

**POL-100-B**  
**AMERICAN POLITICAL SYSTEMS**  
**Fall 2016 MWF 9-9:50 AM**

**Instructor: Whitney Manzo**

**Office Hours: MW 10-11 AM, TR 1-2 PM, or by appointment**

**Office: Joyner 224, Ext. 8540**

**E-mail: wrmanzo@meredith.edu**

**Course Description**

An introduction to American government and politics with an emphasis on the basic constitutional structure of the government and on the political institutions that surround it. Attention given to current political events and issues. \*This Course meets the OC (Oral Communications) Thread and US Perspectives requirements for General Education.

**Course Goals**

This course is designed to educate citizens, not professional politicians or political scientists. It is shaped by the conviction that it is important for you not only to learn how to acquire information, but also how to analyze information, explore political questions, and form your own judgments. About 60% of our time will be spent on the “nuts and bolts” of American politics. The remainder will focus on more open ended political questions and on current political issues. The course learning outcomes are for you to:

1. Improve your knowledge of the basic institutions of the American political system. (Social Science learning outcome #1)
2. Improve your oral communications skills. (Oral Communication learning outcomes #1-2)
3. Know the basic theoretical frameworks which have been developed to understand American politics and apply them to the behavior of individuals, organizations and institutions. (Social Science learning outcome #4)
4. Improve your ability to think clearly and critically about the American political system and about current political issues. (Social Science outcome #5)
5. Examine how diverse cultures have shaped significant ideas, ideals, and values of U.S. society.
6. Analyze the complexities of U.S. cultural experience(s).
7. Express your knowledge of important U.S. cultural issues through written work and oral presentation. (Oral Communication learning outcome #3)

**Texts**

*We the People: An Introduction to American Politics* (Core 10<sup>th</sup> ed.) by Ginsberg, Lowi, Weir, and Tolbert. ISBN-13: 978-0-393-93704-6

A small amount of material may be placed on Blackboard.

**Other Required Materials**

Access to the internet, a word processing program, and Meredith gmail (you should check this every morning)  
2 blue books for written exams  
Loose leaf paper for in-class assignments

**Grades and Assignments**

10%	Attendance
20%	Class Participation: 1/2 Simulation and 1/2 rest of class
20%	Written Exams: October 5 and December 14
20%	Simulation Papers (2)
10%	Election Project
<u>20%</u>	Current Events: 1/2 articles and 1/2 oral reports
100%	Total

**Attendance:** Attendance is expected at all class meetings, and I will be taking attendance each class period. If you miss class, you will miss important material that may be on an exam and you can't participate in class discussion. The attendance portion of your grade will be allocated as follows:

Perfect attendance: Full 10/10

1 unexcused absence: 9/10

2-3 unexcused absences: 8/10

More than 3 unexcused absences: 0/10

To possibly have an absence excused, you must email me a note with the date and reason for absence by the beginning of the next class (I will not accept paper notes).

*Class Participation:* This grade includes but is not limited to contribution to class discussion, active participation in group work/group assignments, and short papers.

*Written Exams:* There will be two short answer/essay exams throughout the semester, each covering the material preceding it (the final will not be cumulative). It is your responsibility to provide the blue books for these exams, and you must write them in pen.

*Simulation:* In the final weeks of the course, we will hold a simulation of the federal government dealing with a certain real-life issue. This project will help us see how the separate institutions of government interact with each other. There are 3 parts:

1. A research paper (minimum 3 pages) outlining the assigned issue and your responsibilities in the government in your assigned role as it pertains to the issue. This paper will be due on MyMeredith by class time on **November 16, 2016**.
2. Active participation in the simulation in your assigned role.
3. A reflection paper (minimum 3 pages) describing what you learned about our government from this activity. This paper will be due on MyMeredith by class time on **December 7, 2016**.

