

INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN GOVERNMENT--PSC 100-02 (TR 9:30-10:45)--FALL 2009
Mr. Jeff Colbert--414 Graham Building--Office Phone 256-0522/Home Phone--288-4616 (not after 10 PM)
E-mail: mjcolber@uncg.edu--Office Hours--MWF 8:00-9:30/TR 8:00-9:15

Texts: America's New Democracy (5th edition) by Fiorina, Peterson, Johnson, and Mayer
Vital Readings in American Politics (2nd edition) by Colbert

The study of government begins with form and structure, but stopping there denies you the opportunity to know how it operates and, just as important, how it cannot. Government is called both the savior from and the cause of most of our problems. I believe it is neither. It is a morass of organizations and individuals that generally attempt to do what is right and what is desired by our citizens combined with enlightened self interest. In addition, we must realize the diversity of our opinions and our officials' difficulties in reflecting those views.

The course will examine issues and governmental structures and is largely a lecture driven course with some discussion. I hope to make class time interesting while adhering to the utmost necessity-that I both present to you and help you discover relevant and accurate information about our governmental system. More specifically, by the end of the course, you should be able to:

- 1.) describe fundamental workings of the American government, such as, but not limited to, lawmaking, the operations of the Supreme Court, presidential activities, the role of political parties and interest groups;
- 2.) locate key provisions of the Constitution and consider the intent of the founders in writing them;
- 3.) identify players, forces and ideologies that affect the political process in the US;
- 4.) locate numerous websites that offer information on the content areas of this course;
- 5.) read and explain in written and oral form historical and current writings about our political system;
- 6.) successfully complete tests which require discrete knowledge (multiple choice and short answers) as well as discrete knowledge combined with larger thoughts and bodies of material (essay questions).

As a class member, you are important to the progression of this course. Timely reading of the material and a willingness to discuss will make the course more interesting and stimulating for you. It is required that you come to class prepared, involved and reasonably willing to participate. I hope you will feel comfortable discussing issues and opinions. To help you do this successfully, you must read all assigned material prior to class. Class discussion and pop quizzes will reveal to me whether or not you have done the reading. Further, assignments are due in class on the dates as announced. It is **your** responsibility to know about them and have them prepared. Pop quizzes are used to see if you've done the reading, encourage discussion and emphasize the importance of attendance. Missed pop quizzes cannot be made up. **I DO NOT do extra credit.**

I have an attendance policy because the taxpayers of North Carolina and others are paying a decent chunk of change for your education. Since this class meets two times a week you have two cuts. I do not live in the "excused" and "unexcused" absence world. Whether you have a bug or just want to sleep in, you get two and that's all. There are two exceptions. If you are ill for a lengthy period (a week or longer), present me with the appropriate documentation and we can discuss it. And, if you are required to miss class due to a university function, those absences will not count against you. Informing me of an upcoming absence or the reason for a previous absence does not constitute my approval or acceptance of the absence. Finally, if you are later than 5 minutes to class, I will count you as absent. Be in class. Be on time.

GRADING STRUCTURE

Web/Class/Research Assignments/Pop Quizzes	10%
3 exams—(best grade=35%, next=30% each, worst=25%)	<u>90%</u>
	100%

SCHEDULE

F= Fiorina, Peterson, Johnson, and Mayer C=Colbert

08-25	Introduction		
08-27	American Political Culture	F 4/1	
09-01/03/08	Constitution	F 2	C 1
09-10/15	Political Parties/Interest Groups	F 9	C 7
09-17	Public Opinion/Individual Participation/National Elections	F 5/7/8	C 9
09-22	Test #1		
09-24/29/10-01	Presidency	F 11	C 3
10-06/08	Bureaucracy	F 12	C 4
10-13	NO CLASS--FALL BREAK!!!		
10-15/20	Federalism	F 3	C 2
10-22	Media	F 6	C 8
10-27	Test #2		
10-29/11-03/05/10	Congress	F 10	C 5
11-12/17/19	Courts	F 13	C 6
11-24			
11-26	NO CLASS—THANKSGIVING!!!		
12-01/03	Civil Rights/Civil Liberties	F 14/15	
12-10 (9-11 a.m.)	Test #3		

ELECTRONIC WARNING!!

Turn off or turn to vibrate ALL cell phones, pagers, and other electronic devices other than your laptop computer. If there is an emergency possibility and you need your cell phone to be on, inform me. Otherwise, they ARE NOT to be heard or seen in class. If you use a laptop computer in class, you may use it for note-taking only unless otherwise directed or approved. Close, not reduce, all other screens. If you are found using your laptop for other purposes in class, your right to use your laptop in class will be forfeited.