

**National Government**  
**PSCI 2000**  
**Spring 2008**

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***Course Description***

This course is designed to be an introductory survey of American national government. It introduces the basic principles and theories of American government, explores the political process, describes the formal structure, and illustrates its functions. Throughout the semester, attention will be focused on some of the problems and challenges facing the American system of government and by extension, its citizens. Students should expect to complete this course with a broad understanding of the concepts laid out above, with the hope that they will be more informed, participatory actors in the political system.

***Texts***

Three texts will be required for this course, two of which are offered as a shrink-wrapped bundle at the bookstore (and thus are one price):

Barbour, Christine, et al. *Keeping the Republic*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2006.

\_\_\_\_\_. *CQ's Guide to the 2008 Elections*. Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2007. (Bundled with the text book.)

Mitchell, Ralph. *CQ's Guide to the Constitution*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Washington, DC: CQ Press, 1995.

There are also some short articles on the library's electronic reserve:

Canon, David T., et al., eds. *Faultlines: Debating the Issues in American Politics*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: London, 2007. Chapter 10.

McKenna, Georgia, and Stanley Feingold, eds. *Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Controversial Political Issues*. 12<sup>th</sup> ed. Guilford, Connecticut: McGraw-Hill/Dushkin, 2001. Chapter 6.

Rourke, John T., ed. *You Decide! Current Debates in American Politics*. 2005 ed. New York: Pearson Longman, 2005. Chapter 5.

Woll, Peter, ed. *American Government: Readings and Cases*. 15<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: Pearson Longman, 2004. Chapter 49.

In addition, some articles may be posted online on the instructor's website and on WebCT from time to time through the course of the semester. Since these will be timely articles published during the course of the semester from various sources, they cannot be listed here. It is in the student's interest to regularly check the website and WebCT for such articles, since they will be discussed in class and will be fair game for exams.

It is critical that you come to class having read the material assigned for that meeting.

### ***Course Requirements and Grading***

The structure of this course is primarily lecture based, but will be augmented by class discussion. I encourage you to ask questions and present your thoughts on the readings for the session at appropriate times. This is the best way to solidify your understanding of the concepts that we will cover in class.

Your grade in this course will be determined according to the following structure:

Exams (3 @ 15% each)	45%
Final Exam (Cumulative)	25%
Writing Assignments (4 @ 6.25% each)	25%
Attendance	5%

Letter grades will be assigned according to the WMU grading scale (i.e., 100-93 A, 92-88 BA, etc).

### ***Exams***

There will be three exams during the semester, each covering a different section of material. While subsequent exams are not cumulative *per se*, the knowledge that you acquire early in the semester will be the foundation for the material that you confront later. The exams will be composed of a variety of question types, which may include multiple choice, term identification, short answer, and essay. I will let you know prior to the exam what types of questions will be there so that you may better prepare. In addition, review sheets will be made available online to assist you in your preparation.

### ***Final Exam***

The final exam will be written to encompass the material covered during the entire semester (i.e., cumulative). This exam will be composed entirely of multiple choice type questions, and will be somewhat longer than the other exams.

### *Writing Assignments*

Through the semester, there will be four writing assignments for which you will be responsible. The details of each assignment will be posted on the instructor's website and on WebCT. However, there will be some overarching guidelines that will apply to all of these assignments, which will be provided in a separate handout.

**N.B.:** You are responsible for making yourself aware of and understanding the academic policies and procedures in the Undergraduate or Graduate Catalogs (found online, <http://catalog.wmich.edu>) that pertain to Student rights and responsibilities. These policies include cheating, fabrication, falsification and forgery, multiple submission, plagiarism, complicity, and computer misuse. If there is reason to believe you have been involved in academic dishonesty, you will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs. You will be given the opportunity to review the charge(s). If you believe you are not responsible, you will have the opportunity for a hearing. You should consult with me if you are uncertain about an issue of academic honesty prior to the submission of an assignment or test.

### *Attendance*

There will be a small portion of your grade that is based upon attendance. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class.

### *Extra Credit*

From time to time, at the instructor's discretion, extra credit opportunities may be offered. Such opportunities will not be offered on an individual basis; that is, do not ask what you can do for extra credit if you are not doing well in the class. Extra credit opportunities may be offered for attendance at certain events that the instructor deems appropriate and beneficial, and extra credit points will be added to one of the three exams (not the final).

### *Class Policies*

1. Attendance is mandatory as the readings will not make up for the material presented in the lectures and the discussion that will take place. Since attendance and participation in the class discussions (which would be difficult if you were absent) factor into your participation grade, regular attendance is paramount as it can push a high letter grade average on the other assignments to the next letter grade (i.e., a high B can become an A). Each student will be allowed two (2) absences for the semester. These may be either excused or unexcused; no explanation is necessary for me, but be aware that if you use up this allotment for frivolous purposes, you will not have them for any emergencies that may arise. For each absence beyond these two, five (5) points will be deducted from your participation grade. Though you need not explain your two absences to me, the wise student will always alert his or her instructor beforehand (or as soon as possible in the case of an emergency) with the reason why if a class meeting must be missed.
2. Participation is imperative for gaining the greatest amount of information and benefit from the class. Since you have paid (or someone has paid) an amazing amount of money

for this class (and it is worth every penny!), be sure to get your money's worth. One of my undergraduate professors used to say that students were the only consumer group who liked to be ripped off by easy workloads and cancelled classes; don't let this be you. I pledge to arrive to each class session prepared and excited about teaching you the material; I expect you to arrive to each class session prepared and excited about learning it.

