American National Government
Course Number: POL 100-01
T/R, 8:00am-9:15am
Misericordia University
MER 400
Spring 2018

Instructor
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Office: MER 347
Phone: (570) 674-3047
Office Hours: Tuesday 11:00am-1:00pm or by appointment

Course Description
This is an introductory political science course designed to give you a basic understanding of the constitutional foundations and subsequent American political development. We will discuss how political institutions in America and political actors work within those institutions to sculpt public policy. We will also talk about mass political behavior and how constituent (in)action affects the politicians who represent them. While we will primarily cover these broad topics in the context of national politics, state and local politics are a key part of American politics. As a U.S. Supreme Court justice once observed, the federal government often looks to states as laboratories of democracy. States and localities are often involved as stakeholders in national politics. As a result, we will address sub-national politics across the country (including Pennsylvania) on a regular basis.

Learning Objectives
1. Students will communicate key concepts and ideas in American politics effectively through oral dialogue, discussion, and presentation, as well as written essays.
2. Students will be able to look at American politics critically, recognize problems, and identify solutions.
3. Students will explore and understand formal and informal political institutions that shape policy and politics in America.
4. Students will learn about key domestic and foreign policy issues facing Americans today.
5. Students will understand public opinion, why it changes, why it stabilizes, and how it affects the actions of policymakers.
6. Students will understand the role of a wide range of pressure groups and ways they influence American politics.
Required Text


- This book is available as an e-book, or you can buy a print version. I suggest you buy the cheapest available version. If that means searching online, that’s okay. I highly encourage you to use the online student resources associated with the book. There are chapter summaries, videos, etc. to help you navigate and supplement your reading of the book. Students who utilize these resources tend to make higher grades in this course.

2. You can find all non-textbook materials on Blackboard.

Supporting Resources and Materials

- **Student Success Center.** We will have visitors from the Writing Center. Regardless of the writing skills you bring to this class, you can improve. I also encourage you to utilize the personalized support and coaching services provided at the Student Success Center.

- **Supplemental Media** There will be required and suggested readings and materials posted to Blackboard throughout the semester. Please monitor these documents, links, and other media as they become available. Required readings are all fair game for quiz and testing material. Suggested resources may assist you in classroom activities, dialogues, and discussions or with your project.

- **Proprietary Material** Material such as slides that are posted on Blackboard may not be used by anyone in any fashion outside of this course. This means you may not share them with anyone outside of this course. These documents are for your study purposes only.

Classroom Expectations

- The items below are expected of you by both me and your classmates.
- **Be respectful.** We will cover contentious topics on a daily basis. Everyone possesses the ability to converse in a cordial manner. We will foster a safe space in which you can discuss sensitive topics in a productive way. Please keep in mind, REASONABLE PEOPLE OFTEN DISAGREE.
- **No web surfing during class.** You may type notes, but do not play around online. It is distracting to both me and your fellow students if you are not paying attention and not engaging in the material. Keep your phone on silent and out of sight.
- **Be on time.** This should go without saying.
- All of these rules will be a factor in your professionalism grade.
Course Requirements

1. **Professionalism:** Professionalism includes demonstrable characteristics such as punctuality, genuine commitment, and intellectual participation. Your classmates and I expect you to be on time and meet deadlines. We also expect you to read the assigned material and generally keep up with the news regarding political events. Class discussion is incredibly important to the success of this course. As is the case in healthy democratic politics, the exchange of perspectives and ideas is essential to finding problems, exploring solutions, and locating possible points of compromise. You will gain broader perspectives through your interactions with classmates. However, everyone must be willing to open an empathetic ear where possible and a sympathetic ear otherwise. We will learn on the first day the difference between dialogue and debate. The point of a dialogue is to understand the speaker’s argument, nothing more. The point of a debate is to exchange ideas such that you may persuade someone else to your position or come to some middle ground. As a class we will always be aware of which of these modes we are in. Neither of these modes allows for hostile or incendiary language. You must earn these points by being on time and prepared for class as well as contributing to class discourse. You will find a rubric on Blackboard.

2. Read the assigned readings **PRIOR** to the corresponding class meeting in the schedule below. Come prepared to engage and ask questions.

