Date: May 14, 2010
Course Number: EST 221
Course Title: Introduction to American Government

☐ New Course OR ☒ Changes in existing course (check all that apply):

☐ Prefix
☐ Number
☐ Credits
☐ Title

☐ Description
☐ Pre-requisite(s)
☐ Co-requisite(s)

☐ Shared Resources
☐ Course Format
☐ Content
☐ Semester Offered

This course meets the General Education standards in the following knowledge and skills area (check all that apply):

☐ American History
☐ The Arts
☐ Basic Communication
☐ Humanities
☐ Mathematics
☐ Natural Sciences
☐ Other World Civilizations
☒ Social Sciences
☐ Western Civilization

Prequisites or co-requisite requirements:

☐ Prerequisites:
☐ Co-requisites:

Institutional Impact:

Anticipated Enrollment: 45 per semester

Technology and Classroom Resource Demands: Doc. camera and standard projection equipment; flexible seating to allow small group discussion
Computing Resources: X
Library Resources: X

Transportation Requirements:

Forest Properties or Field Practicum Facilities
Required:
Health and Safety Considerations:

Conditions or situations present in association with the course?  

Yes / No

1. Will substances with any of the following properties be used during instruction: flammability, toxicity, corrosivity, reactivity, registered pesticide, legally controlled, or other characteristics with the potential to cause harm or injury?  

   No

2. Will any physical hazards be present during instruction? (e.g., machines that need safety guards; razor blades or syringes; compressed gases, etc.).  

   No

3. Will any biological hazards be present during instruction? (e.g., handling animals (rabies or hantavirus); cultures or stocks of infectious agents (fungal spores, viruses, bacteria, etc.).  

   No

4. Will any radiation hazards be present during instruction? (e.g., radioisotopes, X-rays, ultraviolet rays, lasers, etc.).  

   No

5. Will any electrical equipment that, due to its design, location, or method of use, pose any threat to safety during instruction? (Give considerable thought to electrical use outdoors, or any potentially wet location.).  

   No

6. Will there be any personal safety issues related to the class? (e.g., due to time of day or location, at the end of any organized class exercise, will students be in danger of physical assault, etc.).  

   No

7. Will any students be driving official state or research sponsored land or water vehicles during any class or instructional exercise?  

   No

8. Will any type of personal protective equipment be necessary during class exercises? (e.g., hard-hats, eye/face protection, hearing protection, hand/foot protection, lab coat, visibility clothing, etc.)  

   No

If the answer was “Yes” to any of the HEALTH AND SAFETY questions, please explain:

CATALOG DESCRIPTION (Please provide using the precise format currently used in the ESF catalog, please do not exceed 500 characters):

EST 221 Introduction to American Government (3)  

Three contact hours per week.  Describes American political system, and its roles and functions in society.  Examines how political processes change over time, including the role of rhetoric and argumentation in policy development.  Explores critical analysis of political phenomena.  Fall.
Class time and location: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:00 AM -12:20 P.M. in 145 Baker

Professor: Dr. Sharon Moran  
Office/phone: Marshall 113, 470.6690  
Email: smoran@esf.edu

TA:  
Office/phone: 315.559.6637  
Email: cagavilo@syr.edu

Office hours: T 12:30-1:30 P.M.  
Office Hrs:  
W. 10-11 A.M, or email for appt.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This class provides an introduction to the American political system: the actors, institutions, and processes that shape the way our country is governed. The main goal of the course is to develop your ability to think about and analyze political phenomena.

You will become acquainted with competing theories that try to explain how key events or patterns develop. Although this is not a course in current events, I do encourage you to stay informed about the news. By the end of the course, you will understand how the American political system operates, and how it has changed over time. You will also know more about the forces that have shaped the system, in other words, what caused the change. While the specific information you learn in this course may fade over time, the skills you learn will stay with you.

The format of the course varies from session to session and includes a mix of short lectures, guest speakers, films, and group exercises. There may be some field trips (optional). On occasion, we will meet elsewhere, so please check email regularly and listen in class for announcements about changed locations.
COURSE OBJECTIVES:

This course will enable you to:

- Identify the key actors and dynamics within American politics, become familiar with terminology used
- Analyze political phenomena in different ways (conceptually, ethically, etc.)
- Discuss politics persuasively (i.e. make better arguments to convince others, especially those who don’t agree with you)
- Find and accessing the data needed for political/policy discourse
- Explain why “agents of change” continue to be active in American government
- Apply your learning to the “conventional wisdom” about American politics

READINGS:


Additional readings will also be assigned.

GRADING:

I. Assignments 40%
II. Exams - First exam 20%
    Final exam 20%
III. Class Participation 20%
I. **Assignments:** You will complete at least 10 assignments during the semester, and each one counts for 4% of the grade (40% total).

II. **Exams:** The exam format will involve a combination of multiple choice and short answer questions. Please submit candidate questions – extra credit for ones I use.

