INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN POLITICS
POL141A
Rankin 209
Spring 2017
Tuesday, Thursday
2:00-3:50 pm

Instructor: Bob Franze
Email: rfranze@carrollu.edu
Phone 262-894-2235

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
This course provides a broad introduction to the basic political institutions and processes of American national government as well as state and local governments. We will learn about the formal institutions (e.g. Congress, the Presidency, the Wisconsin State Legislature), the founding ideas, and the processes that have evolved over time to make the system function. We will also apply what we are learning to a variety of current events that occur during the semester. This course assumes little knowledge on the part of incoming students about the American political system. Hopefully, students will leave the course with both a solid knowledge base of the workings of the American political system at all levels, and a desire to keep learning once the course is completed.

COURSE GOALS AND STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:
1. Students will understand the rationale behind the founding of the American political system and have opportunities to evaluate that rationale. To achieve this goal students will read some of the Founding documents, and will be required to discuss them during class time and reflect upon them for course exams.
2. Students’ knowledge of, and their interest in, current events related to the American political system as well as the world beyond our borders will be improved and hopefully deepened. To accomplish this students are Strongly encouraged to read—online—a national newspaper daily (either the New York Times, the Washington Post or the Wall Street Journal – Milwaukee Journal Sentinel is a good regional read). Quizzes and group activities will be structured to reward students who attempt to fulfill this expectation.
3. Students will learn about and question the organization and function of the institutions of our system of government. Reading assignments will provide the description, and classroom discussion will serve as a forum for questioning.
4. Students will understand state and local politics and political systems, specifically the Wisconsin state system.

5. Students will demonstrate improved analytical and critical thinking skills. Improvement of these skills will be assessed via critical reading responses, an opinion-editorial reaction paper, and class participation.

6. Students will demonstrate improved written communication skills. Improvement of writing skills will be assessed through exams, quizzes, debates, journals, critical reading responses and class participation.

7. Students will demonstrate improved oral communication skills. Improvement of oral communication skills will be assessed through debates and class participation. Participation will include involvement in online discussion through MyCourses.

Required Texts:


Hamilton, Madison and Jay. *The Federalist Papers*. Available through the Avalon Project at Yale [www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/federal/fed.htm](http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/federal/fed.htm)

**COURSE OUTLINE, READING & ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE**

*Origins of the American Political System*

1/24  Frank Caliendo – Bush/Clinton impressions  
Civic Literacy Quiz  
**Topic:** What is politics? What is a political system? What ideas influenced the Founders in creating the American political system? (powerpoint)  
*Paine’s Common Sense, Jefferson’s Declaration of Independence*  
*Film: Liberty! Blows Must Decide*

1/26  **Topic:** What is the difference between representative democracy and participatory democracy? Why did the Founders establish a representative democracy? (powerpoint)  
*Reading: Federalist #10 and #51, Keeping the Republic(BW), Chpt. 2*  
*Film: Liberty! Are We To Be a Nation*
1/31  **Topic:** Virginia, New Jersey & Connecticut Constitutional Plans  
**Topic:** Examine Articles 1-3 of the Constitution (powerpoint)  
**Topic:** Examine the Bill of Rights (Constitution USA video)

*Federalism*

2/2  Chpt. 2 quiz  
2016 candidate summaries (bio, 3 issue stances) (6)  
**Topic:** Federalism (Constitution USA video, Reagan Inaugural)  
**Reading:** Keeping the Republic (BW), Chpt. 3

2/7  Chpt. 3 quiz  
**Film:** Founding Brothers – The Dinner, Washington’s Cabinet  
**Debate:** Allowing States to Collect Sales Tax on Interstate Commerce (Internet Sales)  
2016 candidate summaries (bio, 3 issue stances) (6)

2/9  **Topic:** Executive powers (powerpoint)  
**Movie:** Thirteen Days

*The Executive*

2/14  **Movie:** conclude Thirteen Days

2/16  **EXAM I:** Covers class lectures, assigned BW chapters, lectures and films/documentaries from 1/24 to 2/7  
**Electoral College Activity**

2/21  **Topic:** Electoral College – Article II, 12th Amendment, disputed elections (1800, 1876, 2000)  
**Readings:** BW, Chapter 7  
**Topic:** Presidential Nominating Process  
**Living Room Candidate website, Nixon/Kennedy debate**

2/23  Chpt. 7 quiz  
**Debate:** The Electoral College: Abolish or Preserve?  
2016 candidate issue stance summaries (12)  
**Watergate intro**
The Congress

2/28 **Congressional Incumbency Activity**
Visit congress.gov and find congressional legislation your Representative and Senator have sponsored – describe such congressional action in two 50 word summaries, discuss in class
2016 candidate issue stance summaries(6)
Presidential candidate TV ads, website summaries(two of each)

3/2 **Movie: All the Presidents’ Men**

3/7 **Movie: conclude All the Presidents’ Men**
**Topic:** Congress basics; key differences between the chambers; committees(powerpoint)
**Film:** Ken Burns’ The Congress
**Readings:** BW, Chapter 6

3/9 Chpt. 6 quiz
Indiana University Center on Congress website
Redistricting Game website

