

American National Government 21:790:201:01  
Monday 2:30-3:50pm/Wednesday 1:00-2:20pm  
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Fall 2018  
Classroom: Hill Hall 104  
Office: Hill Hall 724  
Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday 1:30-2:30pm  
Wednesday 3:00-4:00pm

### Understanding American Government

Susan Welch, John Gruhl, John Comer, and Susan M. Rigdon  
Belmont, California: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning  
14<sup>th</sup> edition

### **Course Description**

American National Government examines the concepts and theories regarding the policy making process in American federal government. Topics include political ideas; constitutional development and law; institutions of government; political parties, elections and voting behavior; the significance of interest groups divided along race, class, gender and other lines; and the role of the media and public opinion. Comparisons with other political systems and generalizations are applied to several policy issues.

### **Participation Requirement**

Class participation will constitute a significant portion of the student's grade. This will be determined by the presentation of current events. Students should follow current news every day about Congress, the President, Supreme Court decisions, current public policy issues, or the political behavior of the American public. The focus of the news should be on the federal level of government and not the state or local level. News should be relevant to the topics of discussion during the semester. Students should read the elite press for news. This includes The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Christian Science Monitor, Time, Newsweek, or U.S. News and World Report. The News Hour on PBS (7:00-8:00 p.m. Mon.-Fri.) is another excellent source of information as is National Public Radio. Each time a student presents a news item it will be recorded for her or his participation grade. Students may record news items on DVD or access the internet to be reviewed by the professor to be shown in class.

### **Attendance Policy**

It is very important that students attend each class meeting; therefore, a strict attendance policy will be applied. More than two inexcusable absences will result in a reduction of the student's grade by one level for each inexcusable absence after the second. If the student knows in advance that he or she must miss more than two classes, it is recommended that the student register for another course. Excusable absences consist only of a personal illness, an illness of a student's child or a student's parent, or a death in the immediate family. Having to work is not an excuse to be absent. The University is designed to be the student's first priority. University recognized religious holidays may also be excused. The professor should be notified immediately should an excusable absence be necessary so that it might be recorded. The allowance for two emergency absences should not be construed as permission to be absent twice without legitimate reason.

Students are expected to have completed the assigned readings previous to class meetings in order to contribute to the discussions. Students are responsible for the text readings for the exams as well as the lecture notes.

Students are required to carefully adhere to the University's policies outlining academic integrity. Evidence of cheating on exams will receive an automatic failing grade and will be reported to the proper university authority. Students are expected to be respectful of other students and the professor. Lack of civility will not be tolerated. Turn off cell phones before entering the classroom. No talking or texting during class will be tolerated. Students needing special consideration for a disability should notify the professor with proper university documentation.

## Grading and Exams

Grades will be based on participation which is 10% of students' grades (this is determined by the presentation of news events and articles during class) and 3 multiple choice exams (30% each). Exams are scheduled for October 3, November 7, and the final exam is December 17, 3:00-6:00pm. The first two exams will be during the class period. The final is during final exams week as scheduled. The final exam is not comprehensive. No electronic equipment is permitted in the classroom during exams. Arrive on time for the final exam. Do not come late and expect the professor to wait for you when the other students have completed their exams. **There will be no extra credit opportunities. A grade earned is a grade received.** Do not ask to reschedule exams because of travel plans. Plan your travel so that your school responsibilities take priority. Do not miss exams. The department administrative assistant is not permitted to administer makeup exams. Makeups, which should be avoided at all costs, must be administered at the professor's convenience.

## Order of Readings and Lectures

Review of class requirements and introduction of class members

Distribution of syllabus

The Theoretical Foundations of the American Democracy (lecture)

Read: Welch Appendix A, The Declaration of Independence

The Introduction

The U.S. under the Articles of Confederation (lecture) Read: Welch, Chapter 1

The Federalists and the Anti-federalists (lecture)

Read: Welch: Chapter 2, Federalist #10 Appendix C, Federalist #51 Appendix D

The Constitution (lecture)

Read: Welch, Appendix B The Constitution of the United States of America

The Bill of Rights/Civil Liberties (lecture) Read: Welch, Chapter 13

Federalism (lecture) Read: Welch, Chapter 3

Civil Rights: Race (lecture), Gender (lecture), and Sexual Preference (lecture)

Read: Welch, Chapter 14, Appendix E, Gettysburg Address

Congress(lecture) Read: Welch, Chapter 9

The Presidency (lecture) Read: Welch, Chapter 10

The Bureaucracy (lecture) Read: Welch, Chapter 11

The Judiciary (lecture) Read: Welch, Chapter 12

Political Socialization (lecture) Read Welch: Chapter 4

Public Opinion (lecture) Read: Welch, Chapter 4

Voting, Participation, and Elections (lecture) Read: Welch, Chapter 8

The Media (lecture) Read: Welch, Chapter 5

Interest Groups (lecture) Read: Welch, Chapter 6

Political Parties (lecture) Read: Welch, Chapter 7