III. **Class participation:** A detailed sheet describing how class participation is graded follows the syllabus. Half of the participation grade is based on in-class exercises, and the other half is based on in-class discussions. **Attendance:** You will be expected to attend class regularly, and attendance will be taken periodically. Attendance does not figure directly in calculating grades; nonetheless, missing class will affect your ability to learn the material, participate, do the assignments, and do well on the exams – in short, everything else. If you do miss class for whatever reason, you are responsible for getting the notes, handouts, from another student. Note: The grading formula may be revised if circumstances warrant it.

**PROTOCOL, LATE ASSIGNMENTS, MAKE-UPS, and ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:**

Much of our class communication will happen through email, and we use the address on file with the Registrar, so check it at least twice daily. Classroom protocol will be discussed the first day and we will agree on some general guidelines. I propose the following: no eating in class unless you brought enough for everyone, and cell phones turned off. All class discussions are premised upon mutual respect. Political ideas of all kinds are up for discussion; *ad hominem* attacks and degrading other people is off-limits.

Assignments are due on their due dates, at the beginning of class, so do not miss class to finish an assignment. Any assignment submitted late will be penalized at the rate of one full letter grade per day (meaning, for example, A- become B-), and the penalty starts immediately. Exams are given on specified dates only.

Concerning academic dishonesty (a.k.a. cheating) don’t do it; if you find yourself even *considering* the idea of faking something, it is time to consider a leave of absence from school. Please familiarize yourself with the University’s policy. Not knowing what constitutes cheating is not an acceptable excuse, so if something even seems like it *might* be cheating, clarify it.
SPECIAL NEEDS:

If you have any special needs that you want me to address, contact me as soon as possible. This includes both documented needs (e.g. learning disabilities) as well as something more generic (e.g. shy about talking in groups). The TA and I can only help if you decide to discuss it with one of us; waiting until it has already become a problem misses the point. We aren’t specialists but we are able to steer you toward people who are, so please feel free to discuss those issues with me. I am also willing to adjust my classroom practice to help you learn more effectively.

DATES, READINGS, and TOPICS:

Note: All readings below are in We the People. Reading should (usually) be done by 1st date listed.

Week 1: T 9/1 and Thurs. 9/3 Introduction and Ch.1 American Political Culture
Organization, overview, expectations, group discussions, agreement on classroom guidelines.

Week 2: T 9/8 and Thurs. 9/10 Ch. 2 The Founding and the Constitution

Week 3: T 9/15 and Thurs. 9/17 Ch. 3 Federalism

Week 4: T 9/22 and Thurs. 9/24 Ch. 4 Civil Liberties

Week 5: T 9/29 and Thurs. 10/1 Ch. 5 Civil Rights

Week 6: T 10/6 and Thurs. 10/8 Ch. 6 Public Opinion
Week 7: T 10/13 EXAM and Thurs. 10/1 Ch. 7 The Media

Week 8: T 10/14 and Thurs. 10/16 Ch. 8 Participation and Voting

Week 9: T 10/21 and Thurs. 10/23 Ch. 9 Political Parties

Week 10: T 10/28 and Thurs. 10/30 Ch. 10 Campaigns and Elections

Week 11: T 11/04 and Thurs. 11/06 Ch.11 Groups and Interests

Week 12: T 11/11 and Thurs. 11/13 Ch.12 Congress

Week 13: T 11/18 and Thurs. 11/20 Ch. 13 The Presidency

Week 14: T 11/25 Ch.14 Bureaucracy in a Democracy and Thurs. 11/27 NO CLASS (T-GIVING)

Week 15: T 12/02 Ch. 15 The Federal Courts and Thurs. 12/04 Review Session

DECEMBER 8 – 12 FINAL EXAM PERIOD (our exact date t.b.a.)

Participation Grading Guide*
EST 221 Introduction to American Government
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Discussion</th>
<th>Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td><strong>Excellent</strong>: leads discussion; offers analysis and comments; always has ideas on theme of the reading; takes care not to dominate; asks probing questions</td>
<td>Clearly has done and prepared questions on virtually all readings; intelligently uses this understanding and these questions in the discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td><strong>Very Good</strong>: thoughtful comments and questions for the most part; willing, able and frequent contributor</td>
<td>Has done most readings; provides competent analysis of reading when prompted by others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><strong>Good</strong>: has basic grasp of key concepts and occasional ideas on the main theme of the reading; arguments are sporadic and at times incomplete or poorly supported; unwilling to ask questions</td>
<td>Displays familiarity with most readings, but tends not to analyze them or to relate them to course material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><strong>Somewhat Poor</strong>: remarks in class marred by misunderstandings of key concepts; seldom contributes effectively to discussion of the main theme; often digresses in unhelpful ways; sporadic</td>
<td>Actual knowledge of material is outweighed by improvised comments and remarks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 – 1</td>
<td><strong>Poor</strong>: rarely speaks; parrots text or comments of others</td>
<td>Little to no apparent familiarity with assigned material</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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*Adapted from George Hoberg, University of British Columbia and William D. Coleman, McMaster University.*