The Judiciary

3/21 **Topic:** Types of law, state/federal court system structure, Supreme Court(powerpoint)
**Film:** The Supreme Court

3/23 Chpt. 9 quiz
**Topic:** Supreme Court, Judicial Review, and Strict vs. Loose Constructionism
**Readings:** BW, Chapter 9
**Film:** The Supreme Court
Exam II: Covers class lectures, assigned BW chapters, and films/documentaries from 2/14 to 3/23
Concord Coalition budget simulation

Civil Liberties & Civil Rights

3/30 Topics: Rights (Political vs. Economic vs. Social); Civil Liberties vs. Civil Rights(powerpoint)
Topic: Civil Rights Legacy: 13-15th Amendments; Civil Rights Cases; Civil Rights Legislation(powerpoint)
Constitution USA video
Readings: BW Chpts. 4, 5

4/4 Movie: Gideon’s Trumpet

4/6 Chpts. 4, 5 quiz
Debate: The Death Penalty: Fatally Flawed or Defensible?
Debate: The Affordable Care Act(Obamacare) – Basic Right or Government Overreach?

Interest Groups

4/11 Topic: Interest Group politics(powerpoint)
You need to visit fec.gov and opensecrets.org and write a 50 word summary about the role of the FEC and investigate info about your Representative and Senator so you can write two additional 50 word summaries describing something you learned about them at opensecrets.org
Interest Group Activity
Topic: Party System(powerpoint)
Topic: Voting Behavior(powerpoint)

4/13 Chpts. 11, 12 quiz
Voting Behavior Activity
Wisconsin State and Local Government and Politics

4/18  **Topic:** Wisconsin State Government (powerpoint)
       **Readings:** *The Framework of Your Wisconsin Government*, pp. 36-67
       **Readings:** *The Framework of Your Wisconsin Government*, pp. 68-105
       **Readings:** *The Framework of Your Wisconsin Government*, pp. 106-117
       **Debate:** Corporate Spending in Political Campaigns – Free speech or undue influence?
       **Debate:** Voter ID – Necessary precaution or discriminatory?

4/20  Quiz on Wisconsin Government (italicized terms from Framework of Wis. Gov’t.)
       **Debate:** Gun control – What does the 2nd Amendment Right to Bear Arms mean?
       **Movie:** Frost/Nixon

4/25  **Movie:** Frost/Nixon

4/27  **Assignment:** hand in Civil Society forms and summaries, discuss address any remaining issues

5/2   **EXAM III:** Covers class lectures, assigned BWSW chapters, lectures and films/documentaries from 3/30 to 5/2

5/9   Exam period scheduled for 2 p.m.
Assessment Information for POL 141
SPRING 2017

All required written work should be submitted in hard copy.

I.  OP-ED PERSUASIVE PAPER
Due Tuesday, April 18, in class

In this paper, you must take a position in opposition to an editorial or op-ed column you have read. You must turn in the op-ed column with which you disagree with your paper assignment. Your assignment is to make a persuasive case, in one to two typewritten, double-spaced pages, explaining the issue and justifying your position. Editorial writing is a form that seeks maximum impact in fewer words. In the space of a single column, the authors seek to inform the reader about an issue and persuade him or her of the best form of action. Your paper will be graded on how well you use your writing to achieve both these aims within a two-page limit.

II.  CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIVITIES
Write-ups due on April 27, in class

All students will also participate in earning Civil Society Points. This is possibly the easiest part of the course and the most important. Your success in college depends on your active participation in the learning process in the same way that our political system depends on the active participation of its citizens. Therefore, one of the goals of this course is to encourage and facilitate active participation in the political process and in groups that try to affect political issues, to help demonstrate the links between individuals and politics. Grades for civil society points will be awarded as follows (No pluses or minuses): A = 46.5 or more points, AB = 44-46 points, B = 41.5-43.5 points, BC = 39-41 points, C = 35-38 points, D = 30-34 points. Students may negotiate with the instructor over other possible point sources. The point of the exercise is to encourage students to become more active and informed as citizens.

Some Ways to Accumulate Civil Society Points

PARTICIPATING IN ORGANIZATIONS
- Join any organization on campus that works with political issues. At a minimum, you must attend three meetings, or attend two meetings and help with one event during the semester. 20 points.
- Join an off-campus political organization, including a group organized around a specific political goal or set of goals, a political party affiliation, or an organization that works to
promote the welfare of the community. Points and requirements are the same as those listed for on-campus groups above.

