



Syllabus

COURSE NUMBER/TITLE: PO 176 American Government

YEAR: Fall 2012

DEPARTMENT: POLITICAL SCIENCE

CREDIT HOURS: 3 Hours

REQUIRED TEXT: Bardes, Shelley and Schmidt's (13th ed.)
American Government and Politics Today,
(Wadsworth)

DAYS/TIMES: T-R
10:50am-12:05am

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Michael Thompson

ROOM NUMBER: BMC 710

OFFICE HOURS: Posted and by appointment.
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COURSE PLACEMENT: FRESHMAN/SOPHOMORE

PREREQUISITE: None

RATIONALE

Government is an organized structure by people to give civilization a method of ruling. How many do the ruling and how the powers are distributed determine the type of government. Too many people within the United States today do not understand how its government operates, the major theories associated with its development, the institutions that make policy, and how individual citizens can interact within this system. The objectives of this course are to have you gain a greater understanding about the system you live within and to be more aware of its origins, institutions, and opportunities. We will accomplish these objectives by studying the form of our government system in the U.S., and how it relates to each individual in a society that is designed to be a republic based on democratic principles. This course fulfills a social science general education requirement.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

An analysis of the powers, functions, and political bases of government in America, including attention to democratic theory, civil liberties, political parties and pressure groups, campaigns and elections, Congress and the Presidency, judicial review, federal-state-local relations, and public policy making in domestic, foreign and budgetary areas.

COURSE OUTCOMES

A. **Cognitive Outcomes:** This course will develop the student's general intellectual abilities, curiosity, powers of critical analysis, aesthetic appreciation and creativity. The student will have the capacity to analyze and interpret the dynamics of political events, governmental processes and their significance, demonstrated by the student's ability to read and think critically, to write effectively and express him or herself clearly in describing the national politics and the federal system of government of the United States; by naming and describing how the agencies of government function; by naming and identifying the structure of the federal government and administrative governing bodies; by understanding the problems and opportunities related to inter-governmental relations and federalism, and by being able to discuss how the federal government and national politics affect the citizenry. Students will have the ability to use an integrated interdisciplinary approach to problem solving, solution formulation, implementation and assessment.

B. **Affective Outcomes:** Upon completion of the course the student will have a solid understanding of federal government and national political systems in the United States, how it affects them and how they can affect it. The student will also appreciate political affiliation, strategy and the

world of politics. Students will through civil discourse have exercised positive and cooperative attitudes. Additionally, students will have developed effective career skills. Through use of a variety of point acquisition systems for grading the student will develop basic computational skills to solve the quantitative grading scale. Students will have the ability to communicate effectively through listening, speaking, reading, writing and the use of computers. Students will have the ability to think critically and have a fundamental understanding of the causes and effects of stereotyping and racism, and a fundamental appreciation of cultural diversity within the United States.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Gain access to existing knowledge about federal political system and governance policies
2. Display a command of the existing knowledge appropriate for an introductory course; this includes:
 - a. the nature of federal and state political and economic systems;
 - b. the structures of public office, elected officials and their philosophies;
 - c. the effectiveness of participatory mechanisms;
 - d. the dimensions of major policy initiatives and the effect upon nation policy;
 - e. trends and needs for the 21st Century.
3. Discuss the basic operations of the U.S. federal system.
4. Identify the governmental institutions, actors, and political processes of national politics.
5. Explain the linkage mechanisms that connect public opinion to public policy including actions, political parties and interest groups at the national level.
6. Grasp the significance of state and local politics in the development of national policy.
7. Display the ability to draw out existing knowledge from professional as well as mass audience materials. This includes the Internet.

COURSE OUTLINE

MODULES	TOPICS	LESSONS	ACTIVITIES
MODULE 1	ORIENTATION	Course Overview Politics & Governance	Review: Class Website Discussion- Introductions Reflect: Terms politics and governance
MODULE 2	INTRODUCTION TO CRITICAL THINKING and WRITING in AMERICAN POLITICS	Critical Thinking Defined Rules of Critical Thinking Rules of Critical Writing	Read: Critical Thinking Handbook Review: PowerPoint Reflect: Critical Thinking Exercises – <i>What if? and political science at the movies</i>

