Introduction

The American Political System is an introductory course that surveys the many facets of American politics. While we will examine the constitutional framework of the American system, as well as voting, political parties, interest groups and our national institutions, we will also address several enduring and challenging questions of democracy, sovereignty, liberty, equality and rights. Although I hope you will attain a mastery of this subject matter, the course is also designed to assist you in developing your ability to read, think and write critically and analytically. The most serious goal of the class, however, is to learn about politics and our democracy in such a way as to encourage all of us to participate actively, frequently and intelligently.

Academic Integrity

As stated in the Honor Code of Guilford College, all students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. This class will maintain and support these standards, specifically the section of the Guilford College Honor Code quoted below:

Academic honesty and integrity represent central elements of the liberal arts education at Guilford College. As scholars pursuing knowledge and truth, informed by the Quaker testimony on integrity, we seek a community where each member acts responsibly and honorably in all activities and at all times. Acts of dishonesty represent a serious offense at Guilford College. Guilford College defines plagiarism broadly as presenting the interpretations, wording, images, or original conceptions of others as one's own without appropriate acknowledgement. Individual faculty members determine what constitutes appropriate acknowledgement within the context of their courses, either by specifically stating requirements or by acknowledging the standard practice within a given discipline.

Appropriate acknowledgment for the purposes of this course requires giving credit where credit is due to the work of others described above. All sources used for completing assignments for this class must appear in the bibliography of a paper; not doing so constitutes plagiarism and violates appropriate acknowledgement according to the standard practice within political science. Any use the work of others requires acknowledgment by citing the original author with a complete Chicago Manual footnote citation.

Paraphrasing another author is an excellent example of this and is something I expect you to do frequently to support your analysis. Because you are using your own words, paraphrasing does not
require quotation marks, but you must still use a complete Chicago Manual footnote immediately following the paraphrased material.

You will also use direct quotations in this course. For the purpose of this course, a direct quotation is any use of four or more words (e.g., the White House asked for a "renewal of crushing sanctions") or a specific term that is not your own (e.g., "adversarial legalism"). Unlike a paraphrase, you must put all words of a direct quotation in quotation marks and follow the ending quotation mark with a complete Chicago Manual footnote citation to the original author.

While learning from others represents an essential component of academic and intellectual inquiry, failure to give proper attribution to words, concepts, and evidence borrowed from others constitutes plagiarism, which is a serious academic offense. Any requirement for this course containing plagiarized material will, at minimum, receive a grade of F. Repeated or flagrant use of plagiarized material, even in a single assignment, may lead to the grade of F in the course, at the discretion of the professor.

In order to avoid unintentional errors, follow the guidelines on avoiding plagiarism in Chapter 33 of Simon and Schuster Handbook for Writers. While not required to purchase for the class, please consider obtaining Simon and Schuster Handbook for Writers. Using this or another reputable writing guide will help you avoid plagiarism. If you have questions about avoiding plagiarism, also please do not hesitate to contact me. I would also encourage students to utilize Zotero, an easy way for MS Word and your web browser to help you cite your references properly. An instructional video on Zotero can be found here.

Course Objectives

This course seeks to achieve two complimentary but distinct objectives. First, this course will provide an introduction to the study of the American political system and the ways in which political scientists approach, study, understand and question what is knowable about American government and politics today. As mentioned above, this objective serves to create political knowledge and to encourage engaged citizenship on the part of all students. This course will achieve this objective through the use of the Five Principles of Guilford College, a common set of values the College upholds.

Innovative, student-centered learning. The learning of each student in this course is the first objective and represents the central core objective of this course. This course will offer each student several opportunities to reflect and critically engage with material supporting the larger themes of American political science. Each student will be expected to provide perspectives and ideas on politics and government reflecting both the case studies examined as well as personal experiences. Several in-class and field exercises throughout the semester will provide the student with the opportunity to develop further these ideas and perspectives. A student's achievement of learning and political engagement represent the core value and objective of this course.

