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PSCI 210S.02: Introduction to American Government

Robert P. Saldin

University of Montana - Missoula, robert.saldin@umontana.edu

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Introduction to American Government

Political Science (PSCI) 210
University of Montana
Tu/Th 11:00 – 12:20
Social Science Building, Room 352
Fall 2018

	<i>Professor:</i> Robert Saldin	<i>Teaching Assistant:</i> Ian Harris	<i>Teaching Assistant:</i> Connor Fitzpatrick
<i>Office:</i>	Liberal Arts 354	Corbin 347	Corbin 347
<i>Office Hrs:</i>	Tu/Th 12:20-1:30 & by appointment	Mon/Wed. 12:00-1:00 & by appointment	Friday 12:00-2:00 & by appointment
<i>Contact:</i>	robert.saldin@umontana.edu	ian.harris@umontana.edu	connor1.fitzpatrick@umconnect.umn.edu

Course Description

This course is an introduction to American government and politics and is designed to provide a foundation for understanding and participating in the American political system. We will examine the theoretical ideas that informed the creation and development of America's political system and consider some of the major contemporary challenges to the maintenance of American democracy.

Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to: 1) understand the origins and nature of the constitutional system; 2) appreciate the relationship between and the development of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches; 3) understand basic social science theories concerning political behavior, bureaucracies, interest groups, and political parties; 4) understand how social scientists explain and understand social and political processes; 5) write a thesis-based persuasive essay; 6) know the difference between a well-crafted argument substantiated with the effective use of evidence, and a poorly constructed argument based largely upon personal values and opinions.

Required Text and Other Readings

The following book is available at the University of Montana Campus Bookstore:

James Morone and Rogan Kersh, *By the People: Debating American Government* (Brief Version), 3rd edition.

- It's fine with me if you'd like to use the full version of this text or earlier editions of either the brief or full version. Please note, however, that there are some changes in each edition and that the chapter numbers for the brief and full editions don't always correspond (though the topics generally do).

Other readings will consist of primary source documents and timely articles. The primary source documents are noted on the syllabus (in Weeks 1, 2, and 3) and can be found in the appendixes of our book, *By the People*. Other primary source documents and timely articles don't appear on the

syllabus but will be added throughout the semester as the instructors deem appropriate. In these cases, the readings will be posted on the course's Moodle website and students will be notified. The instructors reserve the right to add, eliminate, or alter course readings.

Requirements and Grading

Weekly Writing Assignments:	15%
Exam 1 (Sept. 20):	15%
Exam 2 (Oct. 11):	15%
Exam 3 (Nov. 1):	15%
Exam 4 (Nov. 29)	15%
Final Exam (Dec. 14):	25%

Weekly Writing Assignments: Beginning with Week 2, in all full weeks of class without an exam, students will complete a short writing assignment. Unless otherwise noted, Weekly Assignments will be made available on Tuesdays and will be due on Thursdays. More information about weekly assignments, the submission procedure, and grading will be provided in class.

Exams: Exams 1, 2, 3, and 4 will be administered in class on *Thursday, September 20; Thursday, October 11; Thursday, November 1; and Thursday, November 29*. The Final Exam will be held from *10:10 – 12:10 on Friday, December 14*. Exams may include a combination of multiple choice, identification, short answer, and essay questions. Makeup exams will only be permitted if Professor Saldin has been notified *prior* to the missed exam and only if he agrees that the absence is necessitated by a serious, documented emergency. *Check your calendar now to make sure you do not have anything that conflicts with the exams.*

Grades: 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	

Optional Extra Credit Paper

If they choose, students may write a formal paper for up to 15 extra credit points to be added to their lowest exam score. For example, if a student's worst exam score is a 70, and s/he submits a paper and earns 10 out of the possible 15 points, the exam score is adjusted to an 80. Extra Credit Paper questions will be posted on the class' Moodle site. Your task will be to answer one of the questions in 3 double-spaced pages with 1-inch margins and 12-point font. Hard copies of papers are due at the beginning of class on Thursday, Nov. 15. *Extensions are not available for this opportunity, and late papers will not be accepted.*

Academic Honesty

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the instructors up to and including failing the course and a disciplinary sanction by the University. Academic dishonesty may also imperil future bids for the U.S. Senate. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available online at http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student_conduct.php. We take academic honesty very seriously and will do our utmost to prevent, uncover, and penalize any form of cheating. Please contact Professor Saldin if you have any questions or concerns about academic honesty.

Social Sciences (S) and Democracy and Citizenship (Y) General Education Requirements

In order for this course to satisfy your General Education Requirements in Social Sciences (S) and Democracy and Citizenship (Y), you must take the course for a traditional letter grade and earn a C– or better.

Accessibility

The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction by supporting collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students (DSS). *Students requesting accommodations on exams, papers, or other course requirements must contact the instructor as soon as possible and must contact DSS in order to arrange for and provide the instructor with a letter of approval for accommodations at least one week prior to the first exam.* DSS is in Lommasson Center 154; phone: (406) 243-2243.

Class Schedule

Week 1, Aug. 28 and 30: Introduction and the Ideas that Shape American Politics

- Chapter 1
- The Declaration of Independence (Appendix 1 in textbook)

Week 2, Sept. 4 & 6: The Constitution, Part I

- Chapter 2 (first half)
- The Constitution of the United States (Appendix 2 in textbook)

Week 3, Sept. 11 & 13: The Constitution, Part II

- Chapter 2 (second half)
- Federalist #10 (Appendix 3 in textbook)

Week 4, Sept. 18 & 20: Federalism and Nationalism

- Chapter 3
- ***Exam #1: Thursday, Sept. 20 (will cover material from Weeks 1 – 4)***

Week 5, Sept. 25 & 27: Civil Liberties and The Struggle for Civil Rights

- Chapters 4 and 5

Week 6, Oct. 2 & 4: Public Opinion and Political Participation

- Chapter 6

Week 7, Oct. 9 & 11: Media, Technology, and Government

- Chapter 7
- ***Exam #2: Thursday, October 11 (will cover material from Weeks 5 – 7)***

Week 8, Oct. 16 & 18: Campaigns and Elections

- Chapter 8

Week 9, Oct. 23 & 25: Interest Groups and Political Parties

- Chapter 9

Week 10, Oct. 30 & Nov. 1: Congress

- Chapter 10
- ***Exam #3: Thursday, November 1 (will cover material from Weeks 8 – 10)***

Week 11, Nov. 8: The Presidency

- No class on Tuesday, Nov. 6: Election Day
- Chapter 11

Week 12, Nov. 13 & 15: Bureaucracy

- Chapter 12
- ***Optional Extra Credit Paper due Thursday, November 15 by 11:00 AM***

Week 13, Nov. 20: The Judicial Branch

- Chapter 13
- No class on Thursday, Nov. 22: Thanksgiving

Week 14, Nov. 27 & 29: Domestic and Foreign Policy

- Chapter 14
- ***Exam #4: Thursday, November 29 (will cover material from Weeks 11 – 14)***

Week 15, Dec. 4 & 6: Conclusion

FINAL EXAM: Friday, December 14, 10:10 – 12:10

The Final Exam is comprehensive and will cover material from the entire course.

*The instructors reserve the right to make adjustments to the class schedule.
If changes are made, students will be notified promptly.*