

American National Government

PLSC 201 section 004 TR 12:30pm-1:45pm Owens 102

Fall 2018

3 credit hours

Instructor: Dr. Scott Huffmon Office: 344 Bancroft

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Office Hours: Tuesday& Thursday 2pm – 3pm, Wednesday 10am – 11am, and by appointment (8/21 – 12/3 when campus is open and excluding breaks)

"Knowledge will forever govern ignorance, and a people who mean to be their own governors, must arm themselves with the power knowledge gives. A popular government without popular information or the means of acquiring it, is but a prologue to a farce or a tragedy or perhaps both."

--James Madison

Course Goals

This course is designed to familiarize you with the institutions and processes of the American government and the forces that drive them. You may have been previously exposed to a knowledge of the names of some of the various governmental institutions, but through the course of this semester you will (hopefully) begin to understand what they do and why they do it.

Perhaps most importantly, we will examine how the ordinary citizen can (and should!) participate in the governmental process.

An introductory course on American Government is important on several levels. No matter what direction you take in life there will be governmental departments, agencies, bureaucracies, and regulations that affect you. In an ever changing and shrinking world where events half a world away affect our daily lives instantly, an ignorance of our own government is not merely unadvisable, it could be downright dangerous! Finally, we must all realize that this is OUR government and a knowledge of how to make it accessible to ourselves should be basic.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students who successfully complete this course will demonstrate 1) an understanding to the philosophical underpinnings of our constitutional republic; 2) familiarity with the U.S. Constitution; 3) familiarity with the concept of federalism; 4) an understanding of the general structure of American National Government and the general functions of the major branches; 5) a knowledge of the American political system including political parties, public opinion, and elections.

Student Learning Activities

Grades will be calculated using the following formula:

Exam Average	85%
Outside Assignments	15%

This course employs Winthrop’s +/- grading system. The distribution along the number line which triggers a plus or minus will be, roughly, a normal distribution (slightly skewed to the students’ favor). Note: grades themselves will NOT be artificially forced into a normal distribution. The “0” grade will move into the next highest letter grade range. By way of explanation, the following will be the cut points for the “C” grade range: 70 - 72.4999 = C- ; 72.5 – 77.4999 = C ; 77.5 – 79.9999 = C+

Exams:

There will be **three** exams over the course of the semester (two mid-term exams and a final exam). The exams may be multiple choice, short answer, fill-in-the-blank, essay, or any combination thereof. Material

for the exams will be drawn from readings, lectures, and class discussions. Make up exams must be scheduled one week in advance in the case of an *unavoidable* planned absence; otherwise, make ups will be given only in the case of a **documented** illness or emergency. "Documented" means a legitimate doctor's note dating from *prior* to the exam. Any student health center note describing vague symptoms dated the day of or after the exam will not be acceptable. In either case, make up exams will consist entirely of essay questions.

EXAM DATES NOTED BELOW ARE TENTATIVE AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

[A few notes on STUDY GUIDES](#)

Outside Assignments:

There will be three short assignments that fall under "Outside Assignments" for grading purposes. Since each assignment corresponds to a specific part of the course, I will explain each assignment in class when it is handed out. These assignments will be graded "Check Minus," "Check," or "Check Plus." Why do I grade them this way? Doing it this way helps you understand that I am not looking to take away points for grammar, spelling, or controversial content. Making a genuine effort will get you full credit. You will understand the term "genuine effort" more when I explain the assignments. In the short term, think of it this way: if you fail to reach the minimum number of pages for a written assignment (or only reach the minimum by playing with the font and margins) you will get less than a "Check Plus." Otherwise, you will get almost assuredly get a "Check Plus." These assignments will include two short (4-6 page – and/or 1000 to 1600 words) papers and writing letters. Remember: 15% is equal to ONE AND A HALF full letter grades! These are likely to be the only assignments in your *entire* college career where you are graded on *effort* as much as *content*.

There is no "curve". As an incentive to participate, those students who are "on the bubble" between grades may be given the benefit of the doubt if they have taken an active role in the course.

Class announcements will be made via the class listserv and/or via Blackboard. If you have an active winthrop.edu email account, you should be automatically added to the listserv, otherwise you must add yourself to the listserv. You are EXPECTED to regularly check your email for class announcements! Announcements made over the listserv are considered "official" class announcements. If you are not on the class listserv, go [HERE](#) for instructions on how to sign up (the course designator to sign up is: PLSC201004). It is YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to make sure you are on the listserv and Blackboard and are getting class messages.

This syllabus may be revised throughout the semester.

[Note key dates for the university on the University Calendar here.](#)

Withdrawal Date: The last day to withdraw from the course with an automatic grade of "N" is October 19, 2018

Students with Disabilities: Winthrop University is dedicated to providing access to education. If you have a disability and require specific accommodations to complete this course, contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 323-3290 and make an appointment to see a professional staff member. Once you have your official notice of accommodations from Services for Students with Disabilities, please inform me as early as possible in the semester.

Required Text

The following book is required --- you need to be sure you have the **correct edition** of the textbook – note, this is only available in an online/REVEL format:

Gaddie, Keith and Thomas R. Dye. 2018. *The New American Democracy* 11th Edition (2016 Presidential Election Edition). New York: Pearson Publishers.

The instructor reserves the right to add supplemental readings if necessary. Between 45% - 55% of the questions on the exams will come from the book...do not neglect your readings!

The list of assigned readings will merely serve as a guide for the class. There is a high degree of probability that the actual content of the lectures and discussions as well as the schedule of the readings will vary to some degree. It will often be the case that the readings will merely be a spring board for the lecture that allows you to understand the class discussion. If you miss a class you will not only have missed some material that may appear on a test but you might not even have a clue as to what you actually missed!