Challenge to engage in creative and critical thinking. A central challenge for students of this course is to develop and explore the ideas and perspectives of the authors, fellow students and instructors from a critical and creative perspective. Critical thinking requires analyzing, summarizing, interpreting, synthesizing and critiquing the ideas of others as well as being receptive to the critical thoughts of others. Creative thinking, another valuable tool for this course, is absolutely necessary given that many aspects of American government and politics today defy simple and conventional explanations.
Cultural and global perspectives. Differing cultural, religious and world views inform a person's ideas about government and political involvement. During the course, we will recall that differing communities and people, both domestically and globally, may bring different interpretations, values and objectives to a debate or discussion. Engaging this diverse set of ideas and perspectives in an honest and respectful manner represents an essential component of engaged citizenship.

Values and the ethical dimension of knowledge. Beyond exploring the meanings and implications of American politics, this course will also explore the larger ethical questions surrounding these institutions, processes and policy decisions. Civic engagement requires students to not only understand the elements and components of the American political system, but also to actively grapple with the ethical, value-laden choices that our political system and citizenry makes.

Focus on practical application: vocation and service to the larger community. The professional organization for political science here in the United States, the American Political Science Association (APSA), defines political science as "the study of governments, public policies and political behavior to understand the way in which political societies operate around the world." Political science students enjoy a versatility of skills and a marvelous range of exciting careers in federal, state and local governments; law; business; international organizations; nonprofit associations and organizations; campaign management and polling; journalism; pre-collegiate education; electoral politics; research and university and college teaching. Throughout the course of this semester, we will examine the ways in which American political science, used in these careers, helps to address practical political challenges in service to the larger community.

A second objective for the course is to develop a useful and necessary skill set that will assist students in academic success at Guilford College. Assignments, class activities, simulations, and work with a group outside of the classroom will all foster and enable the development of library and research skills, computer literacy and competence, as well as public speaking and listening.

Grading, Course Policies & Detailed Requirements

Grading for the course will be consistent with the guidelines of the College. To that end, as discussed in the Faculty Handbook:

The grade of A is awarded for original insight, sound reasoning and the ability to evaluate the scope of the materials studied. The grade of B reflects interpretive skill on the part of the student and a clear understanding of the meaning and interrelatedness of the course materials. A grade of C indicates thorough familiarity with the basic facts and concepts considered in the course, even though underlying principles may not have been grasped. Although D is labeled a passing grade, it reflects a lack of fundamental knowledge of the subject. The grade of F is assigned for failing work.

Course Books

The following books will be read for this course:


Other required readings will be available from the professor. In addition, it is highly recommended that all students purchase the Simon and Schuster Handbook for Writers as this is used in this course and is an excellent resource for all serious writers.
In addition to the above criteria from the Faculty Handbook, mechanical, grammatical and stylistic skills in written assignments are also considered in determining grades.

Furthermore, it is extremely important for each student to affirm his/her commitment to the course and the work necessary to achieve the learning objectives outlined here. While there are numerous ways of recognizing student effort, the common standard at Guilford is to assign academic credit using the ratio of one credit unit per semester for each three hours of consistent effort per week. This course affirms this practice and this level of commitment is required to attain the learning objectives outlined here. This means that students should be prepared to spend 2.5 hours in class each week and at least 9.5 hours each week preparing for class. Please practice good time management to sustain the effort required to meet the level of success to which you’ve committed yourself.

Finally, students should recall that all practices in this course are consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Students that disclose a documented need and make timely requests for appropriate accommodations will receive the support necessary. Please review the policy of the College and consult with the professor for more information.

Class Participation & Discussion

This element of the course includes class attendance, the ability to answer questions regarding readings in class, and participation in class discussions. Because we will use much of the class time to discuss the readings, I expect you to have done the day’s readings carefully before coming to class and to be an active participant in class discussions.