3. We will utilize Blackboard regularly. Additionally, I will utilize the “Send Email” function in Blackboard if I need to reach you, so you MUST be sure your email address with Blackboard is correct.

4. Read the news. Know what is going on in the world around you. We will frequently refer to news events in classroom examples. You aren’t expected to know in depth details about every current event. However, you should be able to connect class information to the real world. Are you new to the world of reading the news? Here are a few places that you might start:
   - www.nytimes.com
   - www.wsj.com
   - www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis (issue briefs, policy analysis, fact sheets, and Stateline (state politics news))
   - www.nationalreview.com (conservative publication)
   - www.thenation.com (liberal publication)
   - Podcasts (some of my favorites are Wait, Wait Don’t Tell Me (NPR’s weekly news quiz), NPR politics, No Jargon from Scholars Strategy Network, Politico’s Nerdcast, and many others)
   - Washington Post’s Monkey Cage is a political science blog on current events, both domestic and international
   - http://www.pennlive.com/politics/ (Pennsylvania politics)
   - Stitcher’s app, npr.org, the NPRone app are all great customizable resources.
5. Did you know we have elections in May 2018? There are events and news related to the election that you should follow. Here are the **Important 2018 Election Dates in PA**:

- Registration Deadline - 4/16/2018
- Primary Midterm Elections - 5/15/2018
- General Midterm Elections - 11/6/2018

6. **Pop Quizzes**: I will administer four pop quizzes on randomly selected class days throughout the semester. Each time I give a pop quiz, I will ask you to take five minutes at the beginning of class to write a paragraph response to a question regarding the reading for the current topic on schedule. The questions serve two purposes: a) to convince you to read the text and b) to focus your attention on the topic at hand so that you are mentally prepared for class discussion.

7. **Syllabus Quiz**. There is a syllabus quiz that must be completed on Blackboard by **Friday January 19th at 11:59PM**. This quiz is to show that you understand class policies. The Syllabus Quiz will count as the first of five pop quizzes in this course.

8. **Exams** We will have 3 exams in this course. Question material may come from any part of this course including readings, lectures, class discussion, visiting speakers, and current events. Each exam will be administered in class. Exams will consist largely of multiple choice question format. However, you will be required to answer some written responses in the form of short answer and essay. These written responses are designed for you to demonstrate the knowledge you have accumulated and to test your ability to apply that knowledge to practical politics. *If you have a legitimate excuse that prevents you from taking an exam on the scheduled day, you must contact me ahead of time to schedule a make up. Otherwise, no make up exams will be given.*

9. **Profile Project** You will each put together a 3-5 minute presentation profiling a state or local elected politician (e.g. state legislator, county council member, mayor, city council member) currently holding office. This person cannot be the governor. The information you provide will be descriptive and informative. Examples of things you might cover are the issues on which the official is active, their electoral history, and what their district is like demographically and politically among other things. These presentations will take place on the final three days of class. A PowerPoint and brief 1-2 page summary are required.

**Grading**
There will be no curving in this class.

1. Professionalism: 15%
2. Pop Quizzes: 20%
3. Exams 1-3: 45%
4. Profile Project: 20%
5. Final Grades:

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Academic Integrity

This class strictly adheres to the MU policy on academic honesty. Misericordia University has an academic integrity policy found in the university catalogue available online on the university website. Please read the entire policy online if you are not already familiar with the policy.

Serious violations (i.e., extensive non-citation of the work of others) will be penalized with a failing grade on the assignment and an official report to the VPAA. If this offense is committed on a subsequent assignment, the student will receive a failing grade on the assignment and for the course, and an official report will be sent to the VPAA.

Minor violations include the failure to cite a source when other sources are cited, the failure to include a work cited page, and the improper use of footnotes or endnotes.

Emergency Response Policy

To be prepared in the event of an emergency situation, students should keep their cell phone on vibrate during class to receive any message from the emergency alert system (EAS). However, checking your phone for non-EAS messages or texting during class will be treated as a refusal to participate in class and will affect your participation grade. In the event that you need to receive a call for a personal emergency, please notify me before class to receive permission to answer your phone outside the classroom.

In the event of an emergency, I will inform students and coordinate the response recommended by public safety. I expect students to comply with my instructions to ensure the safety of all.