Academic Misconduct

Academic misconduct will not be tolerated. Winthrop's *Conduct Code* defines academic misconduct as:

"Academic misconduct includes but is not limited to providing or receiving assistance in a manner not authorized by the professor in the creation of work to be submitted for academic evaluation including papers, projects, and examinations; presenting, as one's own, the ideas or words of another for academic evaluation without proper acknowledgment; doing unauthorized academic work for which another person will receive credit or be evaluated; and presenting the same or substantially the same papers or projects in two or more courses without the explicit permission of the professors involved. In addition, academic misconduct involves attempting to influence one's academic evaluation by means other than academic achievement or merit. More explicit definitions of academic misconduct specific to certain academic disciplines may be promulgated by academic departments and schools."

I will prosecute cases of academic misconduct to the fullest extent of university policy, and that can mean expulsion from the university. Obviously, any student caught cheating or plagiarizing, in any manner, on an exam or assignment will receive a zero for that assignment in addition to academic prosecution. Additionally, I reserve the right to award the student an "F" in the course for ANY act of academic misconduct if I feel it is warranted. This is in addition to academic prosecution by the Dean of Students.

****ADDITIONALLY**, the Department of Political Science has it's own policies on plagiarism and academic misconduct: [Poli Sci Statement on Plagiarism](#). In the immortal words of Brad Hamilton: "Learn it; Know it; Live it!"**

Class Policies:

Please provide a respectful learning environment for your fellow students. Repeated tardiness, cell phone disruptions, reading materials unrelated to the course (such as the student newspaper), and use of communication technologies (e.g., web browsing/ IMing/ texting during class) during class will adversely affect your grade.

Attendance Policy: Beginning with the third time a student is declared absent, the student will lose a full letter grade for each absence. Any student caught IMing, texting, browsing the web or doing ANYTHING on a computer, tablet, phone, smart watch, or other electronic device that is not directly related to class and has been sanctioned by the professor will be declared "Absent" for that class. Since I don't take roll, this is the only way to be declared absent. Additionally, you may be asked to leave the class that day. Campus police will be called if you do not do so voluntarily.

Please arrive at class on time and **switch off or silence** all pagers, cell phones, and alarms during

class. The only exceptions to this rule are if you have children or an emergency family situation (e.g. family member in surgery). For these circumstances, you must notify the professor and then you may leave your phone on **vibrate** and you **must** leave the class to answer a call.

I do not provide lecture notes for students under any circumstances. To repeat, I do not provide lecture notes for students under **any** circumstances.

Grade Appeals: If you wish to dispute a grade on a particular assignment for any reason other than an obvious arithmetic error on my part, you will need to type a one-page explanation of your position and turn it in, along with the original graded assignment, at least one week after the assignment is returned to you. Appeals submitted less than one week after the grade/assignment is returned to you will not be accepted. I will then consider your appeal and make a determination.

Appeals must be submitted in hard copy format; no appeals submitted via email will be considered.

For appeals regarding your final grade in the course, please consult the Student Handbook and Catalog for procedures.

Constitution, University Level Competencies (ULCs), and Global Learning Initiative (GLI) Requirements:

PLSC 201, American Government, fulfills the University’s constitution requirement. This course contributes to student mastery of the following ULCs: Competency 3: Winthrop graduates understand the interconnected nature of the world and the time in which they live and Competency 4: Winthrop graduates communicate effectively. The GLI components of this course are an examination of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights alongside our Bill of Rights, a discussions of the differences between our legislative system and the parliamentary system of other countries, and discussions contrasting the preferences and opinions of people from around the United States with those locally and regionally.

Syllabus Changes: This syllabus is subject to change by the instructor throughout the semester.

Reading Assignments

Below is the order of topics as we will cover them in class; as we finish one topic, be prepared to move on to the next by doing the readings *in advance*.

Topic	Reading Assignment
History of Democracy & Representation	Chapter 1 (All) & Chapter 3 (pp. 68 – top of 62) and Declaration of Independence (pp 604- 605)
American Drive for Democracy	Chapter 3 (section 3.2)
Building a Constitution	Chapter 3 (the rest)
Principles of the Constitution	U.S. Constitution (pages 606-615)
The Federalists Papers	Federalist #10 and #51 (Pages 616-620)
Federalism	Chapter 4 (All)
Civil Liberties	Chapter 14 (All and again read the first 10 amendments to the U.S. Constitution on pages 611-612)
Civil Rights	Chapter 15 (All)
Exam 1 (Chpts 1, 3, 4, 14 & 15, the Constitution and Federalist Papers, and all lectures since beginning of course) Tuesday, October 2, 2018	

Congress	Chapter 10 (sections 10.1 – 10.4)
How a Bill Becomes a Law	Chapter 10 (sections 10.5 – 10.9)
The Presidency	Chapter 11 (All)
The Judiciary	Chapter 13 (All)
The Federal Bureaucracy	Chapter 12 (All)
Exam 2 (Chpts 10, 11, 12, & 13 and all lectures since last exam) Tuesday, October 30, 2018	
Public Opinion	Chapter 2 (All) and Chapter 5 (sections 5.1 – 5.4)
Political Parties	Chapter 7 (All)
Participation	Chapter 5 (section 5.5 – 5.8)
Campaigns & Elections	Chapters 8 (All)
Interest Groups	Chapter 9 (All)
Media & Politics	Chapter 6 (All)
Final Exam (Chpts 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, & 9 and all lectures since last exam) Thursday, December 6, 2018 at 11:30am	