

## **PSC101 AMERICAN GOVERNMENT**

### **Fall Term 2009**

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Office Hours: After Class or Monday and Wednesday, 2-3:30; Other Times by Appointment

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**Introduction:** This course is designed to be an introduction to American government, its historical foundations, institutions and political processes. We will examine how our political system was designed, how it has changed over time and how public opinion, the media and the “information age” have affected our government institutions and public policy. Finally, we will examine current social policy issues, weigh the costs and benefits of actions and engage in thoughtful discussion of contemporary policies and actions with a view toward how those issues and actions impact the current political scene.

**Course Evaluation:** Grades will be determined by class participation, tests and a paper. All assignments must be completed to pass the course.

**Class Participation:** (20%) Attendance will be taken daily. More than 2 unexcused absences and/or repeated lateness will affect your participation grade. Absences will be excused for medical reasons if the student has a note from the infirmary or doctor or for other circumstances beyond the student’s control. Absences resulting from the student representing Furman University in some capacity will also be excused.

Classes will include discussion and student participation. Keeping up with reading assignments is essential to successful class participation. Occasionally attendance at an on-campus meeting in the evening may be required. The participation grade is based not only on attendance but on positive involvement in class discussion.

American politics takes place all around us, not just in our class and textbooks. Each student will be required to attend at least 3 off-campus political events during the term and will submit a one-page summary of each experience on the last day of class. Meetings of local or state governmental organizations fulfill this requirement but there are other opportunities as well. More information on events and meetings will be given in class. If you wish to attend a meeting but are uncertain as to whether it fulfills the assignment, check with me. Your summaries will be included in the final participation grade.

One or more unscheduled, “pop,” quizzes may be given if deemed necessary. The grade will be included in the participation grade.

**Exams:** (65%) There will be two tests given during the term as well as a final exam. Each will be a combination of identification, short answer and essay questions. These exercises will test your mastery of information from the readings, class lectures and class discussions. Each test

will make up 20% of the final grade, and the final exam, 25%. An unexcused absence from the final exam will result in an “F” on the exam. If you have been identified as requiring special accommodations for taking tests, please make arrangements with Disability Services (2322).

Absolutely no cell phones or other electronic devices will be permitted in the classroom during any test or exam. The penalty for disregarding this will be an “F” on the test.

**Paper:** (15%) There will be a 4-5 page paper due at the beginning of class on November 30. Based on the assigned book, *The Battle for America 2008*, the paper will examine events, tactics and political discourse of the recent election campaign. More information on the assignment will be given at a later date. Your research may and should include other sources but should be focused primarily on the book. Be specific, support your observations with facts and form a coherent, well-established conclusion. Your paper should be typed and double-spaced with standard margins.

Cite the sources you have used in the body of your paper and list your sources alphabetically in your bibliography. Use APA method of citation. Be sure to document your Internet sources as you do research; they may be difficult to locate later. Your paper must be your own work. Information on plagiarism and the penalties for plagiarism is included in the handout on “Academic Integrity at Furman.” Read it carefully. If you have any questions, ask them. The penalties for plagiarism are severe.

Proofread your work, and number your pages. Note that papers are due at the beginning of class on November 30 and will be docked one letter grade for each day they are late. If you wish to submit your paper early, you may do so.

If you have questions about any aspect of this assignment or need help getting started, I will be available to meet with you after class, during office hours or at other pre-arranged times. This paper and the book on which it is based should be interesting, challenging and fun. If you find it a struggle, talk with me, but your first step should be to read *The Battle for America* and become familiar with the election campaign.

**Reading Assignments:** The following books are required. The first two are available at the Furman bookstore. *The Battle for America 2008* is available at Amazon or local bookstores. Assignments are listed below.

Barbour and Wright, *Keeping the Republic (3<sup>rd</sup> Brief Edition)*

Barbour and Streb, *Clued in to Politics*

Balz and Johnson, *The Battle for America 2008*

Class discussion will often be based on current event issues and public opinion. Keeping up with daily events is essential. You will need to subscribe to the *New York Times*. Further information will be given in class.

### **Course Schedule and Assigned Readings**

The reading of *The Battle for America* has not been assigned for specific dates. The book is essential for successfully writing your paper and will be useful for class discussion during the final third of the course. Any testing on *The Battle for America* will be on the final exam.

Aug. 26 – 31	<b>Roots of American Government</b> Readings: Barbour and Wright, Chapter 1 and 2; <i>Clued In</i> , Chapter 1
September 2-9	<b>Constitution</b> B & W, Chapter 2; <i>Clued In</i> , Chapter 2, Federalist Papers 10 and 51
September 11-16	<b>Federalism</b> B & W, Chapter 3; <i>Clued In</i> , Chapter 3
September 18-23	<b>Civil Liberties</b> B & W, Chapter 4; <i>Clued In</i> , Chapter 4
Sept.25-Oct. 2	<b>Civil Rights</b> B & W, Chapter 5; <i>Clued In</i> , Chapter 5
October 5	<b>MIDTERM EXAM</b>
October 7-12	<b>Congress</b> B & W, Chapter 6; <i>Clued In</i> , Chapter 6
October 14-19	<b>Presidency</b> B & W, Chapter 7; <i>Clued In</i> , Chapter 7
October 21-26	<b>Federal Bureaucracy</b> B & W, Chapter 8; <i>Clued In</i> , Chapter 8
Oct. 28-Nov. 2	<b>Judiciary</b> B & W, Chapter 9; <i>Clued In</i> , Chapter 9
November 4	<b>MIDTERM EXAM</b>
November 6-9	<b>Public Opinion and Socialization</b> B & W, Chapter 10; <i>Clued In</i> , Chapter 10
November 11-13	<b>Political Parties and Interest Groups</b> B & W, Chapter 11; <i>Clued In</i> , Chapter 11 and 12
November 16-20	<b>Voting, Campaigns and Elections</b> B & W, Chapter 12; , <i>Clued In</i> , Chapter 13
November 23-30	<b>The Media</b> B & W, Chapter 13; <i>Clued In</i> , Chapter 14
November 30	<b>PAPER DUE</b>
December 2-7	<b>Domestic and Foreign Policy</b> B & W, Chapter 14; <i>Clued In</i> , Chapter 15-16
December 7	<b>MEETING SUMMARIES DUE IN CLASS</b>
December 14	<b>FINAL EXAM</b> (8:30 AM)