
Summer 2019 – ONLINE; June 11-July 11
Fulfills: University Studies 4B – The Nature of US Society
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Overview

Students study a variety of topics in college, but the study of American politics is especially important because students approach the material as citizens as well as learners. As citizens, we are responsible for the health of our political system and it is critical that we evaluate it accurately and responsibly. Evaluation, however, can only take place with a solid understanding of the true nature of the political process and the institutions of American government. This understanding can be greatly aided by learning what political science has to say about our system.

This course introduces students to political science concepts, theories, and empirical findings in American politics. Topics include the context of the American political system (the Constitution, federalism, political culture, civil rights and liberties), the role of citizen demands (elections, political parties, interest groups), and the functioning of the major national institutions (Congress, presidency, bureaucracy, courts, as well as the media).

Course-Specific Learning Outcomes:

1. Describe the theoretical foundations of American government.
2. Summarize the role institutions, such as Congress, the Presidency and the Supreme Court, play in the American political system.
3. Explain how the actions of institutions are influenced by elections, political parties, interest groups, public opinion and the media.

University Studies Learning Outcomes:

1. Analyze social, economic, political, or cultural contexts and the ways they interact in the United States.
2. Analyze the ways in which race and other identities shape social conditions, economic standing, political power, or cultural norms and experiences in the United States.
3. Locate, analyze, summarize, paraphrase and synthesize material from a variety of sources.
4. Evaluate arguments made in support of different perspectives on US society.

How does this online course work? Basically, students' primary responsibility will be to gather information about the topics from the textbook and the online activities, and then assimilate this knowledge through various learning activities. First, students read a chapter in the electronic textbook and visit a website with an activity/video/reading/data. Then, students take a quiz, using their book

as a reference, to help them master the chapter material. Next, student write a response to a question about the chapter. Students' understanding of the material from the chapters will be assessed in a more comprehensive way during the exams. In addition, students complete an assignment focused on a political issue.

Required Texts

We the People, 11th Essentials Edition, EBOOK. 2017. Benjamin Ginsberg, Theodore J. Lowi, Caroline J. Tolbert, and Margaret Weir. WW Norton. ISBN 978-0-393-63058-9.

I am recommending the ebook version, which costs \$35. If you feel strongly about having a printed version of the book, you may purchase that instead. The paperback version retails for \$87.50 new (used versions may be available for less) and the ISBN for that version is 978-0-393-63998-8. The paperback comes with an ebook included.

Requirements

Your grade in the course is based on the number of points out of 1,000 that you earn on the following assignments.

Overview

- Quizzes (225 points)
- Exams (100 points each, 300 total)
- Chapter Response Discussions (225 points)
- Issue Assignment (250 points)

Details

Quizzes:

After reading the chapter and studying it, you will take a quiz that assesses how well you have mastered the material in the chapter. There is no time limit for the quizzes and you are encouraged to use your book to answer the questions. The purpose of the quizzes is to foster a very careful reading and studying of the chapters.

Exams:

There will be three exams during the semester. The purpose of the exams is to give you an opportunity to intensively review the material and therefore learn it more comprehensively. The exams will be a combination of multiple-choice and short answers. You will have a time limit of ninety minutes to complete the exams.

Chapter Response Discussions:

After reading the chapter, completing the online activity and taking the quiz, you will engage in a discussion that will ask you to respond to the chapter in some way. These discussions require you to analyze some of the material from the chapter while also articulating your own response and perspective on the topic. Appropriate responses should be one, maybe two, paragraphs long. Importantly, this component of the course requires you to read and evaluate your classmates' responses. To get full credit, for each discussion you should post one original response and then you should comment on *at least* two other students' posts.

Issue Assignment:

For this assignment, you will gain some basic research skills, conduct research on an issue, share that research with your peers, articulate the arguments about the issue in a pair of letters to an elected official that make the case for both sides of the issue and then evaluate both sets of arguments. The assignment directions will be posted on myCourses in a folder called Issue Assignment.

Your final grade is calculated based on the total points you earn:

LETTER GRADE	TOTAL POINTS	PERCENT		LETTER GRADE	TOTAL POINTS	PERCENT
A+	970-1000	97-100		C	730-769	73-76
A	930-969	93-96		C-	700-729	70-72
A-	900-929	90-92		D+	670-699	67-69
B+	870-899	87-89		D	630-669	63-66
B	830-869	83-86		D-	600-629	60-62
B-	800-829	80-82		F	<600	<60
C+	770-799	77-79				

Course Website

You will need to use the course website on myCourses for this course. To get to myCourses, you need to login to the myUMassD Portal using your UMassD Logon username and password—these are the same ones you use for email:

<https://my.umassd.edu/>

The link to myCourses is located in the Quicklaunch menu on the left.

If you need any help using myCourses, first visit the student help page:

<http://mycourses.umassd.wikispaces.net/myCourses+Student+Resources>

If you still need assistance, send email to mycourseshelp@umassd.edu or call the Student IT Service Center at 508-999-8884 during normal business hours (M-F 9-5).