MODULE 3	THE AMERICAN SYSTEM	<p>The Democratic Republic</p> <p>The Constitution</p> <p>Federalism</p>	<p>Reflect: <i>What if... National Laws were put to a popular vote?</i> Read: Chapter 1 of Text Review: PowerPoint</p> <p>Primer: <i>Impeachment</i> Read: Chapter 2 of Text Review: Constitution (App) Review: PowerPoint Reflect: <i>What if ... An Immigrant Could Become President?</i> Primer: <i>Free Speech & the Internet; Death Penalty USA</i></p> <p>Primer: <i>Deciding Who Decides</i> Read: Chapter 3 of Text Review: PowerPoint Reflect: <i>What If ... Education Were a National Responsibility?</i></p> <p>Exam 1 Due</p>
MODULE 4	CIVIL RIGHTS & LIBERTIES	<p>Civil Liberties</p> <p>Civil Rights</p>	<p>Primer: <i>Gun Control</i> Read: Chapter 4 of Text Review: PowerPoint Reflect: <i>What If . . . You Had to Carry a National Identification Card?</i> Primer: <i>Physician Assisted Suicide</i></p> <p>Primer: <i>Affirmative Action</i> Read: Chapter 5 of Text Review: PowerPoint Reflect: <i>What If . . . One State's Same-Sex Marriages Had to Be Recognized Nationwide?</i></p> <p>Exam 2 Due</p>
MODULE 5	PEOPLE & POLITICS	<p>Public Opinion and Political Socialization</p> <p>Interest Groups</p>	<p>Primer: <i>Measuring Opinion</i> Read: Chapter 6 of Text Review: PowerPoint Reflect: <i>What If . . . Exit Polls Were Banned?</i></p> <p>Primer: <i>PACs</i> Read: Chapter 7 of Text Review: PowerPoint Read: <i>Influencing the Political Process</i> Reflect: <i>What If . . . Retired Government Employees Could Not Work for Interest Groups?</i></p> <p>Exam 3</p>

MODULE 5	PEOPLE, POLITICS and POLICY	Political Parties	Primer: <i>National Conventions</i> Read: Chapter 8 of Text Review: PowerPoint Reflect: <i>What If . . . Parties Were Supported Solely by Public Funding?</i> Primers: <i>What's the difference? Green Party; Reform Party Split</i>
		Campaigns, Nominations, and Elections	Primer: <i>Voting Behavior</i> Read: Chapter 9 of Text Review: PowerPoint Reflect: <i>What If . . . We Had a National Election System?</i> Primer: <i>Negative Campaigns</i>
		The Media and Cyberpolitics	Primer: <i>Media & Politics</i> Read: Chapter 9 of Text Review: PowerPoint Reflect: <i>What If . . . The Media Had to Reveal All of Their Sources?</i> Primer: <i>Internet Civil Liberties</i>
		Domestic and Economic Policy	Primer: <i>Public Policy</i> Read: Chapter 14 of Text Review: PowerPoint Reflect: <i>What If . . . Everyone was guaranteed a job?</i>
		Foreign Policy	Primer: <i>Public Policy</i> Read: Chapter 15 of Text Review: PowerPoint Reflect: <i>What If . . . We brought back the draft?</i>
	Assessment		Exam 4
Finals	Assessment	Finals Week	Final Group Assessment

METHOD OF INSTRUCTION

This course employs a blend of Adult, Experiential, and Transformative Learning platforms to engage the student in a participative set of learning experiences. This will be accomplished by means of lecture, cooperative learning, completion of written assignments, and usage of resources: textbook, transparencies, handouts, current events and instructional technology including interactive computer simulations, Internet and videotaped programs. Guest speakers and field trips may be utilized to accentuate the material being covered. The learning processes employed in this course allows students to experience politics and governance as well as reflect upon this transformational-based learning and to relate these reflections in writing to theoretical constructs in the field of political science. Course work is designed to allow students to apply what they are learning directly to authentic situations related to the course outline. Scheduled presentations will employ lecture-discussion sessions in which students will be encouraged to participate in an instructor-guided exchange of ideas and observations pertinent to selected subject areas. Class attendance and participation are imperative. The instructor may modify course activities and/or the class schedule in the best interest of student learning and will inform the students of any changes.