*Election Project:* Because this is a presidential election season, we will complete a special project surrounding the election as part of Meredith Votes. There will be two parts:

1. Everyone will write a bio on a candidate running for office in Wake County, describing the person's party, position he/she is running for, and positions on important issues. We will choose candidates in class to ensure there are no duplicates. The bios will be combined into a voter education pamphlet that will be passed out on campus. Each bio will be due on MyMeredith by 5 pm on **October 24**.
2. Everyone will participate in a get-out-the-vote event. You may choose one of the following:
  - a. Throughout September and October, we will hold a voter registration drive in the student union. This will help other Meredith students, faculty, and staff register to vote. There will be a Google form on which you can sign up for your preferred 2-hour time slot.
  - b. On **November 7**, we will do election day prep. This may involve making and putting up signs reminding everyone to vote, passing out informative pamphlets on the candidates, or other activities.

*Current Events:* Most Fridays beginning September 2 we will discuss national political issues from the past week's news. You will have one of two kinds of assignments due on those days.

1. Two times during the semester you will stand before the class and make a short oral report and analysis of 2 opinion columns which express a point of view on a current political issue.
2. On days when you do not have an oral report due, you will be prepared to discuss informally one article concerning political issues of your choice. You will be called on regularly to tell the class about the articles you read.

#### 1. Oral Reports

Twice during the semester you will make a short (3-4 minute) oral report to the class discussing two opinion pieces on a current event or national political issue. I will pass around a sign-up sheet during the first week of class to choose your due dates.

You should choose opinion columns which express clear (ideally contrasting) points of view on a current issue that you care about. They should not be older than 6 months old. **Make sure you choose opinion columns and not news articles.** Opinion columns are of two kinds: unsigned editorials which are written by the editorial staff of the newspaper/magazine, and signed opinion columns (or Op-Eds) which are written by regular columnists employed by the newspaper or by guest columnists. Newspaper websites generally have a button marked Opinion or Editorial somewhere on their homepage. They also generally have archives of past columns by their own columnists many of which will still be relevant to current political issues. Magazines also publish opinion columns.

Your report **MUST** follow this format:

1. **Introduce** yourself. State the subject of your presentation and in one sentence for each, introduce your articles. If the title gives a good sense of the articles use that, if not write your own (very) short summary. Be sure to give the author's name and the source for each article.
2. **Summarize** each article's main points or arguments in more detail.
3. **Compare** the articles. Similarities? Differences? Agreements? Disagreements?

4. **Evaluate** the articles. Best point? Worst point? Unanswered questions? (The bulk of your presentation should be spent here.)
5. **Close** by telling us which editorial, in your opinion, was a better editorial on the topic and why. Then thank the audience for listening to indicate that your presentation is finished.

You **MUST** speak from an outline which you turn in with your articles. You should have a highlighted copy of the articles but you should not refer to them unless necessary to answer questions. Attempts to give your report by reading the articles will not get good grades.

Reports will be graded using the rubric below. Note that meeting the time specification is important to your grade. Reports that are less than 3 minutes or a lot longer than 4 will lose points.

The key to a good presentation is to have a well prepared outline and to know your material well enough that you can make eye contact, to stand still and to speak slowly and clearly. The most common problems are due to poor outlines, little eye contact, and speaking too fast or not clearly enough.

### GRADING RUBRIC FOR ORAL REPORTS

I. Time	Minutes		Final Grade		
	Excellent	Adequate			Poor
II. Content					
Introduction	5	4	3	2	1
Summary	5	4	3	2	1
Comparison	5	4	3	2	1
Evaluation	5	4	3	2	1
Closing	5	4	3	2	1
III. Delivery					
Eye contact	5	4	3	2	1
Pace ( <b>SLOW DOWN</b> )	5	4	3	2	1
Clear articulation & adequate volume	5	4	3	2	1
Relaxed/animated/posture/gestures	5	4	3	2	1

#### 2. Articles

For those Fridays days that you do not have an oral report due, you will:

- a. Read at least one major article on American national politics.
- b. Bring a heavily highlighted and annotated copy of the article with you to class (you will turn this in at the end).
- c. Be prepared to discuss your article with the class.

