

## PSCI 102: American National Government

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(leave message with Lee Ellen Phipps)

*Please utilize email for all of your questions. The paper trail will benefit both the instructor and the student for future reference points.*

### **TEXTBOOKS:**

*Government by the People, Brief Edition.* 8th ed. Magleby and Light, Pearson Prentice Hall, 2009.

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

American national government; formation and principles of the Constitution; political parties; structure of legislative executive and judicial branches; civil rights, current trend and issues.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

1. Students will be able to explain the origins, importance and evolution of the U.S. Constitution;
2. Students will be able to explain the U.S. federal system, changes it has undergone, and issues related to federalism;
3. Students will be able to identify distinctive features of American political culture.
4. Students will be able to profile the United States in terms of its cultural and demographic characteristics and explain how these relate to the system of government adopted for the United States.
5. Students will be able to explain the roles of political parties and interest groups in the political process.
6. Students will be able to explain the law making process, roles of members of Congress, and the politics of legislative activity.
7. Students will be able to identify the Constitutional basis, significant changes in the law, and current policy with respect to individual rights and liberties and due process of law.
8. Students will demonstrate an awareness of the powers and scope of activities of the federal government in economic and social policy.
9. Students will be able to explain the meaning of "equal justice under law" and apply the concept in contemporary and historical contexts.
10. Students will demonstrate an awareness of the powers and priorities that determine federal government activity in foreign policy and national defense.

### **ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:**

Academic dishonesty is an act by a student to use and/or represent the work of other individuals as that of his or her own production and/or creation. Academic dishonesty is unacceptable within the campus and in this course. Students committing acts of academic dishonesty shall be penalized by the assignment of lowered or failing grades on assignments and/or for the entire course depending upon the instructor's evaluation of the severity of the dishonest act. Consult the college catalog for more information on the institutional policy on academic dishonesty.

### **ATTENDANCE:**

The online system maintains a log each time you enter your online course. Students are required to login at least once a week in order to meet course assignment deadlines and to receive additional instructor announcements. Students who do not login and who do not communicate with their instructor either through email or by phone by the 10th class day may be administratively withdrawn from the class.

### **LATE WORK:**

Due dates are assigned to each unit. No credit will be given for work submitted after the due date unless arranged with the

instructor. You must request additional time on any unit no less than 24 hours in advance of a final due date. No additional time will be granted on exams or final compositions.

### **SAFEGUARDS:**

Back up every piece of work you do on disk, and make a hard copy. If you experience computer difficulties, you are responsible for solving your own technical problems. Heavy Internet use occurs during the evening hours of 8-10 p.m. You might want to consider logging on at other times if possible.

### **DEADLINES:**

Odd things happen in cyberspace: emails get lost; servers disconnect temporarily; logins are impossible, etc. Do not wait for the last moments to complete your assignments. Allow time to meet deadlines. Reply and check for replies on every email sent and received. Be sure to check the message centers each time you logon, for important messages. You must notify the instructor of a request for additional time 24 hours prior to any due date. No additional time will be granted on examinations.

### **HOW TO PROCEED THROUGH THIS COURSE:**

This course is divided into several units. I suggest that you briefly visit all of the units before you begin the course. This will assist you in creating a "cognitive map" of the types of assignments required for each unit. You should proceed through the units in the order they are assigned. Many times, each chapter and assignment is building toward the next group of concepts and applications. Deadlines are posted within the units and are posted on the course calendar. No assignments will be accepted via email or after the due date unless prior approval is granted by the instructor.

### **GOOD STUDY HABITS:**

If you have never taken a distance education course before, an essential ingredient to passing an online course, is to have good study habits. Working on your own in a distance education course means that greater responsibility is placed on the student, for successful completion of the course. The student who is motivated, self-disciplined, and has good organizational skills tends to develop the study habits essential for normal progress in the course.

While it is enjoyable to have the flexibility of scheduling your course study time, some students never develop a successful study routine. This pattern can place the student in a position that may result in non-completion of deadlines or "cramming" for major assignments. Try to consider the following items when developing good study habits in an online course:

Set aside a certain day or time to work on your course. Try to do this early in the week, so you have time to email your instructor for clarification of exercises and projects you may have been assigned. Get into the habit of checking the Announcement section and Unit section of the course in order to get a mental picture of what you will need to do during the week.

Do not wait until the last day before a deadline, to study and complete assignments. Remember that even though you are not sitting in a classroom for three hours, you will be using the three hours of "classroom" time to read and complete assignments. If you wait until the last minute, you will be stressed when trying to complete the work in an insufficient amount of time. An online class does not mean less time; often it requires more time since you are responsible for reading and completing the work on your own.