Additionally, there are two requirements to receiving a good participation grade. First, you must register to vote or provide proof of your current voter registration. Early in the class we will explore how to register to vote and who to contact to begin this process. This would be an excellent opportunity to begin to participate fully in our democracy. Please discuss with me any political, personal or religious obligations that prevent you from registering; alternative assignments can be arranged. The second requirement is that every student must be an active reader of The New York Times. As evidence of your active readership, I will expect every student to reference specific articles in our class discussions. Failing to demonstrate active and critical reading will result in a lowering of your participation grade.

Course Requirements

The course requirements include class participation (attendance and discussion), written summaries, reading quizzes, short papers and a final exam. Please note that no late work will be accepted. You must complete all requirements in order to pass the course. Failure to complete one or more of the course requirements will lead to a failing grade in the course except in extraordinary circumstances.

Final grades are based on 400 points and are calculated by this formula:

- 80 points (20%) Class participation
- 40 points (10%) Summaries (2)
- 80 points (20%) Reading quizzes (5)
- 120 points (30%) Short papers (2)
- 80 points (20%) Final exam
Attendance is recorded in each Political Science course at Guilford. In support of Guilford’s core values of integrity and community, it is the responsibility of each student to be present and on time for each class meeting. Arriving late or being absent from class meetings stands contrary to these values. Excused absences are rare. Students seeking an excused absence should be prepared to provide the instructor with certifiable documentation and justification for the absence to be excused (e.g. doctor’s note). Each unexcused absence beyond the first one will result in a 1% deduction from a student’s final grade in the course. Further, in support of the college-wide policy on attendance as noted in the Student Handbook, any student missing 20% of class meetings in a semester (e.g. six absences from a twice-a-week course) may be administratively withdrawn from the course by the Academic Dean’s office. Students with concerns about attendance should speak directly with the faculty member. Students with perfect attendance will also receive a 20-point bonus to their final grades.

Finally, while I expect each student to participate fully in class discussions and activities, participation should be respectful and always with an eye toward valuing the larger whole of our community of learners in the class. Rudeness, excessive side conversations and such run counter to community. Two additional reminders will also greatly help build a sense of community in our class. First, please refrain from using cell phones (silence them), texting, providing Facebook status updates, playing games or anything else that takes you out of our common activity. While I do encourage students to access the web to enhance their participation in a particular discussion, please limit your activities to those things related to our class. I use technology in class and you may too. However, there is a proper place for this. Second, try to learn the names of your fellow students. I will make every effort to call on people by name. When speaking of or to others, try to use their name. Doing so will help us all achieve richer discussions.

**Summaries**

A basic skill necessary to succeed in this class is the ability to summarize a complex work in a very short and succinct manner. You will write two brief summaries of designated readings over the first two weeks of the term. Good summaries will not only provide the central argument or thesis of each reading, but also illuminate the on the evidence provided and the logic used by the author. Each individual summary must be no more than 150 words in length. All words (even "a") count. Summaries over 150 words will be dropped a full grade. Summaries must be turned in as hard copies during office hours. I will discuss your writing, grade your summary, and provide any feedback on your writing at this time.

**Reading Quizzes**

Approximately seven quizzes will be given in class over the course of the term. The quizzes will test your comprehension of the readings. All quizzes will be given at the beginning of a class. All quizzes will be "pop" quizzes, given without prior notice. Because these quizzes cover material discussed in class the day they are given, these quizzes cannot be "made up" at a later date. The quizzes will test basic comprehension of the readings assigned for class that day. They also reinforce developing good study and time management skills. While there are seven quizzes, only your top five grades will be used to calculate your overall quiz grade. As good note taking represents an essential element in successful learning, notes taken by the student (apart from physical copies of the readings) can be used in taking reading quizzes. In fact, success on the reading quizzes depends on comprehensive, easily accessible, and organized notes.
You will be required to write two short papers over the course of the semester. While you are only required to write two papers, there are three opportunities to write a paper. Although every student has the opportunity to write three papers, your two highest grades will count toward your final grade.