I strongly believe, that a free and open exchange of ideas and points of view concerning the concepts and issues surrounding the study of governance and politics, is an essential element of the learning process. This approach requires that students think about the federal system of government in an objective fashion. It also requires students to adequately prepare themselves to participate in class discussions. Opposing points of view, even those contrary to my own, which are in good taste, pertinent to the topic at hand, and intended to enhance the learning process are encouraged. As such this course will be a collaborative effort between the instructor and student. We will engage in lectures, class discussion, simulation exercises, critical writing, practical encounters and video viewing.

METHOD OF EVALUATION

Evaluation of the student's success will be measured through examinations, class attendance, participation and assignment management. Using this range of assessment will give me a fair evaluation of student performance in the course. A final letter grade will be given based on the following criteria:

EXAMS: There will be four (4) scheduled exams, for this class. Subsequent exams are not comprehensive. Each exam will cover all material from up to and including that presented the day immediately prior to the exam. Any topic discussed in class or included in the readings, regardless of whether the material was covered by lecture, will be considered "fair game" for testing. Examinations are designed to allow the student to demonstrate and measure their factual knowledge and ability to identify, interpret and analyze major concepts and themes. The format will be the same for all exams. Each test shall be worth one hundred (100) points. The lowest score may be dropped from your average for a **possible 400 points**.

ATTENDANCE: Roll will be taken daily. Students must attend a minimum of 70% of the classes to be eligible for a passing grade. Once the student surpasses the 70% minimum, there cannot be a differentiation between an excused and unexcused absence. Emergency circumstances, school sponsored events and other considerations will be made on an individual basis but *still may not exceed the minimum attendance requirement*. Students must approach the instructor to determine the feasibility of making-up the lost hours. Attendance and class participation is worth **100 points** and may be a deciding factor in lowering or raising borderline grades at my discretion.

PARTICIPATION: This is a hands-on course. It is your task to impress me by playing an active role in class, and have thoughtfully read the assignments. It is not necessary for you to have the answer to every question asked in class. Class time is for answering your questions and exploring ideas. On the other hand if you never answered a question, make a comment or add your insights to the class discussion or if you are regularly absent, your grade will most likely suffer.

You will have the opportunity to analyze data relevant to the federal political institutions and activities that comprise the focus of this course. This analysis will not be a summary of what you read, but will instead consist of critiques, comments, observations, suggestions or ideas developed while preparing for your assignments. You will be asked to observe national politics and federal government. And, you will help one another and the instructor better understand politics at these levels. It should be fun, as well as informative. To get the most out of this class, you need to participate in all aspects of it, including Internet analyses, field trip(s), class discussions, class meetings with invited guests, and public meetings. You are also expected to complete assignments and papers on time and to do your own work. Evidence of improvement in your work may also lead to an increase in your grade at my discretion.

These exercises and assignments are intended to develop your critical reading and thinking skills, and will also serve as important feedback regarding what you are learning from the readings so that I can adjust

our in-class activities to help you understand the material better. You will be graded on the critical thinking evident in your responses that indicate you carefully reflected on the assignment.

Guidelines for Assignments - Please follow these guidelines for all papers turned in this class.

- a. Each paper must be clearly labeled. It must state the assignment, your name, the date it is turned in, your section number and a title if appropriate. Multiple pages must be stapled or bound.
- b. Most papers are graded on a Satisfactory/Not

Satisfactory basis. Assume a paper is satisfactory unless it is returned with comments and suggestions of what to do to make it satisfactory.

Record Keeping: Please save copies of all quizzes, papers, projects, correspondence, and other assignments. This is especially important when contesting grades. In the absence of your papers, the instructor's records will be considered correct.

ASSIGNMENTS:

Reflection

Finding relevance in a course on national politics and federal government is impossible if you are not up to speed on current events. I will expect you to read Time magazine, Newsweek, The Kansas City Star, Washington Post or the Denver Post, or any other publication on file in the library. Each of these newspapers and magazines has good days and bad, but each devotes considerable space to the coverage of national politics and federal government and write a reflection poster on each module topic. We will begin each class period with a brief discussion of the latest developments in the federal government and national politics, and familiarity with those developments will improve your class participation grade. As such there are **five (5) poster assignments** wherein you will be expected to collect and discuss political satire, parody or news article demonstrating the federal government at work as it relates to the course topics. The article or satire is to be the discussion. The assignment is in class only and may not be turned in late or otherwise made up. **Point Value = 60**

Quality, not quantity are the keys to a good Participation Forum. My experience with these Forums has been that students sometimes treat them as obligations, where they simply bang something out about that week's topic, then move on to the next task in their schedule. That is contrary to the aim of a Forum, which is to stimulate conversation. Imagine being in a group of people at a party. Someone you don't know very well comes up to the group, blurts out something, then moves on. The conversation drops dead in its tracks, or shifts to a discussion of that odd character that just left. Neither outcome is very productive. Each participation assignment should consider what has been said previously, and should advance the discussion in some way.