You may generally choose the subject of your articles freely, so long as they are related to American government and politics. Please do not choose articles on state, local or international politics unless the US government is a major player in the story. On occasion, I may ask everyone to find an article on one particular subject.

### SOURCES FOR ARTICLES AND OPINION COLUMNS

Good articles can be found in a number of different ways. The Meredith library has a good selection of newspapers and magazines. Most newspapers and some magazines have websites which can be accessed through the *American Journalism Review* site at [www.ajr.org](http://www.ajr.org). This site links you to the sites of other publications.

**Newspapers** - The best papers to use are the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*.

**Magazines** - At the AJR site under the heading for "Magazines" choose "News/Opinion." Especially interesting are *The American Prospect* ([www.prospect.org](http://www.prospect.org)), *American Spectator* ([www.spectator.org](http://www.spectator.org)), *Common Cause* ([www.commoncause.org](http://www.commoncause.org)), *The Nation* ([www.thenation.com](http://www.thenation.com)), *National Review* ([www.nationalreview.com](http://www.nationalreview.com)), *New Republic* ([www.tnr.com](http://www.tnr.com)), and *Policy Review* ([www.policyreview.org](http://www.policyreview.org)). Many of these are also in the Meredith Library.

**Websites** – Most major newspapers and cable channels have websites, and some online organizations like Yahoo! News, the Huffington Post, and [npr.org](http://npr.org) are good sources. In addition, the BBC ([bbc.com/news/world/us\\_and\\_canada/](http://bbc.com/news/world/us_and_canada/)) and Al Jazeera ([america.aljazeera.com](http://america.aljazeera.com)) have pretty good coverage of American politics that sometimes our major organizations skim over or miss completely. Be careful on the web, though- many times articles and sites can seem unbiased and reputable when in fact they are simply partisan mouthpieces.

### GRADING OF ARTICLES

Articles will be graded check, check + or check -. Higher or lower grades will be based on the quality of the pieces you select and whether you have highlighted and annotated them. Avoid very short articles. You can't get a good grade, or contribute much to class discussions without high quality articles.

If you turn in all of the assignments and get a check and participate in class discussions at a reasonable level, you will get a B for this portion of your grade which is 1/2 of your grade for Current Events. As long as you get at least a B on the articles, it will not lower your overall grade.

Grade Breakdown	A: 90-100%
	B: 80-89%
	C: 70-79%
	D: 60-69%
	F: 59% or lower

#### Class Policies

*Makeup Work:* You may make up a missed exam or oral report if you have a valid excuse and notify me (preferably at least 24 hours in advance) that you will be absent. Friday articles may NOT be made up unless you are absent due to a school-sponsored activity. Late papers will be accepted with a letter grade dropped for every day the paper is late.

*Inclement Weather:* You can expect for us to hold class unless the school closes due to unsafe conditions. You can check the Meredith inclement weather line at (919) 832-8878 and/or your Meredith email for school closure messages. I do not want you to risk your life to get to class, but I will not allow make up work for anything you miss, so final judgment on this matter rests in your hands.

*Food and Drink:* Food and drink will be allowed so long as they do not become distracting.

*Classroom Etiquette:* We will have lots of discussion in this course, and politics is by nature highly contentious. However, it is essential that every student be polite and courteous to other students, even if they are expressing views that offend or anger you. I will encourage scholarly debate of justifiable opinions, but not disparaging remarks or personal attacks. If I feel you have crossed the line, you will be asked to leave class and your participation points will be marked down.

*Laptops and Cell Phones:* Laptops will be allowed on Mondays and Wednesdays to take notes. Laptops will not be allowed on Fridays, for these days will be entirely discussion based and I want everyone to participate fully. If I discover you are using your laptop for something unrelated to class (Twitter/YouTube/email/insert irrelevant webpage or game here) I reserve the right to ask you to put your laptop away. Repeated abuse of this policy will result in you no longer having the ability to use your laptop in class. Similarly, cell phone usage is banned during class time except for extreme emergencies.

*Extra Credit:* Any extra credit offered will be at my discretion.