Papers should be no longer than 3 pages. Questions for each paper assignment will be posted online approximately two weeks before the paper is due. All papers should be properly annotated using footnotes in Chicago Manual of Style; see the Simon and Schuster Handbook. Papers will be graded using a grading rubric that will be discussed in class early in the semester. Each paper should be a single Microsoft Word document attachment to an email to kdell@guilford.edu before the beginning of the class they are due. Papers will be returned to you also via email with comments and a grade. If you have questions about how to submit your papers this way, please ask me. Papers not properly emailed and on time will not be graded.

The final examination will be given Monday, May 2, noon - 2:30 p.m. The final exam is an equal combination of multiple choice and essay questions covering material from the entire semester.
Course Calendar

Below is a general outline of how the course will proceed. As the course progresses, it is possible that specific reading assignments for each class will be changed to reflect our progress. As always, it is important to stay aware of any changes in the calendar and updates on specific reading assignments. Presentation slides from class, when used, will be available as YouTube videos by clicking on the appropriate date of the given class meeting below (e.g., F 18 January).

**Enduring Questions about American Politics**

T 11 January
No class, snow day

F 14 January
Introduction,
*American Government*, Chapter 1 "What Should We Know About American Government?"

T 18 January
Question #1: Why is government so political?

F 21 January
Question #3: Why are elections so dissatisfying?
No class - Professor Dell in Washington at National Conference for Science and the Environment Films, "True Believers" and "Journeys with George"

T 25 January
Question #2: Why does government fail so often?

F 28 January
No class - Professor Dell in San Francisco at the Association of American Colleges & Universities conference on Global Education Complete the Project Vote Smart worksheet

**Public Opinion, Political Parties, Interest Groups & Elections**

T 1 February
Question #4: Is this the way politics is supposed to be?

F 4 February
American Government, Chapter 6, "Public Opinion and the Media".

T 8 February
American Government, Chapter 7 (part one), "Political Parties".
E.E. Schattschneider, "The Displacement of Conflict," The Semisovereign People, pp. 60-75.

F 11 February
American Government, Chapter 7 (part two), "Interest Groups"
E.E. Schattschneider, "Scope and Bias of the Pressure System," The Semisovereign People, pp. 20-45.

T 15 February
Kay Schlozman and John Tierney, "More of the Same,"
Jeffrey Birnbaum, "Lobbyists—Why the Bad Rap?"

F 18 February
American Government, Chapter 8, "Campaigns and Elections".

The Legislature.

T 22 February

F 25 February
U.S. Constitution, Article I.
American Government, Chapter 9 "Congress".

T 1 March
C-SPAN exercise

F 4 March

T 8 March
No class, Spring Break

F 11 March
No class, Spring Break
The Executive

T 15 March

F 18 March
U.S. Constitution, Article II.
*American Government*, Chapter 10, "The Presidency".

T 22 March

F 25 March

The Judiciary

T 29 March
US Constitution, Article III.
*American Government*, Chapter 12 "The Judiciary".

F 1 April
US Constitution, Amendments I-X (Bill of Rights).
*American Government*, Chapter 3 "Civil Liberties"
*Gratz v. Bollinger* 539 US 244 (2003) (Click "Play" button in lower left of the window)

Public Policy

T 5 April
*American Government*, Chapter 13 "Making Domestic Policy".
Budget Puzzle activity (complete before class and bring a print-out of your solution)
2011 Budget Proposal interactive

F 8 April
The Bureaucracy

T 12 April
American Government, Chapter 11 "The Bureaucracy".

F 15 April
Columbia Accident Investigation Board Report, Volume 1, Part Two, Chapter 8.

Direct Democracy

T 19 April
David Broder, Democracy Derailed, Introduction.

F 22 April
David Broder, Democracy Derailed, Chapter 1.

T 26 April
No class; Special Academic Events Day.

M 2 May
Final examination; noon - 2:30 p.m.