PRACTICAL ENCOUNTERS

Meet the Press: To help you acquaint you with practical politics you will be required to prepare for a session of Meet the Press. **Point Value = 200**

Personal Introduction - Students will be **awarded 50 points**, the equivalent of one test score, for a personal introduction on our first class session. The purpose of the introduction is to provide an opportunity for the students and the instructor to learn about each other, to know each other and to work at issues that may emerge from the course. The Introduction will be in the form of a **Learning Game – Two Truths and a Lie**.

Discussion Room: This is an individual grading exercise. You will be assigned a reflection topic for class, the eleven (11) "What if" topics in the course outline. A twelfth (12th) room topic will be the 5 take aways from the guest speaker. This assignment is your ticket into the classroom. We will begin each class with discussion; you will be graded on your individual remarks turned

in prior to class and then on your class commentary. These assignments are **worth up to 60 points**.

Mind Mapping Research and Writing Wiki Project: This is a collaborative assignment, you will be assigned to a group and general topics to research, write and post on the Wiki Collaboratory under your byline. The written portion of the assignment must be *approximately 600 words in length*, to complete the project you must include a *relevant image* and at least 2 *references*. The Wiki Project is worth **up to 150 points**.

Final Project Digital Story: You will script, narrate and produce a digital story that is personal and reflects upon the contextual course material. This Digital Story will be worth **up to 400 points** in which you critically reflect upon and analyze your personal life experiences as they relate to a sociological concept or social commentary. This project is to be a self-conscious effort at thinking about what you are learning. Notes, reflections, insights, connections, and critiques from your life experiences, readings, other relevant courses or experiences are to be recorded in your project. Your stories should reflect a serious effort to synthesize theory and practice by including analytical observations and critical thought of the various social environments that we cover in class and discuss the main concepts that have interested/affected you. **So, read, daydream, think of some questions that the reading left you with or think about how the reading made sense to you, explore your ideas by observation within the social environments.** Your script should be no less than 300 words and no more than 500, the duration of the digital story should be no less than 2 minutes and not more than 5 minutes. For full credit your story must include: appropriate imagery, music and voice over. Additionally, you must publish your story to the Wiki site and present it on the final day of class. Specifically, reflect on the social interactions you have or observe. Reflect on the interactions of social structure, social class, inequalities of race, deviance, crime and community. Consider the political sociology of rural and urban America; reflect on inequalities of gender, race and family interactions. Remember this is a personal story – one only you can tell – it is not a report. It must demonstrate creativity, critical thought and a connection and understanding of the course material

POLITICAL PARTY AFFILIATION and VOTER REGISTRATION PAPER: Being a responsible member of a democracy means VOTING. You are to research the voter registration requirements of your home state and our existing political parties. You must then analyze the information against your personal beliefs and ideology. Each student will be required to write a brief, carefully organized and thoughtful paper that is no more than 1 page in length explaining the registration requirements and which political party you would or are aligned with and why. This paper must be typed with 12 point font and double spaced, with 1" margins. **Point Value = 50**

BONUS POINTS: You can receive bonus points by attending certain College functions and events, these will be announced in class, or you may give in-class presentations on Federal Government and National Political topics. You will need to discuss these topics with me first, and to schedule when the presentations will be given. No more than fifty (50) bonus points will be added to your total points for these activities. Additionally, you can receive ten (10) bonus points by attaching a copy of your voter registration card to your Political Party Affiliation and Voter Registration paper. **A total of sixty (60) bonus points may be earned in this class, which will be added to the sum of your point totals.**

EXTRA CREDIT OPTION: To obtain extra credit, you must complete the term project option on Cyber-Politics. The purpose of this project is to practice writing-communication skills necessary to succeed in most occupations and to learn more about the political process. This option requires you to write a formal research paper on some specific aspect of Cyber-Politics.