Outside those hours, call 1-888-989-7074 or live chat at:

https://embanet.frontlinesvc.com/app/chat_launch/p/2146

Policies

Reaching Me

Without classroom or office contact, it is important that opportunities to discuss the course and the material with me be explicitly stated. You may email me at my regular address (dprentiss@umassd.edu) or using the course email function anytime you like.

Late Penalties and Incompletes

Late issue assignment components will be penalized 10% points per day. Quizzes must be completed before the relevant exam, or no credit will be given. No late work of any type will be accepted after midnight on July 12. The exams are open for you to take over a multi-day period, so there really is no

reason to take them late. However, if you do not take it in the allotted time period, special arrangements will have to be made and a 15% point late penalty will apply.

Incompletes will only be given in exceptional circumstances. A request for an incomplete must be made no more than 48 hours after the last class. You must be passing at the time of the request or sufficiently close to passing that the completion of the work after the semester will likely lead to a passing grade.

Academic Dishonesty

Because you will be completing your exams at home, you will be allowed to use your textbook as a reference (there's no way to avoid it). Your ability to rely on the book is limited by the one-hour time limit on the exam, but it is not impossible to use it as a reference for some questions, and this is fine. However, for the short answer questions, the online format can create problems with academic dishonesty. Two pitfalls can occur because of this, one minor and one major. A minor problem occurs when students complete an answer by closely paraphrasing the information in the textbook regarding the relevant material. For instance, students simply read each sentence in a section and paraphrase each sentence in turn for their answer. This kind of answer, while not academically dishonest, is not a good demonstration of your learning and will not receive a good score. To avoid this problem, I strongly suggest you draft some talking points for each answer, either as bullet points or as an outline, and then close the book before writing your actual answer. You need to show that you understand and can explain your understanding of the material. Sentence-by-sentence (or point-by-point) paraphrasing is not the same as understanding.

The major problem occurs when material from the textbook (or another source) is put forward as your own writing without quotations or citations. I expect you to draw from the textbooks for your responses, so paraphrasing from the book does not require a citation. But, anytime you *quote* from the textbook in response to a question, you **MUST** indicate that the text is quoted by putting it in quotation marks. If you do not, it will be considered academic dishonesty. And, if you use information from an outside source, printed or online, quoted or paraphrased, you **MUST** indicate this in your response as well. Failure to indicate that you have quoted or used information from an outside source constitutes academic dishonesty. *Copying and pasting from an internet source without putting that text in quotation marks and providing a citation is academic dishonesty.* This is true for both the exams and the issue assignment. Students who engage in academic dishonesty will *fail the course*. If you have any doubts or questions about whether some action constitutes academic dishonesty, please ask me. Also, you must familiarize yourself with the UMD statement on academic ethical standards in the Student Handbook:

<http://www.umassd.edu/studenthandbook/academicregs/ethicalstandards.cfm>

Students with Disabilities

In accordance with University policy, if you have a documented disability and require accommodations to obtain equal access in this course, please contact the Center for Access and Success, which is located in Pine Dale Hall, Room 7136, phone 508-999-8711, email access_success@umassd.edu.

Schedule

The course is organized through a series of *learning modules*. Each learning module is associated with a topic and a related chapter in the ebook, along with an online activity/video/game/reading. Within the module, you will find the quiz and the chapter response question for that chapter. You will work through the learning modules in the order they are listed in the schedule and in the left-side menu in myCourses. Running parallel to the modules is the issue assignment, which will require you to

complete several shorter sub-assignments at various due dates. These materials will be in a separate folder titled Issue Assignment.

The course is set up so that you have flexibility in the pace with which you work through the learning modules. The only requirement is that you complete the learning modules in each part before the related exam. That said, the chapter response discussions work best when people are posting and responding to one another, so be sure to check back on these discussion boards throughout the entire time period for each part, especially if you work ahead of schedule.

This course happens during a summer term that is only 31 days long. Compressing a full semester of material and work into a month means you will likely have to do some work each day, including weekends. And the nature of the schedule means that even some exams will have to be scheduled on weekends. The exams will be open for you to take over a two-day period, as indicated in the schedule below. The exams are setup so that you have one hour to complete them, but you can begin them any time during the two-day window. Because of the time limitation, you will want to spend some time reviewing and studying before you begin.

Part I – Governmental Design

Chapter 1 – Introduction: The Citizen and Government
Chapter 2 – The Founding and the Constitution
Chapter 3 – Federalism
Chapter 4 – Civil Liberties and Civil Rights
Issue Assignment Research Summary Due – June 18
Exam 1 – June 18-20

Part II – The Political Environment

Chapter 5 – Public Opinion
Chapters 6 – The Media
Chapter 7 – Political Parties, Participation, and Elections
Chapter 8 – Interest Groups
Issue Assignment Letters to Elected Officials Due – June 28
Exam 2 – June 28-June 30

Part III – Political Institutions and Policy

Chapter 9 – Congress
Chapter 10 – The Presidency
Chapter 11 – Bureaucracy
Chapter 12 – The Federal Courts
Issue Assignment Reflective Evaluation Due – July 9
Exam 3 – July 9-11