

BOWIE STATE UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY & GOVERNMENT

GOVT 231: U.S. National Government
FALL 2021

Instructor: Dr. William B. Lewis

Class Schedule: M 4:55-7:25 p.m.

E-mail Address: wlewis@bowiestate.edu

Office Location: MLK, Room 0202

Phone #: (301) 860-3602

Office Hours: Monday 11:00 a.m.-12 p.m.

(Zoom) & 1:00 -4:00 p.m.

Wednesday 1:00-3:00 p.m. and By Appointment

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course is a study of both the structure of the national government and the process of power and influence in the American political system.

II. REQUIRED TEXT

McClain, Paula D. & Steven C. Tauber. *American Government in Black and White* (4th ed.). New York: Oxford University Press, 2020.

RECOMMENDED TEXT

Abernathy, Scott F. *American Government* (2nd ed). California: CQ Press, 2020.

Additional reading assignments may be placed on library reserve and/or BSU Blackboard.

III. **INSTRUCTIONAL MODE:** The course is taught online due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The class will meet via Zoom on Mondays, 4:55-7:25 p.m. Learning assignments will be posted via Blackboard.

IV. **EMERGING ISSUES:** Consistent with the view of federalism, students will critically examine the role of the national and state governments in environmental management.

V. GENERAL EDUCATION COMPETENCIES

1. Written and Oral Communication

A) Analyze and discuss critical issues and recurring themes in American national government; and

B) Conduct research and evaluate information using the appropriate methods of the

discipline.

2. Scientific and Quantitative Reasoning

- A) Employ quantitative and qualitative empirical information to analyze American politics.

3. Critical Analysis and Reasoning

- A) Apply critical thinking and analytical reasoning to the assigned readings; and
- B) Evaluate facts, opinions, assumptions and theories of American government to begin solving recurring problems in the discipline.

4. Technology Competency

- A) Use information from various historical prints and electronic sources in the evaluation of American national government; and
- B) Use the library software to identify relevant sources for course assignments.

5. Information Technology

- A) Use library to locate and access information from the University consortium;
- B) Select the most appropriate materials for course assignments; and
- C) Understand the ethical, legal and socio-economic issues surrounding information and information technology in the digital age.

VI. **STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**

After completing the course, students should be able to:

- A) Define key concepts and theories in American politics;
- B) Understand the history, and evolution of the American national government;
- C) Evaluate the constitutional context of American politics;
- D) Identify key philosophers and framers and their impact on the Constitution;
- E) Identify the roles and functions of several institutions within the American government;
- F) Discuss the dynamics of the political behavior of the American electorate; and
- G) Discuss the role of the states and the federal government.

VII. **STUDENT EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES:** Students will be required to complete:

- A) Three (3) examinations dealing with the materials covered in the prior weeks (1a, 3a);
- B) A research paper or discussion papers on a U.S. national government issue (1a, 1b, 3a, 3b, 4a, 4b, 5a, 5b); and
- C) Read the major newspapers and make critical analysis of the themes that are related to American politics (1a, 1b, 3a, 3b).

VIII. **STUDENT REQUIREMENTS:**

A. Attendance

- 1. Students are required to attend class sessions regularly and punctually.
- 2. A record of attendance will be maintained.
- 3. It is the responsibility of students to make-up for all work missed during any period of absence.

B. Examinations And Discussion Papers

- 1. Students will be given two (2) unit examinations.
- 2. Students will be required to take the final examination.
- 3. Students are required to take all the examinations as scheduled.
- 4. There will be no make-up examinations for unit examinations.
- 5. The mid-term evaluation will be based on the average of the two (2) unit examinations administered in September and October 2021.
- 6. Students are required to submit two (2) discussion papers, no more than two to three pages in length.

IX. **Grading Scale & Distribution of Percentages:**

1.	First Unit Exam	20%
2.	Second Unit Exam	20%
3.	Final Exam	30%
4.	Discussion Papers	20%

5. Class Participation 10%

Total: 100%

Note: (i) The numerical equivalent of letter grades are: 90-100 = A
80-89 = B
70-79 = C
60-69 = D
Below 60 = F

(ii) Final Grades will not be changed unless there is an error in computation.