Extra credit project minimum standards are:

1. Your paper must be typewritten.

2. Your paper must have a title page identifying the title of your paper, the title of this class, your name, my name, and the date.
3. You must develop a thesis that you will prove or disprove, such as: “Public officials are not responsive to public opinion polls.” You are to state this thesis on a separate piece of paper and place it after your cover sheet. Be specific ... do not be ambiguous.
4. The body must have page numbers, and all margins must be no greater than 1 inch.
5. Use an English style manual (*i.e.*, Turabian, Strunk, or the Chicago Manual) for proper citation of footnotes.
6. The body must be thoughtful, neat, well organized, and must be at LEAST ten (10) pages in length. Less will not be accepted and does not include the bibliography. The body of your research paper will provide evidence to support your thesis ... not based on your opinion, but based on the best factual sources that you can find in the literature.
7. Use a multitude of footnotes, notes at the end of the sentence MLA style are not acceptable. Using lots of notes to draw attention to where you got your material only strengthens a research paper. Almost every thing you say came from some source!
8. Lastly, have a bibliography page(s) and I expect at least four (4) or more quality sources.
9. The paper must be completed by the **Tuesday of the last week of the session**. The paper must be handed in on time or it may be downgraded each day the project is late and not actually in my physical possession. **The term project will be worth a maximum of 100 points of extra credit depending on the quality of the project. Extra credit points will be added to the sum of your point totals**

GRADING POLICY AND SCALE

There is no grading curve, nor are there any expectations as to the number of A's, B's, C's, *etc.* are given in a particular class. Therefore you are not competing against others in the class. This means you will receive whatever grade you earn based upon the quality of your work, however excellent or poor that quality is. I believe every student is capable of earning a good grade in this course if they are willing to make the necessary commitment of time and effort. I encourage you to be optimistic about your potential grade, however, at the same time you have realistic expectations given the level of commitment you are willing to devote to the class. I make every effort to be a fair and objective grader. I will never penalize you because you have a difference of opinion with me, as long as you support your opinion with well-reasoned arguments and evidence, which you believe, supports your opinion.

Grading Scale: *Excluding extra-credit and bonus points, the grading scale for this class is as follows:*

POINTS	LETTER GRADE
90%	A
80%	B
70%	C
60%	D
<59%	F

DO NOT CALL THE OFFICE FOR YOUR GRADE!

I will not give any information regarding grades over the telephone. Please do not call the office or my home.

GRADE APPEAL PROCEDURE FOR ASSIGNMENT AND EXAM GRADES

I am perfectly willing to hear an appeal of your grade on any assignments or exam. In fact, because I try my best to be a fair, objective and accurate grader, I actually want you to point out to me any concerns you have about the points and grades I have assigned. To make the appeal process itself as fair and objective as possible, I have the following procedures you need to follow in making a grade appeal:

1. Your appeal must be in writing and typed. This is so that I have an official record of the specifics of your appeal, but also partly so that I know your appeal is genuine.
2. In your written appeal you must tell me your precise concern about my grading, how many additional points you think you deserve and why. This is so I know your precise concern(s), the specific remedy you are seeking, and your reasons in support of your appeal. If you believe a photocopy of a portion of your class notes or a page reference to one of the course texts supports your appeal, then include them in your written appeal.
3. You must attach your graded assignment or exam to your appeal so that I can re-evaluate it with your concerns in mind.

After receiving your written appeal I will give it serious consideration, and make a decision as soon as possible. I will return the assignment or exam to you with a written, typed explanation of my decision in the appeal. If you would then like to meet with me personally to discuss my decision, I will be happy to do so in order to help you improve your performance in the course. Further appeals should be made to the Division Chair, and subsequently to the Dean of Instruction.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attend each class. Read the assigned text. Prepare daily. Keep clear, chronological notes of the various classroom presentations. Analyze the information presented. Maintain a course portfolio. Participate in class activities in a positive and sincere manner during class and maintain respect for other students.

ASSIGNMENT AND DEADLINE POLICY

Students are expected to meet all deadlines as designated. If you miss a scheduled deadline for any reason, you must document the reason for the absence in order to be considered for any makeup opportunity. No students will be allowed a makeup opportunity without my prior approval. The format of the makeup will be at my discretion and may differ significantly from the in-class assignment. If you fail to take the makeup, a zero will be recorded. There will be no makeup date for in class assignments and work. Bottom line, late assignments are not acceptable.