*Academic Dishonesty:* Cheating on any assignment, quiz, or exam in this class is **absolutely forbidden** under the Meredith Code of Honor, which is printed below. If any academic dishonesty is discovered, I will not hesitate to take appropriate action. Possible punishments for this class include a failing grade on the assignment/quiz/exam, failing grade for the course, and a mark on your permanent record. There may also be additional punishments from the Meredith Honor Council. Long story short- **DON'T DO IT!**

#### Meredith Honor Code

We, the Meredith Community, are committed to developing and affirming in each student a sense of personal honor and responsibility. Uncompromising honesty and forthrightness are essential elements of this commitment. The Honor System is a method by which individual honors are protected and maintained. Any dishonorable action will be regarded as a violation of this commitment, and corrective action will be taken.

If I am in violation of the Honor Code, to prevent jeopardizing the Honor System or weakening our system of self-government, I have an obligation to report myself to the proper authorities. If I am aware of a violation of the Honor System by another student, I shall call this matter to the attention of that student as a violation of responsibility to the community.

In choosing Meredith College, I am accepting the Honor System as a way of life. As a Meredith student, I am responsible for insuring that the Honor System is at all times carried out.

#### Disability Statement

Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with documented disabilities. In order to receive accommodations, students must go through the Counseling Center/Disability Services office. Disability Services is located in Carroll Hall and can be reached at (919)760-8427 or [disabilityservices@meredith.edu](mailto:disabilityservices@meredith.edu). For additional information see the website at [http://www.meredith.edu/on\\_campus\\_services/academic\\_and\\_support\\_services/disability\\_services/](http://www.meredith.edu/on_campus_services/academic_and_support_services/disability_services/)

#### Course Drop Dates

If you decide you cannot complete this course for whatever reason, you may withdraw. You must initiate this process with the Registrar's Office, I cannot do it for you. If you fail to meet the last drop date, you will receive a grade for this course, usually an "F".

Last day to drop without a "W": August 30, 2016

Last day to drop with a "W": November 4, 2016

#### Course Outline

Date	Topic	Readings and/or Assignments
August 24	Introduction	
August 26	American Political Culture	We the People Ch. 1; Political Compass Test Form due (link on MyMeredith)
August 29	American Political Culture, cont.	
August 31	Presentation and Argumentation	
September 2	Current Events	
September 5	Labor Day- NO CLASS	
September 7	The Constitution	We the People Ch. 2
September 9	Current Events	
September 12	The Constitution, cont.	
September 14	Federalism	We the People Ch. 3
September 16	Current Events	
September 19	Federalism, cont.	
September 21	Civil Liberties	We the People Ch. 4
September 23	Current Events	
September 26	Civil Liberties, cont.	
September 28	Civil Rights	We the People Ch. 5
September 30	Current Events	
October 3	Civil Rights, cont.	
October 5	<b>Midterm Exam</b>	
October 7	Autumn Recess- NO CLASS	
October 10	Voter Registration Drive	
October 12	Political Participation and Voting	We the People Ch. 8
October 14	Current Events	
October 17	Political Participation and Voting, cont.	
October 19	Political Parties	We the People Ch. 9
October 21	Current Events	
October 24	Professor out- NO CLASS	<b>Candidate Bio due by 5 pm</b>
October 26	Campaigns and Elections	We the People Ch. 10
October 28	Current Events	
October 31	Debate: The Electoral College	

November 2	Public Opinion	We the People Ch. 6
November 4	Current Events	
November 7	Election Day Prep	
November 9	Government Simulation discussion	
November 11	Current Events	
November 14	Economic Policy	
November 16	Foreign Policy	<b>Simulation Paper #1 due</b>
November 18	Government Simulation	
November 21	Government Simulation	
November 23-25	Thanksgiving Break- NO CLASS	
November 28	Government Simulation	
November 30	Government Simulation	
December 2	Government Simulation	
December 5	Government Simulation	
December 7	Government simulation wrap-up and review for final	<b>Simulation Paper #2 due</b>
December 14	<b>Final Exam</b> from 9-12	

The instructor reserves the right to amend this syllabus as necessary.