3. Punctuality, whether in arriving for class sessions or in turning in assignments, is important. It is an excellent habit to have in your possession, regardless of what it might be; future employers will not be as forgiving of tardiness and absence as some of your college professors are. Since I believe that my job is not only to provide you with information about this particular subject but also to prepare you for the "real world" outside of this pristine campus, I would be remiss if I did not begin to hold you to the same standards that your future employers will. Therefore, excessive tardiness (defined as being more than 10 minutes late) will be counted as an absence. Still, I encourage you to attend even if you are going to be late like this; class lectures and discussions cannot be recreated from one of your peer's notes. In addition, all out-of-class assignments (papers, etc.) must be submitted at the beginning of class on the due date. If it is not, it will be considered late. For each day an assignment is late, ten (10) points will be deducted from the overall grade.
4. ***The quality of your writing is important, both here and in the real world.*** Being able to convey your ideas and thoughts in both a clear and concise manner is necessary for succeeding in life. One of the goals of this class is to prepare your writing ability. If writing is not one of your strong suits, I strongly encourage you to attend the Writing Center in Moore Hall Room 1071 (387-4615). This is a free service for students.
5. Make-up exams will only be given under dire circumstances, and few things meet this criterion. Advance permission and arrangements must be made with me, unless a medical emergency has occurred (you may be required to produce proof of such an emergency). Otherwise, there will be no make-up exam and you will receive a zero on the missed exam.
6. Respect is of the utmost importance in any course and in life in general. Throughout the duration of this course many controversial topics will be discussed, and many diverse views will be expressed. Thus, it is important that everyone's views are respected in this class; this is a non-negotiable item. Debate is allowed, and in fact is encouraged, but disrespect for your peers will not be tolerated. If you cannot respect others' opinions, you will not be allowed to express your own views and you may be subject to further disciplinary action, including being removed from the class.

In addition, there are some other aspects of respect that shall be observed in this class.

***Cell phones*** should be turned off before entering class. I understand that this can be difficult to remember, but please make an effort to do this. A cell phone going off can derail a discussion or lecture, and as such is disrespectful to your fellow students and the instructor. Also, ***laptops***, if brought to class, should only be used for note taking purposes only – no email, instant messaging, checking sports scores, maintaining your Facebook or MySpace profile, etc. If I suspect that you are using your laptop for non-note taking purposes, you will not be allowed to use your laptop for the remainder of the semester. Finally, ***do not bring food*** to class sessions. Drinks are acceptable.

7. Honor is a characteristic that each of us should cherish. To that end, the Student Code will be strictly enforced in this class, particularly the section surrounding academic integrity. This can be found on the WMU website and if you have not already done so, I strongly encourage you to read it and become familiar with it. If any student violates the provisions of academic integrity, they will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs. Because this integrity is your responsibility, you must ask me any questions that you might have in this area *before* the assignment is submitted. After it has been submitted, it will be too late for such questions.
8. Any student with a documented disability (e.g., physical, learning, psychiatric, vision, hearing, etc.) who needs to arrange reasonable accommodations must contact Ms. Beth Denhartigh at 387-2116 or at beth.denhartigh@wmich.edu at the beginning of the semester. A disability determination must be made by this office before any accommodations are provided by the instructor.

### *Course Schedule*

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Reading Assignment and Assignment Due Dates</b>
Jan. 8	Course Info; Review of Syllabus and Paper Assignment	
Jan. 10	What is politics?	Barbour Ch. 1
Jan. 15	Political Culture and Ideology in America	Barbour Ch. 2
Jan. 17	America Before and At the Founding	Barbour Ch. 3; Appendix 1-2
Jan. 22	The Constitution	Appendix 3, except Amendments
Jan. 24	The Constitution, <i>cont.</i>	Barbour Ch. 4; <b>Writing Assignment 1 Due</b>
Jan. 29	Civil Rights and Liberties	Barbour Ch. 5; Appendix 3 – Amendments to Constitution
Jan. 31	Civil Rights and Liberties, <i>cont.</i> ; Equal Rights	Barbour Ch. 6
Feb. 5	<b>Exam 1</b>	
Feb. 7	Congress	Appendix 3; Barbour Ch. 7
Feb. 12	Congress, <i>cont.</i>	Barbour Ch. 7
Feb. 14	Presidency	Barbour Ch. 8
Feb. 19	Presidency, <i>cont.</i>	Barbour Ch. 8; <b>Writing Assignment 2 Due</b>
Feb. 21	Bureaucracy	Barbour Ch. 9
Feb. 26	Courts and Legal System	Barbour Ch. 10
Feb. 28	<b>Exam 2</b>	
<b>Mar. 3-7</b>	<b>Spring Break – Have fun and be safe!</b>	
Mar. 11	Political Parties	Barbour Ch. 12
Mar. 13	Political Parties, <i>cont.</i> ; Elections	Appendix 4; Barbour Ch. 14
Mar. 18	Elections, <i>cont.</i>	Barbour Ch. 14; <i>CQ's Guide to the 2008 Elections</i> ; <b>Writing Assignment 3 Due</b>
Mar. 20	Interest Groups	Barbour Ch. 13

Mar. 25	The Media	Barbour Ch. 15
Mar. 27	Public Opinion	Barbour Ch. 11
Apr. 1	<b>Exam 3</b>	
Apr. 3	Domestic Policy	Barbour Ch. 17
Apr. 8	Domestic Policy, <i>cont.</i>	Barbour Ch. 17; <b>Writing Assignment 4 Due</b>
Apr. 10	Foreign Policy	Barbour Ch. 19
Apr. 15	Foreign Policy, <i>cont.</i>	Barbour Ch. 19
Apr. 17	<b>Review Session</b>	
Apr. 21	<b>Final Exam – 8:00-10:00 am</b>	<b>Good luck to everyone!</b>