TEST POLICY

Students will be prepared to take an examination at the designated time and place, with all the necessary items fully prepared for usage, and without unauthorized papers, books or other materials. Students shall not wear hats or coats during the exam without the instructor's permission. Emergency situations will be handled on an individual basis. Students should inform the instructor or designated representative as soon as possible regarding the emergency.

TEST MAKEUP AND RETAKE POLICY

Students are expected to take the exam at the scheduled time. If you miss a scheduled test for any reason, you must document the reason for the absence in order to take the makeup test. No students will be

allowed to take a makeup exam without my prior approval. The format of the makeup exam will be at my discretion and may differ significantly from the in-class exam. If you fail to take the makeup, a zero will be recorded. There will be no makeup date for the Final Exam or for in class assignments and work.

The exam retake policy applies to all students, in class and distance learning.

DO NOT BE LATE TO ANY EXAM:

If any student has turned in an exam, you will not be permitted to take the exam, and will have to follow the makeup exam process.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Daily attendance is expected, regardless of whether roll is taken. There is no excuse for missing a class unless a debilitating illness or kidnapping occurs. Communicating your thoughts to others is an important component of learning and participation is an important part of the course. Participation requires that you to have read and thought about the material. Participation means not only responding to questions, but also asking questions inside and outside of class. People who participate perform better than those who do not. Moreover, your absence deprives classmates of your wise judgment and could lead hopeless cynics to conclude that your thinking might be as random as your attendance. Regular attendance is essential to earning a passing grade in this class and is strongly encouraged. If you plan to drop the course, it is your responsibility to officially withdraw before the last day to drop. If you fail to do so, you may receive a failing grade in the course, instead of a “W”.

A large portion of the course material will be presented in the class lectures and discussions. It may not appear in the text. If you miss a class it is your responsibility to find out from your peers what went on during that class. I will not supply you with notes or repeat the lecture for you. However, if you have a copy of the notes and studied them and then have a question about them, I will be happy to discuss them with you during office hours.

There may be times when class will be postponed/canceled for a variety of reasons. The College has no obligation to notify students in advance of such cases. As you will, so will I endeavor to meet all class attendance times. However, should class be postponed for more than **twenty (20) minutes**, then only those students present should sign in on the roster and the roster left at my office.

DO NOT BE LATE FOR CLASS

Each student is expected to arrive for class and be in their seat when class is scheduled to begin. A tardy will be recorded for students that are more than ten minutes late for class. Three tardies will be considered one absence. While the absence will result in a lost credit point, late attendance and participation will balance out the points for evaluation.

STUDENT DISHONESTY

You are strongly encouraged to review the section Academic Dishonesty found in the College Bulletin. Copying answers from a classmate, being unprepared for class without informing the instructor, using crib notes, plagiarizing, signing in another student for class, or representing another’s work as your own without giving due credit, will constitute Academic Dishonesty and will be dealt with in accordance with Colby College’s policy and result in a failing grade for the course.

CITIZENSHIP

The nature of the class is intended to elicit spirited debate and discussion. You are to operate under the assumption that everyone is acting in good faith as to honestly held beliefs. Those beliefs will be respected; discussions will be issue oriented only and not personal. There will be no personal attacks, name calling, questioning of patriotism or the like. One goal of this course is to teach you to learn how to think and analyze critically and academically. You will govern your behavior accordingly, no barbarics.

BEHAVIOR

Students pay money to take this course, and most want to learn. However, sometimes an individual is not primarily interested in learning and disturbs or distracts others during class in a variety of ways, such as talking, and laughing. Therefore, I reserve the right to ask the student to leave class and to reduce a student’s grade by a letter for each incident. This also extends to a student who distracts others and me by reading newspapers and other non-class materials. A serious case of misconduct can result in expulsion

from the course and a failing grade. Please be considerate of others trying to listen, trying to contribute and trying to learn.

READINGS

You must be prepared to discuss the assigned reading for each class. You are also responsible to learn all reading material assigned, whether or not it was covered in class. So pace yourself and do not leave your reading until just before a test. Use whatever learning skill you like, but I recommend reading the material at least twice, and making notes about key concepts, or make an outline. You must be able to demonstrate knowledge of the material presented in class, and you must read and comprehend the text.. For example, the following does little, if anything to demonstrate you actually read or even thought about the material and does not explain the basis for the question or comment:

1. “What does the author mean when she said ‘X’?”
2. “I disagree with the author when she said ‘Z’.”