CITIZEN EDUCATION AND ACTIVISM

- Attend a lecture identified by the professor on a topic of political significance. (10 points per lecture, maximum of two lectures allowed for points).
- Attend a meeting or legislative session of the city council, state or national legislatures in either the Waukesha area or the Milwaukee area, or in Madison, or in your home city/state. (10 points, maximum of two allowed for points).
- Call your state or national representatives or senators to ask them to take a certain position on upcoming legislation. (10 point, maximum of two calls).
- Write and send a letter to the editor on a topic about which you have strong feelings. (10 points).
- Attend a campaign, rally, protest, symposium or other event of political significance. (10-20 points depending on time commitment).
- Give blood (If you do not meet the requirements for giving blood, you can always earn civil society points by volunteering at the blood drive.) (10 points).
- Spend a weekend day building houses for Habitat for Humanity. (10 points).
- Visit either the City of Waukesha website or the Wisconsin Legislature website and write a short description of Mayor Shawn Reilly or the legislator who represents you (state rep/state senator); this person could represent Carroll area or your home are if you’re a native “cheesehead” (5 points each)
- Visit Project Vote Smart website and write a brief summary of some info you discovered at the site that you believe made you a more informed voter (5 points)

In order to earn your points you must write up these activities. This is not difficult. For most activities, a page describing what you did and what you learned, as well as when and where the activity took place, is fine. For lectures, films, and plays, I would also like at least a few lines of reaction to what you saw. You must also include documentation of your actions (e.g. flyers from lectures attended, blood donor stickers, copies of letters sent, etc.) If you have any question about what constitutes appropriate documentation for a specific action, ask. Your complete write-up will be submitted on April 27, in class.

**In order to avoid cheating, I am demanding verification of your Civil Society activities. Although your final write-up will still be due the last day of class, you must also submit a verification form of your Civil Society activity.** A copy of the form is attached to the syllabus and can be photocopied as often as necessary.

**III. Exams**

Three exams will be given during the semester. **The exams are not cumulative.** The exams will consist of short answer and essay questions. The questions on each exam are drawn from class lectures, the Barbour et al. textbook (hereafter, “BWSW”), and films/documentaries. Failure to show up to a scheduled exam will result in an “F” grade (0 points), unless prior arrangements are made with me for valid reasons. Each exam is worth **50 points** toward your final grade.
IV. Term Quizzes

There will be a quiz on the bolded terms highlighted in the BW textbook for each assigned chapter unless otherwise noted in the course outline. Each quiz will consist of ten short answer identification questions, including a couple of questions that are current events related. Failure to show up to a quiz will result in an “F” grade (zero points), unless prior arrangements are made with me for valid reasons. Each quiz is worth 10 points toward your final grade.

V. Debates

Students will be assigned to work in small groups and debate a specific political issue related to topics covered during the course. Prepare/be prepared for the following:

1) @ ten minute opening round argument for or against their stated topic; (10 pts)  
2) @ five minute follow-up rebuttal session per side; (5 pts)  
3) @ five minute closing argument per side; (5 pts)  
4) respond to questions from the rest of the class, bibliography of at least 5 sources. (5 pts)

The dates for each debate are identified in the course outline. The professor will identify the debate groups and related topics ASAP after class has begun. Grades will be based on 1) the content of overall arguments and 2) overall presentation (e.g., preparation, creativity). The debate is worth 25 points toward your final grade.
Grading Policy
The final grade will be based on points earned on the exams, quizzes, debates, Concord Coalition assignment, Civil Society assignment, Op-ed response paper and class participation. There is a total of **450 points** distributed as follows:

### Course Requirements and Point Values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exams</td>
<td>150 points (50 points per exam)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>80 points (10 points per quiz)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debate</td>
<td>25 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op-Ed Position Paper</td>
<td>50 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Society Points</td>
<td>50 points possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movie reviews</td>
<td>20 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate ads, websites, issues</td>
<td>40 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concord Coalition activity/worksheets</td>
<td>10 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation/Attendance</td>
<td>25 points</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total: 450 points**

### Final Grade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Cumulative Points</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>450-418 points</td>
<td>(100%-93%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AB</td>
<td>417-396 points</td>
<td>(92%-88%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>395-373 points</td>
<td>(87%-83%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC</td>
<td>372-351 points</td>
<td>(82%-78%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>350-315 points</td>
<td>(77%-70%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>314-270 points</td>
<td>(69%-60%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>269 points and below</td>
<td>(59% and below)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Cell Phone, Pager and iPod Policies**
Out of courtesy for your fellow students and the professor, please turn off all cell phones, paging devices and iPods.

**Academic Integrity Policy**
The Carroll College Academic Integrity Policy is located in your student handbook. I encourage you to familiarize yourself with it. If it is found that you have violated the policy in any way I reserve the right to impose a sanction of failure on the assignment/assessment and/or failure in the course. If you have questions, please ask.

**Special Needs**
Students with documented disabilities who may need accommodations, or any student considering obtaining documentation should make an appointment with Ms. Martha Bledsoe, our disabilities coordinator, no later than the first week of class. She can be reached by calling 524-7335 or contacting her via email at mbledsoe@carrollu.edu.

**Syllabus Changes**
The instructor and Carroll University reserve the right to modify, amend, or change the syllabus (course requirements, grading policy, assignment deadlines, exam dates, etc.) as the curriculum and/or program require(s).
Civil Society Point Verification Form

(May be photocopied)

On ___________________________ (date, day of week and time) at ___________________________ (time and place), I completed the following activity ___________________________ (name or description of activity) for ____________ (number of points) Civil Society Points.

I certify that I, ___________________________ (print name) completed this activity and that all information is truthful.

__________________________ (signature)

__________________________ (date)

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