### **UNIT ACTIVITY GUIDELINES:**

The Unit Activities accompanying each unit are designed to require some independent research (either or both library and/or traditional research). Since it is difficult to submit an incorrect response to the Unit Activities, your grade will be derived from a number of factors. Make certain that you conduct sound research and provide sources, be very thorough and detailed in your responses, provide well-organized and theoretically-sound responses, and present your position sociologically. The combination of these criteria will result in your grade. The first few activities will be quite important and can be used as a frame-of-reference for future responses. I will try to make my comments very detailed and specific so that you can remedy future projects and refine your work into consistently exceptional responses. Questions are designed to demand brief essay responses and will need to be answered in no fewer than one-two very-detailed paragraphs per question or activity. ***Feel free to work ahead on all unit activities, the final composition, and the exams. You may submit them at any time during the semester but no later than the posted due date on the course syllabus. No additional time will be granted on the final composition or exams.***

### **NETIQUETTE:**

Netiquette is using good manners in cyberspace. Since most of the communication over the net is by way of text, be sure your written words are not offensive to the receiver. Remember email is a document, and can be read by someone other than the intended audience. "Flaming" (making personal attacks on a person) is also unacceptable, and will follow the same discipline actions found in the student handbook, including administrative withdrawal at the instructor's discretion. Whether you are in a chat

room, writing an email or posting to a discussion area, remember to use proper etiquette in consideration of others. If you would like to read more on the subject of netiquette, use the links below.

<http://www.iwillfollow.com/email.htm>

<http://www.albion.com/netiquette/corerules.html>

**GRADING POLICY:**

Midterm Exams (2 essay exams) 35 % of the final grade

Unit Activities 40 % of the final grade

Final Composition (see end of course syllabus) 25 % of the final grade

**All units, including exams, are accessible throughout the semester. Feel free to work ahead on all units but remember to meet the final due date for each unit. Begin work on your Final Composition in Unit #2.**

**Unit 1 :** Read Chapter 1

Complete Unit Activity

Due no later than 9/5

**Unit 2 :** Read Chapters 2 and 3

Complete Unit Activity

Due no later than 9/12

**Unit 3 :** Read Chapters 4 and 5

Complete Unit Activity

Due no later than 9/19

**Unit 4 :** Read Chapter 6

Complete Unit Activity

Due no later than 9/26

**Unit 5 : Submit Midterm Exam #1: Due no later than 10/10**

**Unit 6 :** Read Chapters 7 and 8

Complete Unit Activity

Due no later than 10/17

**Unit 7 :** Read Chapters 9 and 10

Complete Unit Activity

Due no later than 10/24

**Unit 8 :** Read Chapter 11

Complete Unit Activity

Due no later than 10/31

**Unit 9 :** Read Chapters 12 and 13

Complete Unit Activity

Due no later than 11/7

## Final Composition Due 11/21 in Unit 9 Assignment Area!

### Unit 10 : Midterm Exam #2: Due no later than 12/5

## American National Government

### Final Composition

### Due no later than 11/21!

The final composition allows you to systematically evaluate the state of American democracy today. You should question whether our current system is the best that it can be. The goal of the project is not to suggest an entirely different style of government, such as communism or socialism. Instead, provide suggestions to make American democracy more inclusive and equitable while still maintaining the integrity of the Constitution and governing institutions.

Your task is to design a better American government by keeping some of the current features and providing suggestions to improve others. In a 4-6 page essay, explain your ideas for a better government. Consider the following timeline for each week. You may include your experiences with civic participation and discussion questions in your units.

#### Final Project Timeline

You should budget your time wisely and work on your project throughout the course. As outlined below, some assignments in the course are designed to assist you in creating your final project. If you complete your course activities and use the feedback provided by the instructor, you will be on the right track to successfully complete your project.

- “ Suggested in Week One: Consider the challenges to democracy. Do you think any one of these challenges poses a particular threat to our current system of government? In response to these challenges, reflect on American civic values and what we appreciate most about our democracy. Which side do you think wins—democratic challengers or civic values?
- “ Suggested in Week Two: Reflect on the framers' intentions for the Constitution. What do you like most about the Constitution, and subsequently our democracy? What do you like least? If you were one of the original framers, what would you advocate changing about the Constitution?
- “ Suggested in Week Three: Which civil liberty or civil right do you value the most? Which do you value the least? Is there a civil liberty or civil right that we currently do not enjoy for which you would advocate?
- “ Suggested in Week Four: Consider the intended and unintended consequences of the electoral college. Do you think this is the most effective or best way to elect the President of the United States? Also, consider how political participation affects elections. Discuss one thing you would change to enhance political participation in America. Is increased participation necessarily a good thing?
- “ Suggested in Week Five: Consider the way a bill becomes a law in America. Do you think it is too easy or too difficult to enact a law? Defend your answer with specific examples. What strengths do you see in the congressional structure? What weaknesses do you see? Do the strengths outweigh the weaknesses?
- “ Suggested in Week Six: What presidential roles do you think are most and least important? What presidential powers do you think are most and least important? If you could add or subtract one presidential role, what would it be and why? If you could add or subtract one presidential power, what would it be and why?
- “ Suggested in Week Seven: Based on the exercise and assignment, do you think there should be more or less bureaucratic influence on Americans? Discuss at least one advantage and one disadvantage of more or less influence, depending on which position you advocate.
- “ Suggested in Week Eight: Federal judges and Supreme Court justices are not elected—they are appointed by the president and confirmed by the U.S. Senate. Rely on your responses from the discussion questions when considering how equitable it is to support an unelected judiciary. Is this the fairest way? Defend your argument for or against the election of federal judges and Supreme Court justices.