Overview, Objectives, and Goals of the Course

This introductory honors course in American Government is designed to give you, the student, an understanding of how American government and the American political system works. Further, it is hoped that this course will spur you to put knowledge and opinions into action, and to encourage active and involved citizenship. To accomplish these goals, I suggest that each of you should focus on two fundamental questions.

First, how does American politics really operate? You should sift through the abundance of information and seek to develop a satisfying explanation of “what” American politics is and “why” it is what it is. The task is not easy. Not only are there many facts through which to sort, but also you will soon learn that not everyone agrees on what the “facts” are and what those facts mean. But each of you should work toward making some judgments about how American politics works and toward developing well-reasoned arguments to support your judgments.

In addition, there is an equally important question. How should American politics work? Here you are concerned not just with description (the “what is”), but also with the evaluation (the “what ought to be”). You should try to develop your own political values, or seek to better understand and articulate those you already have. In the end, you should be able to make reasoned judgments about the merits of American political practices.

This is a social science course in the General Education Program that fulfills the state’s and University’s Constitution requirement. It has a broad liberal arts orientation and a writing component, and it contributes to the mastery of the following university-level competencies (ULCs):

3. *Winthrop University graduates understand the interconnected nature of the world and the time in which they live.*

Winthrop graduates value integrity, perceive moral dimensions, and achieve excellence. They take seriously the perspectives of others, practice ethical reasoning, and reflect on experiences. Winthrop graduates have a sense of responsibility to the broader community and contribute to the greater good.
4. **Winthrop University graduates communicate effectively.**

Winthrop graduates communicate in a manner appropriate to the subject, occasion, and audience. They create texts – including but not limited to written, oral, and visual presentations – that convey content effectively. Mindful of their voice and the impact of their communication, Winthrop graduates successfully express and exchange ideas.

**Student Learning Outcomes**

By the end of the course, students will be able to identify and analyze:

- The outline, core concepts, and main themes of the U.S. Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, and the *Federalist Papers*.

- The branches of the US government and their powers and functions.

- Federalism and the separation of powers.

- The founders’ vision of American politics and government, and how it has changed over time.

- At least three means by which citizens may be involved in American government and politics.

**Global Learning (GLI) Fulfillment**

The global learning components of this course include a comparison of the U.S. Bill of Rights with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and a comparison of the American and European electoral systems.

**Required Textbook**

Lowi, Ginsberg, Shepsle, and Ansolabehere

*American Government: Power and Purpose*


ISBN # 978-0393-922462

(Be sure to purchase/rent this edition and not an earlier one.)

Other course readings will be made available via Blackboard or will be distributed in class.

**Classroom Decorum and Appropriate Use of Technology**

All students are expected to refrain from any behaviors that disrupt the learning environment for others. Inappropriate activities include, but are not limited to, chronic tardiness, engaging in idle chitchat during lectures and discussions, using cell phones, IPODS, Blackberries, and other personal electronic devices in class, or using laptops computers for activities such as checking E-mail, that are unrelated to what is happening in the classroom.
Student Learning Activities and Evaluation

Each of the course objectives will be considered in the evaluation process. Your final grade will be based on the total points you earn for the semester. There are 500 total points available:

A= 450 - 500 points. (A 460-500; A- 450-459)
B= 400 - 449 points (B+ 440-449; B 410-439; B- 400-409)
C= 350 - 399 points (C+ 390-399; C 360-389; C- 350-359)
D= 300 - 349 points (D+ 340-349; D 310-339; D- 300-309)
F= under 300 points

- **Exams** (50% of overall course evaluation)
  Three exams will be given. These exams will focus primarily on the “what” and “why” of American politics. They will include both objective and essay questions. Exam questions will be drawn from all of the resources used in this course: textbook, assigned readings, lectures, discussions and video presentations. **NOTE:** Make-up exams will be allowed only for clinic-certified illness and/or excused absences. They may be significantly more difficult than the scheduled exam (and will contain few to no choices). Failure to take an exam or make it up at the appropriate time will result in a grade of zero.

- **Writing Assignments** (30% of overall course evaluation)
  There will be a number of writing assignments given in this course. These assignments will supplement the textbook’s treatment of each major section. Paper topics and due dates will be announced in class. Poorly written, poorly organized efforts will be penalized. **Papers must be typed.** Since class discussion will be tied to the writing assignments, submitting papers on time will be essential. Late papers will not be accepted unless there is a documented illness or for a compelling reason. **Please note this.**

- **Attendance and Participation** (20% of overall course evaluation)
  I expect regular participation in class discussions. Questioning, probing, formulating hypotheses, making judgments, wondering about the “what ifs”—these are all part of the learning process. You should come to class having read the assignment for the day and having thought about the questions. Please note that **these combined factors will make up a full 20% of your overall course evaluation.** Attendance and participation are key elements of this course, and constitute a significant part of the final grade evaluation. With a few very specific exceptions, I permit only three (3) unexcused absences in a 75-minute class format. I do understand that you have life commitments other than your academic pursuits, but regular attendance and participation are “musts” for doing well in this course.

**Syllabus Change Policy**

I intend to adhere to the schedule of assignments and deadlines laid out in this syllabus. However, I may need to make minor changes in the schedule to accommodate special events, inclement weather, guest presenters, the instructor’s unplanned absence or other unforeseen circumstance. I will announce any changes to the syllabus in a timely manner in class and/or by e-mail. You are responsible for this information.
Tentative Schedule of Readings, Papers, and Exams

• **Part I: January 12- February 16**

The introductory section will cover the “foundations” chapters in the text and will include the reading of The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States.