On the other hand, the following comments demonstrates the material was thoughtfully reflected upon:

1. “The author says ‘X’ on page 89 but I’m not sure I understand that concept because the author also seemed to say ‘not X’ on page 94 and then also left out any discussion of concept ‘Y’ which I think was necessary background in understanding ‘X.’ What did the author mean when she said ‘X’?”

2. “I disagree with the author when she said ‘Z.’ Her evidence on page 72 did not support ‘Z’ because that evidence could have been explained instead by explanation ‘Q’ and then the author also used the logical fallacy of ‘LF’ when she concluded ‘Z’.”

PREPAREDNESS

You are expected to be prepared for every class. However, I understand there are times when situations dictate otherwise. Because this course is participatory intensive it is disruptive to the class discussion when you are thrust into the discussion without proper preparation. Should you be unprepared to participate in the discussions you should indicate by leaving me a note at my lectern prior to class. That way I will know you are unprepared and won’t call on you during the discussion. However, should I collect too many notes from the same student it may adversely affect your final grade. Should you be called upon during class when you are unprepared and you failed to provide me with a note so indicating I will consider it a form of Academic Dishonesty subject to sanction.

FINAL GRADES

If you want your final grade sooner than the College will provide it, please provide me with a self addressed and stamped envelope at final time and I will mail your grade as soon as it is available. In the alternative you may e-mail me a grade request and I can send you a reply.

EGRESS

If you are tardy or must leave class early please sit near an exit.

RECORDINGS

Except to accommodate special needs, audio taping of my lectures or class discussion is **not** allowed.

RESERVATION OF RIGHTS

I reserve the right to change any information contained in this document, when necessary, with adequate notice given to the student. Notice shall be given in the classroom during class. No other notice is required. It is the students' responsibility to keep up with any changes, modifications, adjustments or amendments that are made to this document.

COURSE FEEDBACK POLICY

I actively seek and highly encourage any feedback about this course at any time you wish to offer it. I want to try to help you learn the material as best as I can, and if I can improve my teaching or the learning environment, I really, truly, sincerely, honestly would like you to let me know. If you feel uncomfortable telling me in person, you can leave me an "Anonymous Feedback letter in an unmarked envelope at my office. All I ask is that you try to be polite in offering your criticism and that you try to offer constructive advice on how I can best respond to the feedback. In other words, tell me your suggested improvements for the course, my teaching or anything else about the learning environment.

E-MAIL

My office hours are posted on my door and at the head of this syllabus. However, I am also available for questions and consultations by telephone and e-mail. I regularly check and answer my e-mail. E-mail is the most reliable and efficient way of contacting me. If you do not have an e-mail account you should get one. It is an important communication tool and it is free. If you don't have Internet access at home, student computer labs are connected to the Internet and a web based e-mail account can readily be established.

EQUIPMENT

Students should purchase and take to class the following items:

- 1) Access to computer and the Internet
- 2) Portfolio management folder
- 4) Textbooks and course materials including assignments/projects.
- 5) Weekly Planner-Calendar

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS:

Colby Community College complies with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Students with disabilities who need special accommodations should make their requests in the following way: (1) talk with your instructor after class or during office hours about your disability or special need related to work in the class; and/or (2) contact Student Support Services and ask to speak to the ADA officer.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Schmidt, Shelley & Bardes, (2007, 13th ed). *American Government and Politics Today*. (Wadsworth, Belmont, CA.); Perkins, James (2007, 13th ed.) *American Government and Politics Today: The Essentials Study Guide; An Introduction To Critical Thinking and Writing in American Politics* (Handbook); Thompson, Michael (Journal of Community Policing, Vol. 1, No. 1, Summer 1999), *Influencing the Political Process*. Speakers, handouts, videotapes, transparencies, Internet resources and supplemental materials.

