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PSC 100S.02: Introduction to American Government

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PSC 100, SECTION 2 -- INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

Spring 2006

MWF 11:10-12:00, Science Complex 131

Professor Christopher Muste

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Office: 158 Liberal Arts

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

Political Science Department - 350 Liberal Arts; phone 243-5202

Teaching Assistant: Ellen Schultz Wilson

Office: Corbin 347

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

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 in the political process. We will emphasize the roles people play in national politics, the different values and interests people have, and people's influence on political decisions. By examining the roles people play in politics – as we study the fundamental structures of American government, political processes, and political institutions – we can understand politics in greater depth, better evaluate how well our political system functions, and develop a critical understanding of the U.S. political system's strengths and how the system might be improved.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

This course is structured to build on the knowledge gained in 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 and are 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 current political events, which will help you understand the course material. The best way to stay current is to read the news coverage in a major national newspaper on a daily basis. The *New York Times* and *The Washington Post* are two of the best for news coverage and free websites. The *Wall Street Journal* has somewhat less political news, and is only available free on 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 (30% of the course grade), as well as one research and analysis paper (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 if I agree that the absence was necessitated by a serious, documented emergency.

All three exams and the research & analysis paper must be completed in order to pass the course.

COURSE READINGS:

There is one textbook for this course: Benjamin Ginsberg, Theodore J. Lowi and Margaret Weir, *We the People: An Introduction to American Politics, Shorter 5th edition* (in paperback), available at the University of Montana Bookstore.

There is a website for this textbook with useful study materials such as practice quizzes, key term definitions, and chapter overviews, at <http://www.wwnorton.com/wtp5e/>

ACADEMIC HONESTY:

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University.

All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at <http://www.umt.edu/sa/VPSA/index.cfm/page/1321>.

I take academic honesty very seriously, and will do my utmost to prevent, uncover, and penalize any form of cheating in this course. See p. 22 in the *2005-2006 Catalog*, and the Student Conduct Code on the UM website listed above. Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns about academic honesty.

CLASS COURTESY:

In order to have a pleasant and effective learning environment in a class this size, we need to observe a few basic courtesies. This is a small campus, so it is possible to get to the classroom on time from all other campus buildings; arriving late or leaving early disrupts the class and disturbs other students and the instructor. Please turn off all cell phones before class begins. Please don't read a newspaper or other non-course material, or eat during class. If you have a question or comment about the material, please raise your hand instead of discussing it with your neighbor. We'll all benefit if we just keep in mind the reason we're in the room together.

DROP POLICY AND INCOMPLETES:

You can drop on Cyberbear until February 10, and from then until March 7 using a drop slip signed by me. After March 7, you must go through the more formal and difficult "late drop" petition process. I will sign late drop petitions for only one week after the first exam grades are posted on Blackboard, and not thereafter except under extraordinary circumstances.

Incompletes will only be permitted when all the conditions set forth in the official University policy are met – the policy is on page 21 of the *University of Montana 2005-2006 Catalog*.

SOCIAL SCIENCES DISTRIBUTIONAL REQUIREMENT:

In order for this course to satisfy your University of Montana Distributional Requirement in the Social Sciences, you must take the course for a letter grade, and freshmen and other students governed by the *2005-2006 Catalog* must earn a C– or better.

DSS STUDENTS:

Qualified students with disabilities will receive appropriate accommodations in this course. Students with disabilities requesting accommodations on exams, papers, or other course requirements should contact me as soon as possible, and must contact DSS in order to arrange for and provide me with a letter of approval for accommodations. DSS is in Lommasson Center 154.

E-MAIL AND BLACKBOARD:

Every registered UM student has an official UM e-mail account, and students registered for this course have a Blackboard course account. I may use your official UM e-mail to send you important announcements, and exam grades will be posted on Blackboard. See the last page of this syllabus for instructions on how to access your UM e-mail and Blackboard accounts.

COURSE SCHEDULE: Dates Subject to Change by Professor

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Readings</u>
<u>I. Foundations of American Politics</u>		
January 23-27	A. American Political Culture	Chapter 1
January 30 - Feb. 3	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 6 - 8	C. Federalism	Chapter 3
February 10 - 15	D. Civil Liberties	Chapter 4, Appendix pp. A16-A20 (Amendments to the Constitution)
Feb. 17 - 24	E. Civil Rights	Chapter 5

February 20, Monday **NO CLASS TODAY DUE TO PRESIDENTS DAY HOLIDAY**

FEBRUARY 27 - MONDAY (TENTATIVE DATE) EXAM #1 – BRING SCANTRON

Part II. Politics and Political Processes

March 1 - 6	A. Public Opinion	Chapter 6
March 8 - 13	B. The Media	Chapter 7
March 15 - 17	C. Political Participation	Chapter 8
March 20 - 24	D. Political Parties	Chapter 9

March 27 - 31 **NO CLASS DUE TO SPRING VACATION**

April 3 - 7	E. Campaigns and Elections	Chapter 10
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APRIL 10 - MONDAY (TENTATIVE DATE) EXAM #2 – BRING SCANTRON

April 12 - 17	F. Groups and Interests	Chapter 11
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Part III. Formal Institutions

April 19 - 24	A. Congress	Chapter 12
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MONDAY, APRIL 24, RESEARCH PAPER DUE IN CLASS

April 26 - May 1	B. The Presidency	Chapter 13
May 3 - 5	C. Federal Courts	Chapter 15

FINAL EXAM: FRIDAY, MAY 12, 10:10 – 12:10 – BRING SCANTRON