X. RUBRICS FOR EVALUATING ESSAYS AND DISCUSSION PAPERS

- a. Focus – Displays a clear understanding of the task.
- b. Organization – A clear organizational structure with logical progression, linking ideas to supporting points.
- c. Content - Provides relevant content and effective supporting details.
- d. Critical Thinking and Analysis – Ability to synthesize and make certain inferences.
- e. Grammar and Usage – Strong grammar, mechanics, and usage.

Note: The instructor reserves the right to modify the organization of the course content and may adjust the grading scale in the computation of the final grades.

XI. EXAMINATIONS, ASSIGNMENTS AND ATTENDANCE

- a. The examinations will be a combination of multiple choice, definition, short answer questions and essay questions. They will cover the lectures, reading assignments, and class handouts. Class participation is based on students' analysis of assigned readings and meaningful contributions to the ongoing class discussions. The final examination will be comprehensive. **THE FINAL EXAM MAY ONLY BE TAKEN ON THE DATES AND TIMES LISTED FOR EACH CLASS AS PUBLISHED IN THE FALL 2021 SCHEDULE OF CLASSES.**
- b. All exams and assignments will be taken or handed in as scheduled. Failure to do so will result in zero points earned for the exercise; therefore, except in the most extreme circumstances, (death in family, childbirth, auto accident, hospitalization) there will be no make-up. An INCOMPLETE (I) grade will rarely be given and only in cases where the student is doing passing work and has a valid excuse (distress or illness). Please contact the professor prior to an exam in case of an emergency/illness which would be a cause for an official excuse from the DEAN OF THE COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES. However, the final grades will not be changed unless there is an error in computation.

Students are expected to maintain regular and punctual attendance; there will be a roll call at the beginning of each class session. Therefore, excessive tardiness or unexcused absences will not be tolerated; any such documented absences may negatively impact the final letter grade. In any case, the University's rule states that "a student may be advised by the instructor to withdraw from a course for excessive absences. Five (5) or more hours of unexcused absences before the final date for withdrawal may result in the student's receiving a grade of "F" for the course."

XII. COURSE OUTLINE

WEEK 1:

- Course Overview
- Review of Course Syllabus
- Note-Taking Skills

1. American Government and Politics

- The Nature of Government
- The Functions of Government
- Types of Government
- Foundations of American Government

- Text: Chapter 1, "American Government and Politics in a Racially Divided World"

WEEKS 2 & 3:

2. The U.S. Constitutional System

- From Revolution to Constitution
- Crafting the Constitution
- The Battle for Ratification
- Amending the Constitution

- Text: Chapter 2, "The Constitution: Rights and Race Intertwined"

-Reading: Thurgood Marshall, "Race and the Constitution," in Bruce Stinebrickner (ed.), *American Government* 97/98

3. Federalism

- The Federal Framework

- Federalism and the Constitution
- The Evolution of American Federalism

- Text: Chapter 3, “Federalism: Balancing Power, Balancing Rights”

FIRST UNIT EXAM- September 20, 2021

WEEKS 4:

4. Civil Liberties

- The Bill of Rights
- Freedom of Expression
- Freedom of Religion
- Rights of the Accused
- Criminal Justice
- Privacy

- Text: Chapter 4, “Civil Liberties: Freedom and Government Authority in Tension”

5. Civil Rights

- Equality and Civil Rights
- The Struggle for Civil Rights

-Text: Chapter 5, “Civil Rights: Inequality and Equality”

WEEK 5:

6. Congress

- Congressional Representation
- Congressional Organization and Leadership
- The Lawmaking Process
- Influences on Congressional Decision-making

-Text: Chapter 6, “Congress: Representation and Lawmaking”

WEEK 6:

7. The Presidency

- The Constitutional Basis of the Presidency

- The Constitutional Powers of the Presidency
- Presidential Leadership
- Presidents and Congress
- Public Opinion of the President

-Text: Chapter 7, “The Presidency: Conventional Wisdom Redefined”

WEEK 7:

8. The Bureaucracy

- Bureaucracy and Bureaucrats
- Bureaucratic Organization
- Bureaucratic Policymaking and Power
- Controlling Bureaucracies

-Text: Chapter 8, “The Bureaucracy: Career Government Employees, Accountability, and Race”

SECOND UNIT EXAM- October 18, 2021

WEEK 8:

9. The Judiciary

- The Legal System
- Judicial Powers and Limitations
- Judicial Selection
- Decision-making on the Supreme Court

-Text: Chapter 9, “The Judiciary: The Counter-Majoritarian Institution”

WEEKS 9 & 10:

10. Public Opinion

- Understanding Public Opinion
- Race, Gender, and Public Opinion
- Political Culture and Public Opinion
- Measuring Public Opinion

-Text: Chapter 10, “Public Opinion: Divided by Race”

11. The Media

- The History Media and Politics
- The Media History
- Press Coverage

-Text: Chapter 11, “The Media: Reinforcing Racial Stereotypes”

WEEK 11:

12. Social Movements

- A Social Movement Defined
- Successful American Social Movements
- Other Important U.S. Social Movements

-Text: Chapter 12, “Social Movements: Civil Rights as a Movement Model”

13. Interest Groups

- Interest Groups and their Functions
- Types of Interest Groups
- Techniques of Interest Groups
- Political and Financial Inequalities

-Text: Chapter 12, “Interest Groups: Good Outcomes with Few Resources”

WEEKS 12 & 13:

14. Political Parties

- The Development of the Two Party System
- Party Organization
- Parties and Voters

-Text: Chapter 14, “Political Parties” Linking Voters and Governing Institutions”

15. Political Participation

- The Electoral Process
- Campaigning for Elections
- Voting

-Text: Chapter 15, “Voting and Elections: Past and Prologue to the Obama Victory”

WEEKS 14-15:

16. Domestic and Foreign Policy Making

- Agenda Setting
- Policy Enactment
- Post-enactment Stages

-Text: Chapter 16, “The Making of Domestic and Foreign Policy: Summing Up American Government in Black and White”

Disability Statement: Students who have a disability or think they need special accommodations should report immediately to Disability Support Services (DSS), located in Suite 082 (Room 8212), in the Thurgood Marshall Library, or call Dr. Michael S. Hughes, DSS Coordinator at (301) 860-4047. Go to the following website for more information: <https://www.bowiestate.edu/academics/support-services/disability-support-services/>

Bowie State University shall not discriminate against any individual on the basis of race, color, religion, age, ancestry or national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, marital status, or veteran status (ADA and Non-Discrimination Policy)

BSU Blackboard: The instructor will post some items (announcements, course syllabus, examination-study guides, etc.) on the BSU Blackboard.

Final Examination: TBA

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- Barbour, Christine & Gerald C. Wright. *Keeping the Republic: Power and Citizenship in American Politics* (7th ed.). California: SAGE Publications, 2017.
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- Ginsberg, Benjamin et al. Theodore Lowi & Margaret Weir, Caroline J. Tolbert, and Andrea L. Campbell (eds.). *We the People: An Introduction to American Politics* (11th ed.). NY: W.W. Norton & Co., 2019.
- Janda, Kenneth, Jeffrey M. Berry, & Jerry Goldman (eds.). *The Challenge of Democracy: Government in America*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2008.
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- McKenna, George. *The Drama of Democracy*. Sluice Dock, CT: The Dushkin Pub. Co; 1990.
- Milkis, Sidney M. & Michael Nelson. *The American Presidency: Origins and Development: 1776-2018* (8th ed.). California: CQ Press, 2020.
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- O'Connor, Karen, Larry J. Sabato & Alixandra B. Yanus. *American Government: Roots and Reform*. New York: Pearson, 2012.
- Patterson, Thomas E. *We The People*. New York: McGraw Hill, 2009.
- Pfiffner, James P. & Roger H. Davidson. *Understanding the Presidency*. NY: Pearson, 2009.
- Shea, Daniel M., Joanne Connor Green, & Christopher E. Smith. *Living Democracy*. New York: Pearson Education, 2012.
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