Tutorial Assistance

Peer Tutoring Program: Misericordia University offers a variety of tutorial options to assist students in achieving academic goals. Individual and group peer tutoring is provided in most core curriculum courses and some professional courses dependent on student tutor availability. The Peer Tutoring Program services are provided by the Student Success Center,
which is located in the lower level of Alumnae Hall. All tutoring services are free of charge.

Smarthinking is an online tutoring service available to all students. Students can drop in on a live tutoring session, submit papers, or schedule private sessions in many subject areas, such as statistics, economics, biology, physics, chemistry, and many others. Smarthinking registration and log in information can be found on the Student Success Center channel found under Student Services.

**Mental Health Support**
The Counseling and Psychological Services Center (CAPS) provides free counseling services to students. If students find their studies are suffering due to mental health concerns, please contact CAPS directly for support.

**Disability Statement**
In Accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, Misericordia University strives to ensure that no otherwise qualified individual with a disability shall, solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program administered by the university.

If you are a student who requires academic accommodations due to a disability, please contact Kristen Ricardo in the Student Success Center at kricardo@misericordia.edu or (570) 674-6205.

**Tentative Course Calendar**

- **Tuesday January 16:** Course overview dialogue versus debate introduction
  - Read textbook’s front matter
  - Read the syllabus carefully
  - **Quiz 1-Blackboard Due Friday 1/19 at 11:59pm**
- **Thursday January 18:** CH 1 - The Logic of American Politics
  - Prisoner’s Dilemma Activity
- **Tuesday January 23:** CH 1 - The Logic of American Politics
  - Read CH 1 before class
- **Thursday January 25:** CH 2 - The Constitution
Read CH 2 before class

- Tuesday January 30: CH 2 - The Constitution
  - Listen to “The Past and Future of the Constitution” podcast (on Blackboard)
  - Prepare for class discussion

- Thursday February 1: CH 3 - Federalism
  - Read CH 3 before class

Assign this in the future:

- Tuesday February 6: CH 4 - Civil Rights
  - Read CH 4 before class

- Thursday February 8: Civil Rights Continued
  - Civil rights activity continued

- Tuesday February 13: CH 5 - Civil Liberties
  - Read CH 5 before class

- Thursday February 15: CH 5 - Civil Liberties Continued

- Tuesday February 20: EXAM 1
  - Bring a writing utensil, I will provide exams

- Thursday February 22: CH 6 - Congress
  - Read CH 6 before class

- Tuesday February 27: CH 6 - Congress Continued
  - Read CH 6 before class

- Thursday March 1: CH 7 - The Presidency
  - Read CH 7 before class

- Tuesday March 6: No Class - Spring Recess

- Thursday March 8: No Class - Spring Recess

- Tuesday March 13: Professor Matthew Hinton

- Thursday March 15: CH 7 - The Presidency Continued
- Read CH 7 before class

- Tuesday March 20: CH 7 - The Presidency Continued
  - Read CH 7 before class

- Thursday March 22: CH 8 - The Bureaucracy
  - Read CH 8 before class

- Tuesday March 27: CH 9 - The Federal Judiciary
  - Read CH 9 before class

- Thursday March 29: No Class - Easter Recess

- Tuesday April 3: CH 9 - The Federal Judiciary
  - Read CH 9 before class

- Thursday April 5: EXAM 2
  - Bring a writing utensil, I will provide exams

- Tuesday April 10: CH 10 - Public Opinion
  - Read CH 10 before class

- Thursday April 12: CH 11 - Voting, Campaigns, & Elections
  - Read CH 11 before class

- Tuesday April 17: CH 12-13 - Parties & Interest Groups
  - Read CH 12
    - Listen to “Party Interest Group Connection” podcast before class (on Blackboard)

- Thursday April 19: CH 14 - The News Media & PA State & Local Politics
  - Read CH 14 before class
    - Listen to “Melting Pot, Boiling Pot” podcast before class (on Blackboard)

- Tuesday April 24: EXAM 3
  - Bring a writing utensil, I will provide exams

- Thursday April 26: Student Presentations

- Tuesday May 1: Student Presentations
Caveat

The aforementioned weekly schedule and assignments in this course are subject to change.