

American Government and the Constitution
PLS 1153, Section 005
Spring 2009, Wednesday 6 to 8:30 p.m.

Amber (Williams) Lusvardi, Instructor
E-mail: anwilliams@eiu.edu
Meeting times by appointment

Course description

An introduction to the core principles of American government, the U.S. Constitution, the courts, and political institutions. Students should learn throughout the course how we arrived at our current political condition, how to participate in the political process and how to critically analyze political policies and institutions.

Text

Larry Berman and Bruce Allen Murphy. **Approaching Democracy**. 6th Ed.

Classroom policies

- ◆ All assignments are to be turned in to me personally unless other arrangements have been made in advance of the due date. No assignments should be submitted to me via e-mail unless I have given you prior approval to do so.
- ◆ All assignments should be handed in on time. Assignments handed in late will be deducted 10 percentage points for each day it is handed in past the due date.
- ◆ Please turn off all cell phones and other electronic devices prior to coming to class.

Attendance and participation

- ◆ Attendance will be taken in class each day. If you arrive late and are not in the room when attendance is taken, you will be marked absent.
- ◆ Participation is absolutely necessary to facilitate class discussion and will be a part of your final grade. You need to come to class in order to receive participation points.
- ◆ Make-up tests will be provided for **University-approved** absences, and should be scheduled immediately after the absence.

Disabilities

Students with a disability that requires special arrangements should notify me during the first week of class.

Academic integrity

Students must comply with the university's Student Conduct Code on academic integrity, which can be seen at www.eiu.edu/~judicial/student_conduct_code.html. Violation of the student conduct code will result in the grade of an F for the assignment or exam and notification of the incident to the Office of Judicial Affairs.

Grading

Your final grade will be based on three exams, two short writing assignments, five unannounced quizzes, and participation.

- ◆ Exams (300), the three exams will be worth 100 points each and will cover lecture material as well as material from the readings in the textbook. Exams will be a combination of multiple choice and essay. Study guides will be given.
- ◆ Writing assignments (100), you will be required to complete two short critical thinking assignments worth 50 points each during the semester. Additional information will be given about the assignments in class. Due dates are noted on the course outline.
- ◆ Unannounced quizzes (50), five ten-point quizzes will be given during class throughout the semester and will cover material from the previous class session.
- ◆ Participation (20), you need to attend class and be involved in class discussions.

Total points for the course = 470

Grading Scale:

A = 470-423

B = 422-376

C = 375-329

D = 328-282

F = 281-below

Course outline, subject to change:

Jan. 14 – Introduction, Chapter 1

Jan. 21 – The Constitution, Chapter 2

Jan. 28 – The Constitution/Federalism, Chapter 3

Feb. 4 – Congress, Chapter 4

Feb. 11 – The Presidency, Chapter 5

Feb. 18 – **Exam 1**

Feb. 25 – The Judiciary, Chapter 6

March 4 – The Bureaucracy, Chapter 7

March 11 – Public Opinion and Interest Groups, Chapter 8 and 11

March 18 – Spring break

March 25 – Political Parties, Chapter 9 *Writing assignment 1 due*

April 1 – **Exam 2**

April 8 – Participation, Voting and Elections, Chapter 10

April 15 – The Media, Chapter 12

April 22 – Civil Liberties, Chapter 13 *Writing assignment 2 due*

April 29 – Civil Rights, Chapter 14

May 6 – Finals week **Exam 3** at 7:30 p.m.