INSTRUCTOR PROFILE:

DR. MICHAEL THOMPSON, Preparatory education, Central State University, (Master of Arts/Political Science, *Summa Cum Laude*), Central State University, (Bachelor of Arts/Sociology); **Legal education**,

Oklahoma City University (Juris Doctor *with Honors*). **Fraternity**, Phi Delta Phi Honor Society, Phi Alpha Delta. **Recipient**, Kerr Foundation Scholar, Wayne Johnson Memorial Scholar, Hervey Foundation Scholar, OCU School of Law Faculty Honor Roll, Who's Who Among American Law Students, West Publishing Company Award; American Jurisprudence Awards; Jessup Moot Court Award, OCU Law Review Staff Editor; **Appointments**, *Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Advisor to Governors George Nigh and Henry Bellmon*; *Juvenile Post Adjudication Review Board, State Commission on Children and Youth Services to Governor Frank Keating*; **Member**, University of Central Oklahoma Alumni Life Member (Edmond, OK), *Southwest Legal Foundation Alumni Association (Dallas, TX)*, *Georgetown University Law Center, Civil Rights Litigation Alumni (Washington, D.C.)*. **Written Works**, include articles on Political Process, Legal Liability, Constitutional Jurisprudence, Labor Advocacy and monographs on Public Policy and Municipal Administration. **Prior Lectures**, include criminal law and procedure, administrative law, legal liability and constitutional jurisprudence for the FBI Academy (Quantico Va.), Southwestern Law Enforcement Institute (Dallas, TX), Oklahoma Judicial Conference, Oklahoma Council On Law Enforcement Education and Training and Southwestern States Highway Safety Group; **Formerly**, Police Detective Captain (Retired), Attorney with emphasis in prosecuting and defending civil rights actions and government litigation; Legal Studies Instructor, City College, Moore, Oklahoma.

COURSE OVERVIEW

The political system in the United States is complex and fascinating. National politics one way or another affects every resident of this country. We are now living in times of great governmental and economic uncertainty. This uncertainty coupled with declining trust in basic governmental institutions, and the withdrawal of large numbers of American citizenry from active participation in the political process, presents profound complexities. As a result, understanding the way in which the system operates is critical.

It is the purpose of this course to introduce and familiarize you with the workings of these important arenas of government so that you may participate in them more knowledgeably, whether as a voter, an elected official or at some other level. The way you view and approach our political system is important. It has been argued that, in the larger sense, the way you view the political system depends upon your view of life in general. Meaning, your desires lead you to expect certain results from the political system. Obviously, if these results are not achieved, frustration ensues. But we must view our political system in a fashion, which does not exactly preclude frustration, yet renders it palatable or understandable thereby increasing our frustration tolerance level. In the final analysis this course deals with you and your responsibility for and to the political system.

This class is designed to appeal to a broad cross-section of students. Those who wish to major in criminal justice and political science will receive grounding for higher-level courses. Students majoring in journalism will get a sense of the type of news they most likely will cover some day. Business majors will gain familiarity with the government channels they might have to navigate on behalf of their employers. Pre-law majors will gain insight into the bureaucracy, passage of laws and the judicial system. Everyone else will receive sound preparation in how to track and influence public policies that could dramatically affect their lives. And, with luck, you will reach the conclusion that every election matters. Additionally, by the end of the semester you should have formed an opinion, and be able to express it well, about what constitutes the proper or best substantive role and solutions of government in various public policy areas.

What we will do here is analyze national politics, not just talk about it. Everyone has an opinion, but yours needs to be an informed one! Your success or failure by the standards of this course will depend on how well you absorb this distinction. But, besides teaching the actual course content, any college course is inadequate if it fails to improve the academic and career skills of students. Thus, this course will help you further develop the skills that employers, universities, graduate schools and law schools demand from position seeking candidates. These skills have

been called the “3 C’s”: communication, cooperation and critical thinking. As any employer, graduate or law school instructor can and will tell you, topical knowledge can always be learned easily on the job or in a class, but students coming out of undergraduate education in the United States often sorely lack the skills necessary for career success that take time to develop and were supposed to be taught and learned during those students’ undergraduate education. Teaching these background skills after college wastes substantial time and resources on the part of an employer, graduate or law school, so they are hesitant to hire or admit graduates still needing to develop these skills. Therefore, those students that already possess these skills coming out of college will have a tremendous starting advantage over other college graduates. Because of this fact, I hope to improve the quality of your college education by having frequent small group exercises, in-class discussions, debates, presentations, and critical thinking activities, assignments and exam questions.

Welcome to the world of American Politics and Government.