

**Introduction to American Government  
PSCI 210S-01-34736  
University of Montana**

**COURSE SYLLABI**

| <b>Instructor Information</b>                               | <b>Course Information</b>          |
|---|------------------------------------|
| Instructor: Mr. Ray Curtis                                  | Term: Spring 2020                  |
| Office: Corbin 332, hours: T, Th 11-12 am                   | Class Meeting Days: T, Th          |
| Phone: 406-360-0762   | Class Meeting Hours: 9:30-10:50 am |
| Email: ray.curtis@mso.umt.edu                               | Class Location: Mc Gill 210        |
| TA: Christa Street, Corbin 347, hours: M 10-11:30, W 1-2:30 | christa.street@umconnect.umt.edu   |

**I. Course Description**

Students will explore the nature, purpose, and forms of the American government; relationship between function and structure; dynamics of political change; governmental problems of modern society; emphasis upon constitutional principles, political processes of the national government, public opinion, interest groups, political parties, elections, Congress, the Presidency and the Courts.

**II. Course Learning Objectives**

Upon successful completion of this course, the student should be able to:

- 1) understand the origins and nature of the constitutional system, federalism, and civil liberties;
- 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.

**III. Course Prerequisites**

None

**IV. Course Credits**

3

**V. Required Texts and Materials**

There is no required. You are expected to research (google) on your own to clarify class topics

The US Constitution; I will provide you with a pocket copy.

Additionally, I will assign articles to read that you will be able to access via Moodle.

## VI. Grades

If people were perfect, assigning grades would not be necessary. But, as Madison wrote, people are not angels. Therefore, you will be assigned a grade based upon your performance on the tasks listed below. It is not a perfect system although it is rather traditional. It is possible for you to earn 1000 points. Actually, with extra credit you can earn more.

| Assessments  | Points possible |
|--|-----------------|
| 10 random in class assignments, one must be in attendance to earn these points (up to 15 pts each) | 150 (10 x 15)   |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Midterm Exam, February 13  | 150             |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> Midterm Exam, March 26   | 200             |
| Paper, "A More Perfect Union", due April 23  | 200             |
| Comprehensive Final Exam, Thursday, May 7, 8-10 am   | 300             |
|  | 1000            |

| Grading Scale (%) |    |
|-------------------|----|
| 100-94            | A  |
| 90-93             | A- |
| 87-89             | B+ |
| 84-86             | B  |
| 80-83             | B- |
| 77-79             | C+ |
| 74-76             | C  |
| 70-73             | C- |
| 67-69             | D+ |
| 64-66             | D  |
| 60-63             | D- |
| 0 - 59            | F  |

## VII. Course Policies

**Late Work Policy:** Late work is unacceptable unless there are extenuating circumstances. Please speak with me if that is the case. If granted an exemption expect a 10% deduction from your overall grade for that assignment.

**Extra Credit Policy:** There will be a few extra credit assignments offered in this course. These assignments provide you an opportunity to improve upon your grade total. Consider this a way to make up for a missed class or low test grade.

**Grades of "Incomplete":** The current college policy concerning incomplete grades will be followed in this course. Incomplete grades are given only in situations where unexpected emergencies prevent a student from completing the course and the remaining work can be completed the next semester. I am the final authority on whether you qualify for an incomplete. Incomplete work must be finished by the end of the subsequent semester or the "I" will automatically be recorded as an "F" on your transcript.

## VIII. Course Policies and Student Expectations

Disability Access: Missoula College is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities. If you have a disability that adversely affects your academic performance, and you have not already registered with Disability Services, please contact Disability Services. I will work with you and Disability Services to provide an appropriate modification.

Attendance Policy: As stated previously, students can earn up to 150 points for attendance.

Professionalism Policy: I do not expect any behavior that disrupts the learning environment. Please arrive on time for all class meetings.

Academic Conduct Policy: Please refer to the [Student Conduct Code](#) which “embodies and promotes honesty, integrity, accountability, rights, and responsibilities associated with constructive citizenship in our academic community at the University of Montana.”

Any student involved in academic dishonesty will be subject to disciplinary action imposed by the instructor up to and including administrative withdrawal or a failing grade for the course. Academic integrity includes a commitment to not engage in or tolerate acts of falsification, misrepresentation, or deception. Such acts of dishonesty include cheating or copying, plagiarizing, submitting others’ work as your own, using Internet sources without citation, having another student take your exam, tampering with the work of another student, facilitating other students’ acts of academic dishonesty, etc. Depending on the severity of the offense, disciplinary action may range from an “F” grade on an assignment or test to an “F” in the course. Severe cases and/or repeat offenses of academic dishonesty may also result in more severe disciplinary actions up to and including administrative withdrawal.

## **I. Proposed Course Sequence and Related Chapter Readings (Subject to Modification)**

Foundations of American Government

Socialization

Political Parties

Media

### **1<sup>st</sup> Exam**

Interest Groups

Elections

Legislative Branch: Article I

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Exam**

Executive Branch: Article II

Bureaucracy and Policy

Judicial Branch, Civil Liberties and Rights: Article III, Amendments

### **Reform Paper**

**Final**