PS 102: Introduction to American Politics

Dr. James C. Rhoads

Patterson Hall 303

Office Hrs: MWF 12:50-1:50 and by appt ONLY

Fall 2017

Patterson Hall 208

MWF 10:30-11:30

Office Hrs: MWF 10:30-11:30

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Course Objectives:
The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the study of American national government. We will investigate the Constitution and American federalism; the major branches of government; civil liberties and civil rights; political parties and elections; differing theories on how America is ruled and by whom; the mass media; bureaucracies; the economic system; and America's role in a global community. It is hoped that the course will stimulate the student to think critically about American politics and his/her place in the political environment.

Course Requirements:
The class will be conducted in both a lecture and discussion format. Students will be expected to participate fully in class discussions. Throughout the course students are required to attend each class and to keep abreast of their reading assignments. During the course of the term four exams and three quizzes will be given. These exams and quizzes will cover material from the assigned readings as well as from class lectures.

Texts:

Grading:
4 Exams at 80 points each...........320
3 Quizzes at 20 points each...........60
Attendance/Participation..............20
TOTAL POINTS............................400
Letter Grades will be based on this scale:

93%-100%... A  
90-92%...... A-  
87-89%...... B+  
83-86%...... B  
80-82%...... B-  
77-79%...... C+  
73-76%...... C  
70-72%...... C-  
67-69%...... D+  
63-66%...... D  
60-62%...... D-  
0-59%........ F

Student Learning Objectives:
By the end of the term, students will be able to demonstrate knowledge of:
1. The foundations and origins of the American system of government  
2. The importance of civil liberties and rights  
3. The origins of and significance of political ideologies in America  
4. The role of public opinion in our democracy  
5. The role of the media in our democracy  
6. The role of interest groups and political parties in our democracy  
7. The nature and significance of the electoral process in our democracy  
8. The structure and functions of Congress, the Presidency and the Judiciary  
9. The importance of Economic and Domestic Policy in our democracy

Make-up Policy:
"Absence from an announced examination results in a failing grade for the examination, unless suitable arrangements are made for a special examination. A student who seeks such a privilege should petition the instructor in writing PRIOR to the scheduled examination date. If the instructor considers that the petition should be granted, then a note to the effect is added and the petition is presented to the Dean of the College. The examination may be given only if the Dean also approves the petition. (Westminster College Undergraduate Catalog, 2017-18, p.65)
Tentative Schedule of Classes:
August 28: Introduction/What is Politics
August 30: US Constitution
September 1: US Constitution

September 4: Founding Fathers: You Say You Want a Revolution?
September 6: Founding Fathers: A Healthy Constitution
September 8: Career Center Presentation

September 11: NO CLASS
September 13: Federalism
September 15: Civil Rights & Liberties

September 18: Civil Rights & Liberties
September 20: Civil Rights & Liberties
September 22: Exam Review

September 25: FIRST EXAM
September 27: Political Ideologies: American Feud
September 29: Political Ideologies: American Feud

October 2: Public Opinion
October 4: Public Opinion
October 6: Political Participation

October 9: Politics & The Media
October 11: Politics & The Media
October 13: Exam Review

October 16: SECOND EXAM
October 18: Interest Groups
October 20: Political Parties
October 25: Political Parties
October 27: Campaigns & Elections

October 30: Campaigns & Elections
November 1: The Congress
November 3: The Congress
November 6: Exam Review
November 8: THIRD EXAM
November 10: The Presidency Chapter 10
November 13: The Presidency Chapter 10
November 15: The Presidency Chapter 10
November 17: Bureaucracies Chapter 11

November 20: The Judiciary Chapter 12
November 27: The Judiciary Chapter 12
November 29: The Judiciary Chapter 12
December 1: Exam Review

December 4: FOURTH EXAM
December 6: Roger & Me Chapter 14
December 8: Roger & Me Chapter 15

December 13 FINAL PERIOD 9:30am