Introduction to the Course:

This course is meant to provide an introduction to American politics. We will be examining the institutions and actors in the American political system and the rules that govern their behavior. We will also discuss and analyze some of the debates surrounding important contemporary issues in American politics, including political polarization, participation, representation, and civil rights. This course will examine politics from a scientific perspective; we will attempt to discuss and analyze political action and behavior in a systematic and empirical manner.

Course Objectives:

This course has two major objectives. The first objective of the course is to introduce the basic concepts about the American political system and how it works. While many of you will pursue careers in areas other than political science, understanding the basic processes of American government is critical to being an active and informed citizen. By the end of this course, you will have a better understanding of how the American governmental system works, the role of political actors within that system, and how the American public fits into all of this.

The second objective of the course is to develop a greater familiarity with and understanding of contemporary political issues. In addition to understanding how government works, active and informed citizens should have a basic understanding of the policy and ideological debates within the country today. To this end, we will often discuss the major issues of the day, and how disagreements over those issues might affect policy decisions or other political outcomes. By examining these issues critically, you will develop your own opinions, and you will acquire the tools to evaluate future policy debates.

This course consists of both lecture and discussion. At times, I will depend on class participation to drive the lecture. You should come to class prepared and willing to participate in the discussion. While I am happy to clarify the material from the readings, if there are no questions I will assume that everyone has completed the readings and understands them.
**Readings:**

You should purchase one text for this course:


Scott F. Abernathy  
Sage/CQ Press  
ISBN 978-1-5443-2761-7

All other readings will be provided by the instructor.

**Requirements:**

With a few exceptions, each week you will be assigned to read one chapter from the text. While the lectures will follow the same subject matter as the readings, they won’t necessarily cover the same material, and they almost certainly won’t present the same perspective as the one presented in the text. It is critical that you do the reading if you want to succeed in this course. Falling behind in the reading is the easiest way to do poorly in this class.

Approximately once per week, you will be given a quiz. The quiz will be posted on Canvas on Friday after class, and it will be due Monday before class. At the end of the semester, I will drop your lowest quiz score. The material on the quizzes will focus on the readings. Collectively, the quizzes will be worth 25% of your grade (see the grading summary below).

There will be three exams over the course of the semester. The format of the exams will be a mixture of multiple choice, fill in the blank, and short answer. The exams will not be cumulative, meaning that each exam will include only material presented since the previous exam; however, you will need to have a good understanding of earlier material in order to perform well on subsequent exams. Anything mentioned in the readings or in class is fair game for the exams. This includes policy discussions, current events, and any other topics mentioned in class but not covered in the readings. If you cannot take one of the exams when it is scheduled, you should drop the class. Make up exams will be offered at my discretion and only under the most unusual extenuating circumstances. Each exam is worth 25% of your grade (see the grading summary below).

While I do not take attendance, there is a significant cost to missing class. The class covers quite a bit of material, so it is very easy to fall behind. Perhaps more importantly, however, by missing class you miss out on the opportunity to ask questions and to engage in discussion with your classmates and with me. I encourage you to make it a point to attend every class.
Grading Summary:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points Each</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes (10)</td>
<td>10 pts. each</td>
<td>100 pts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exams (3)</td>
<td>100 pts. each</td>
<td>300 pts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>400 pts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grade Scale:

You can check your current grade at any time by dividing the points you have accumulated by the points possible. The resulting percentage can then be applied to the following scale:

- A 94-100
- A- 90-93
- B+ 87-89
- B 84-86
- B- 80-83
- C+ 77-79
- C 74-76
- C- 70-73
- D+ 67-69
- D 64-67
- D- 60-63
- F 59

Due Dates:

I will provide you with a course schedule with all of the assignment due dates. This means you will know in advance if there is going to be a conflict with a wedding, family vacation, or some such other event. You will be able to drop one quiz this semester, so there will be no make-ups or early quizzes given regardless of illness, weddings, family emergencies, or the like. I encourage you to plan accordingly.

Incomplete Policy:

Incompletes are given for medical or other serious reasons. Simply miscalculating the time needed to complete the course is not a sufficient reason for an incomplete. You must contact me EARLY in the semester if you think your circumstances warrant an incomplete grade. Pleas in the last week of class do not hold a lot of credibility.

Academic Honesty:

“Students have a responsibility to promote academic integrity at the University by not participating in or facilitating others’ participation in any act of academic dishonesty and by reporting all violations or suspected violations of the Academic Integrity Standard to their instructors.

Violations of the Academic Integrity Standard (academic violations) include, but are not limited to:
Cheating: (1) using or attempting to use or providing others with any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, examinations, or in any other academic exercise or activity, including working in a group when the instructor has designated that the quiz, test, examination, or any other academic exercise or activity be done “individually”; (2) depending on the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments; (3) substituting for another student, or permitting another student to substitute for oneself, in taking an examination or preparing academic work; (4) acquiring tests or other academic material belonging to a faculty member, staff member, or another student without express permission; (5) continuing to write after time has been called on a quiz, test, examination, or any other academic exercise or activity; (6) submitting substantially the same work for credit in more than one class, except with prior approval of the instructor; or (7) engaging in any form of research fraud.

Falsification: altering or fabricating any information or citation in an academic exercise or activity.

Plagiarism: representing, by paraphrase or direct quotation, the published or unpublished work of another person as one’s own in any academic exercise or activity without full and clear acknowledgment. It also includes using materials prepared by another person or by an agency engaged in the sale of term papers or other academic materials.”

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