  Chapter 1: Introduction: Making Sense of Government and Politics
  Chapter 2: Founding and Constitution
    - Declaration of Independence
    - United States Constitution
    - Universal Declaration of Human Rights
    - Federalist 10 and 51
  Chapter 3: Federalism and Separation of Powers
    - “Exit Costs, Federalism, and Public Choice” excerpt.
  Chapter 4: Rights and Liberties
  **Exam #1: Monday, February 16th**

• **Part II: February 18- March 30**

This section will deal with political groups and processes. In-class projects will examine the role and power of the media and the ways in which groups and parties form and gain power.

  Chapter 9: Public Opinion and the Media
  Chapter 10: Voting and Elections
    - “The Logic of Collective Action” excerpt.
    - “The Tragedy of the Commons” excerpt.
  Chapter 11: Political Parties
  Chapter 12: Groups and Interests
  **Exam #2: Monday, March 30th**

• **Part III: April 1- May 5**

The final section will examine the separation of powers and the three branches of American government.

  Chapter 5: Congress: The First Branch
    - “Congress: The Electoral Connection” excerpt.
    - “Homestyle: House Members in Their Districts” excerpt.
  Chapter 6: The Presidency
  Chapter 8: The Judiciary: The Balancing Branch
    - “The Supreme Court and Democracy” essay.
  **Final Exam: Tuesday, May 5th, at 8:00 a.m.**
Institutional Support Services

- **Academic Success Center (ASC)**
  Winthrop’s Academic Success Center is a free resource for all undergraduate students seeking to perform their best academically. The ASC offers a variety of personalized and structured resources that help students achieve academic excellence, such as tutoring, academic skill development (test taking strategies, time management counseling, and study techniques), and group/individual study spaces. The ASC is located on the first floor of Dinkins, Suite 106. Tutoring for this specific course is offered through the office. If you wish to request a tutor, you must attend ONE Tutee Seminar, offered every Friday until March 14. Please contact the ASC at success@winthrop.edu or 803-323-3929 or if you have any questions. For more information on ASC services, please visit www.winthrop.edu/success.

- **Dacus Library**
  Not everything can be found online. Dacus Library is the primary on-campus provider of scholarly information in all forms from print to electronic. To fulfill its mission, the library provides information quickly, efficiently, and in sufficient depth to promote excellence in all academic programs offered by the university. Additionally, the library maintains depository status for federal and state publications. For information on library hours call (803) 323-2362.

- **The Writing Center**
  Students who wish to improve their writing skills should seek assistance from the Writing Center, located at 242 Bancroft. Tutors works with students on an individual basis in all phases of the writing process and on academic and writing projects in any discipline. Call (803) 323-2138 for information regarding hours of operation and services.

- **The Office of Disability Services**
  Winthrop University is dedicated to providing access to education. If you have a disability and require specific accommodations to complete this course, then contact the Office of Disability Services at (803) 323-3290. Once you have your official notice of accommodations from ODS, please inform me as early as possible in the semester.

- **The Office of Victims Assistance**
  The Office of Victims Assistance (OVA) provides services to survivors of sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking as well as educational programming to prevent these crimes from occurring. The staff assists all survivors, regardless of when they were victimized in obtaining counseling, medical care, housing options, legal prosecution, and more. In addition, the OVA helps students access support services for academic problems resulting from victimization. The OVA is located in 204 Crawford and can be reached at (803) 323-2206. In the case of an after-hours emergency, please call Campus Police at (803) 323-3333, or the local rape crisis center, Safe Passage, at their 24-hour hotline, (803) 329-2800.
Academic Honesty and Integrity

The Student Conduct Code notes, “A fundamental tenet of all institutions of higher learning is academic honesty. Academic work must depend upon respect for an acknowledgement of the research and ideas of others. Misrepresentation of someone else’s work as one’s own is a most serious offense in any academic setting.” Winthrop University is no exception. In short, academic integrity is very important and misconduct, in any form, will not be condoned. If you have any questions regarding academic honesty and student conduct, please review Section V of the Student Conduct Code.

Political Science Department Statement on Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct

The Winthrop University Political Science department abhors all forms of academic misconduct, and faculty members aggressively investigate all incidents of suspected cheating. This includes, but is not limited to, using turnitin.com. Plagiarism, whether intentional or unintentional, is by far the most common form of academic misconduct in the Political Science department. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to:

- Using the words or ideas of others as one’s own;
- Reproducing, in whole or in part, principal ideas from a fellow student’s work;
- Granting a fellow student permission to copy one’s paper, or to reproduce some or all of its principal ideas;
- Quoting or paraphrasing material from sources without any citation;
- Quoting or paraphrasing material without sufficient and/or proper citation;
- Omitting some or all sources used in a paper; and
- Submitting a paper written for one course – whether in Political Science or another discipline – to meet a course requirement in a second course, without the express permission of all instructors involved. This is the case even though many paper topics may be relevant to several different courses.

All incidents of suspected academic misconduct are investigated with equal vigor.

When a faculty member suspects that a student engaged in academic misconduct, the faculty member will follow the appropriate procedures outlined in the Student Handbook. The faculty member will apply whatever sanctions s/he deems appropriate. Possible sanctions include, but are not limited to:

- Failing the assignment;
- Requiring a student to repeat an assignment for reduced credit;
- Requiring a student to repeat an assignment for no credit; or
- Failing the course.

Academic misconduct applies equally to required assignments and extra credit assignments.