Instructor: Jason Kehrberg, M.A.     Email: jasonk@muskingum.edu

Course Summary: This is an introductory course in American government that provides a general overview of American politics. The course studies American institutions, behavior, and other areas of American politics. American institutions include the three branches of government (legislative, executive, and judicial), the U.S. Constitution, and federalism. American behavior examines public opinion, elite behavior, media, and elections.

The goal of this course is more than students developing an understanding of American institutions and political environment. Students are challenged to develop theoretical, analytical, and critical thinking skills to become better citizens, who are able conclusions about the massive about of information that the modern citizen is exposed to on a daily basis.

Textbooks. There are two required texts for this course.


Teaching Approach.

Since this course is on-line, the teaching approach is a combination of traditional presentations with lectures and on-line class discussion. The nature of an on-line program limits interactive class activities and group exercises, partially due to being on-line and the limited class size. From the presentations and lectures, I encourage students to focus on theories, evidence, and trends. It is important to understand how we have arrived where we are today, specifically, how ideas and concepts have changed and interacted with other factors to shape the American political environment. By understanding each of these, you will become a better citizen by having a better understanding of American politics. To accomplish this, one needs to understand the relationship between political theories and the real world.

On-line Lectures and Office Hours.

Lectures will become available on-line for the week on each Wednesday and remain on-line for the duration of the class. Each lecture is followed by a short quiz that is composed of randomly picked multiple-choice questions. It is the student’s responsibility to watch and listen to the lecture and finish the quiz by Sunday at midnight. Some weeks will have more lectures than others but on average each week will have 2 to 3 lectures. I hope this provides the freedom for students to set their own schedule.

As far as office hours, since this class is on-line. I will be available on-line 5:30 to 9:00pm each Monday and by appointment that can be setup through email. I am also available in-person on the Muskingum University campus by appointment.
Grades.

- Exam 1 – 20% of final grade.
- Exam 2 – 20% of final grade.
- Exam 3 – 20% of final grade.
- Class Participation and Quiz grades – 10% of final grade.
- 3 Issue Papers - 30% of final grade (15% each).

Grades: Your final grade is determined as follows: A= 93-100%, A-=90-92%, B+=87-89%, B=83-87%, B- 80-82%, C+= 77-79%, C= 73-77%, C-70-72%, D+=67-69%, D=63-67%, D-=60-62%, F= 0-59%. This course is not graded on a “curve.”

Tests.

Each test is composed of multiple formats. A basic knowledge section will use multiple-choice questions, available through blackboard. The multiple-choice section will be composed of 20 multiple-choice questions. A second section will test each student’s ability to integrate and apply the materials into a larger whole to solve “real world” puzzles. Learning dates and facts will not help you with the second section, but an understanding of theory and concepts will be required. This second section, will be in written format and either short or long essays. The tests are available over a 24 hour time period, see the course schedule for exact days, and each student is given 2 hours to complete the exam. The 2-hour time period starts when you start the exam on-line.

Issue Papers.

As one of the stated goals of this class is to provide students with the ability to think critically about modern political issues by applying knowledge gained from the class, each student will write three issue papers. Each paper will ask a student to apply the knowledge gained from the class to a current political issue. Students will be asked to support a specific position on each issue and will be graded on their ability to apply theories, analytical skills, critical thinking, and knowledge from the course to the political issue. I will drop the lowest paper grade.

Disability Statement.

Any student who wishes to request an accommodation is responsible to contact the Disability Education Office (DEO) to discuss his/her specific needs and the process to receive reasonable accommodation. Please contact the DEO, located in the Center for Advancement of Learning in Montgomery Hall 223 or call 740-826-8280 to arrange an appointment as soon as possible. At the appointment, the procedure to coordinate accommodations will be discussed. You can also find information about the process for accommodation on the web at http://www.muskingum.edu/home/cal/ada.html
Course Schedule.

Below is a general listing of topics to be covered during the semester, including due dates for readings, course assignments and exams. On any given day, all students are responsible for all readings, in-class materials, and court-related headlines up to and including that day. Please note that this schedule is subject to change. Changes will be announced on-line.

Week #1. June 1st – 8th
   Introducing Politics in America: Edwards, chapter 1
   The Constitution and Democracy: Edwards, chapter 2; American Polity 9, 15

Week #2. June 9th – 15th
   American Federalism: Edwards, chapter 3; American Polity 19, 20

Week #3. June 16th – 22nd
   Civil Liberties in America: Edwards, chapter 4; American Polity 49, 54
   Civil Rights in America: Edwards, chapter 5; American Polity 5, 51

EXAM ONE: June 23rd
ISSUE PAPER #1: June 30th

Week #4. June 24th – 29th
   Political Parties and the System: Edwards, chapter 8; American Polity 77, 78
   Interest Groups and the System: Edwards, chapter 11; American Polity 62, 63

Week #5. June 30th – July 6th
   Mass Media and American Politics: Edwards, chapter 7; American Polity 81, 83
   Public Opinion and Participation: Edwards, chapter 6; American Polity 56, 58

Week #6. July 7th – 13th
   American Campaigns & Elections: Edwards, chapter 9, 10; American Polity 61, 71, 72

EXAM TWO: July 14th
ISSUE PAPER #2: July 21st

Week #7. July 22nd – July 27th
   The American Congress: Edwards, chapter 12; American Polity 23, 24
   The American Presidency: Edwards, chapter 13; American Polity 33, 35

Week #8. July 28th – August 3rd
   The Federal Judicial System: Edwards, chapter 16; American Polity 43, 45
   The Federal Bureaucracy: Edwards, chapter 15; American Polity 37, 38

EXAM THREE: August 9th
ISSUE PAPER #3: August 13th