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Spring 2-1-2007

### PSC 100S.02: Introduction to American Government

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**PSC 100, SECTION 2 – INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN GOVERNMENT**

**Spring 2007**

**MWF 11:10-12:00, Social Science 352**

Professor Christopher Muste

Office: 416 Liberal Arts

Office Hours: Monday 3-5; Wednesday 12-1 and 3-4; and by appointment

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Office Hours: Monday 12-1; Wednesday 10-11

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

The purpose of this course is to introduce you to the study of government and politics in the United States, to enable you to better understand political events and processes as they occur, and to provide you with information you can use to become more involved and effective in the political process. We will emphasize the roles played by the people in national politics, the different values and interests people have, and people's influence on political decisions. Exploring the roles people play in politics – as we study the fundamental elements of American government, dynamic political processes, and political institutions – we can understand politics in greater depth, better evaluate how well our political system functions, and more accurately understand the U.S. political system's strengths and potential for improvement.

In addition to addressing these topics, this course satisfies the General Education Social Sciences (S) requirement. The goal of this requirement is to enable you to 1) describe the nature, structure, and historical development of human organizations and/or relationships, 2) comprehend the role of theory in explaining social phenomena, 3) generate and/or interpret social science data, 4) assess and evaluate the significance of social science phenomena.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING:**

This course builds on the knowledge gained from each part of the course, which means that your investment in keeping up with the course material will pay off in terms of how much you will learn and how interesting class will be for you. This requires that you do the readings before each class that you're prepared to contribute to class discussion and questions – even in a large class such as this one, intelligent questions and discussions are important to learning.

It is also very important to keep up with political events, which helps in understanding the course material. The best way to do this is to read news coverage of politics in a major national newspaper on a daily basis. The *New York Times* and *The Washington Post* are two of the best for political news coverage, and both have free websites. The *Wall Street Journal* has somewhat less political news, and is only available free online at Factiva, through the UM Mansfield Library website.

There will be two midterm exams (each worth 25% of the course grade) and a third exam during finals week (worth 30% of the course grade), as well as one research and analysis paper (worth 20% of the course grade) which will be due after spring break.

Grades will be assigned according to the following percentages:

A = 93-100

B+ = 87-89.9

C+ = 77-79.9

D+ = 67-69.9

below 60=F

A- = 90-92.9

B = 83-86.9

C = 73-76.9

D = 63-66.9

B- = 80-82.9

C- = 70-72.9

D- = 60-62.9

- \* Makeup exams will be permitted only if I have been notified prior to the missed exam and only if I agree that the absence was necessitated by a serious, documented emergency.
- \* All three exams and the research paper must be completed in order to pass the course.
- \* Check your calendar now to make sure you do not have anything that conflicts with the exams.

**COURSE SCHEDULE: DATES SUBJECT TO CHANGE BY PROFESSOR**

<u>DATE</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>READINGS</u>
<b><u>Part I. Foundations of American Politics</u></b>		
January 22-26	A. American Political Culture	Chapter 1
January 29 - Feb. 2	B. The Founding & Constitution	Chapter 2, Appendix pp. A3-A25 (Declaration of Independence, Articles of Confederation, Constitution of the U.S. and Amendments, Federalist Papers #10 and #51)
February 5 -7	C. Federalism	Chapter 3
February 9 - 14	D. Civil Liberties	Chapter 4, Appendix pp. A16-A20 (Amendments to the Constitution)
Feb. 16 - 23	E. Civil Rights	Chapter 5

February 19, Monday NO CLASS TODAY DUE TO PRESIDENTS DAY HOLIDAY

**FEBRUARY 26 - MONDAY (TENTATIVE DATE) EXAM #1 – BRING SCANTRON**

**Part II. Politics, Dynamic Forces, and Political Processes**

Feb 28 - March 5	A. Public Opinion	Chapter 6
March 7 - 12	B. The Media	Chapter 7
March 14 - 16	C. Political Participation	Chapter 8
March 19 - 23	D. Political Parties	Chapter 9

March 26 - 30 NO CLASS DUE TO SPRING VACATION

April 2 - 6 E. Campaigns and Elections Chapter 10

**APRIL 9 - MONDAY (TENTATIVE DATE) EXAM #2 – BRING SCANTRON**

April 11 - 16 F. Groups and Interests Chapter 11

**Part III. Formal Institutions**

April 18 - 23 A. Congress Chapter 12

**MONDAY, APRIL 23, RESEARCH PAPER DUE IN CLASS**

April 25 - 30 B. The Presidency Chapter 13  
May 2 - 4 C. Federal Courts Chapter 15

**FINAL EXAM: WEDNESDAY, MAY 9, 10:10 A.M. – BRING SCANTRON**