms: margin of error

How are they used?

How are they useful?

How are they harmful?

Public Opinion Polls. In the [United States](http://www.unitedstates.gov), some notable companies include:

- [Gallup poll](#) run by [The Gallup Organization](#)
- [Harris Poll](#)
- [Ipsos](#)
- [National Opinion Research Center](#)
- [Nielsen ratings](#)
- [Pew Research Center](#)
- [Rasmussen Reports](#)
- [Research 2000](#)
- [YouGov](#).
- Zogby International

