

**HAGERSTOWN COMMUNITY COLLEGE**  
**OFFICIAL COURSE SYLLABUS DOCUMENT**

**Course:** POL 101-01, American Government, 3 credits

**Times and Place:**

**Instructor:** Dr. Eric Schwartz

**Semester/Year:** Spring 2018

**Contact Information:** 240 500 2409, eschwartz@[hagerstowncc.edu](mailto:eschwartz@hagerstowncc.edu), BSH 135

Office hours: Monday & Wednesday: 1-2 p.m.

Tuesday & Thursday: 10:30-11:30

Thursday: 1-2 p.m.

**Course Description:** The basic course covers the structure and functions of the United States federal government. Emphasis is placed upon American constitutional development; the executive, legislative and judicial functions; and the interrelationship of these branches of the federal government. The growth and operation of political parties in the federal structure are also emphasized.

**Textbooks** By The People, Morone & Kersh. 2017

Additional required readings will be posted on Moodle.

**Student Learning Outcomes:** The student will be able to:

- A. Critically analyze and evaluate issues derived from the social sciences using appropriate methods.
- B. Demonstrate an understanding of how culture, society and diversity shape the role of the individual within society and human relations across cultures.
- C. Demonstrate understanding of the theoretical and historical underpinnings of the US Constitution.
- D. Critically examine the structures, processes and functions of US governmental institutions.
- E. Assess the various ways that the US government impacts its citizens.
- F. Illustrate how individuals can make a difference politically both locally and in the nation.

**Total Hours of Coursework:**

To earn one academic credit at HCC, students are required to complete a minimum of 37.5 clock hours (45 fifty-minute “academic” hours) of coursework per semester. Those hours of coursework may be completed through a combination of hours within the classroom and hours outside the classroom. Certain courses may require more than the 37.5 minimum hours of coursework per credit.

For most classes, students should expect to do at least 2 hours of coursework outside of class for each hour of in-class coursework.

**Course Content Objectives:**

This course will assist the student to:

\*demonstrate knowledge of basic principles of our system of government (such as democracy, republican form of government, federalism) and how these principles are based in the US Constitution

- \*examine the differences between a conservative and liberal ideology as well as discuss where the ideologies come from and how they come into play in politics
- \*evaluate how the diverse groups within our country make demands on government; these groups range from small, non-political groups to political parties
- \*examine who participates in the process, who votes and why they vote the way they do
- \*discuss how the media plays an integral role in politics
- \*critically analyze the role of Congress, the executive branch, the courts, and the bureaucracy in the formation of policies and laws
- \*discuss the role in government in protecting First Amendment freedoms
- \*discuss the role of government in insuring equal protection of the laws
- \*analyze the choices that those who govern have to make as to domestic and foreign policies

### **Assessment Procedures:**

- A. There will be two announced exams. The first exam is worth 100 points. The second exam is worth 200 points. The questions on the exams will be representative of the material covered in readings and lecture.
- B. There will be at least seven quizzes. The questions will be very brief. There are no make-up dates for quizzes, but the lowest two will be dropped. The quizzes are worth 100 points overall.
- C. Because attendance is a key factor in success I will take attendance each day. Please note that being on time for class and staying for the whole class are considered in the attendance grade. If a student accumulates three absences, he or she will be required to meet me during office hours to discuss the issue. Five absences will lower a student's grade one full letter grade. Six absences will lower the grade two letter grades, and so on. The college attendance policy can be found in the College catalog.
- D. Two essays will be required. The first paper will be worth 50 points. The second paper is worth 150 points. Further instructions about the papers will be distributed weeks before the papers are due. We will make extensive use of the Learning Support Center in the process of preparing these assignments.
- E. News journal: In order to emphasize how the political process and the various political institutions have an impact on the day-to-day lives of US citizens, students will be required to keep a notebook/journal on a topic of their choosing. You can scan through the table of contents of your text for a topic or make your selection in any manner. The topic you select should be one that is an on-going concern, not a one-shot news item. You are required to read thoroughly at least one article per week and once a week write in a news journal. Be prepared to discuss your news article in class. In your journal you should note the source of the article, summarize the information and comment on it.

The source should be a newspaper or news magazine, a scholarly journal or the Internet site of a newspaper or news magazine. There is no certain length required for these writings but they should demonstrate college-level thought and work. (One or two sentences is too short! One or two pages is too long.) These entries should be compiled as a computer file – and you should make sure that you have a back-up.

Students should expect to update the class about developments in their topics on a regular basis. This will be part of the regular discussion of current events.

At the end of the course you are required to write a summation/overview which should include as many of the following topics as apply (NOTE: THESE REFLECT THE OBJECTIVES OF THE COURSE)

1. how the basic principles of our system of government (such as democracy, republican form of government, federalism) played a role
2. how the US Constitution played a role (this would include First Amendment protections as well as Fourteenth Amendment protections)
3. how differences between a conservative and liberal ideology played a role
4. what groups within our country made demands on government in connection with your topic and how those demands helped the government make decisions
5. how the average citizen participated through voting or other means of participation and what impact that had
6. how the topic was covered by the media
7. how Congress played a role

8. how the executive branch played a role
9. how the courts played a role
10. how the bureaucracy played a role
11. how this topic was balanced with other domestic programs and policies
12. how this topic was balanced with other foreign programs and policies

You will be required to turn in the journal on the last day of class – not the exam day. The journals & summaries will be submitted via Moodle in computer file format.

Evaluating the journal: If you meet the following criteria you will get 100 points for this part of your grade:

You identify your topic by the third class.

You have at least one entry per week on your topic following the directions above.

You must conclude the journal with the summation as discussed above.

You must have shared in class on a regular basis about developments in your subject.

You **MUST** turn the journal in to me on the last day of class.

If, in my opinion, you have made an attempt at completing the assignment but have not fulfilled each and every one of the above criteria, you will get 70 points for this part of the grade. In other words, if your work product is average, your grade will be average.

If, in my opinion, you have not made an attempt to fulfill the requirements, you will get 50 points for this part of the grade.

Of course, if you do not do a journal, this part of the grade would be a 0.

If you add all of your points together you will be able to determine your grade for the class.

630-700=A  
 560-629=B  
 490-559=C  
 420-489=D  
 Below 420=F

**Course Policies:** In order to make our class run more smoothly, please try to honor the following:

1. Come to class on time. For one thing you'll miss quizzes if you are late. In addition, tardiness will be factored in to your attendance/participation grade.
2. The college attendance policy can be found in the current college catalog.
3. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to make up missed work. If you must be absent, find a classmate from whom you can borrow notes and get assignments. **DO NOT CONTACT ME TO ASK "Did I miss anything?"**
4. You are expected to take exams on the days they are scheduled. If you have a legitimate reason to miss the exam, such as a business trip or an illness, please let me know **before** the exam. If you miss the exam and do not communicate with me I am not required to allow you to make up the exam.
5. If you have any special classroom needs, such as taping lectures, please see me privately.
7. Listen to television, radio, emergency alerts, etc. for announcements of school closings due to inclement weather.
8. Don't assume you are withdrawing from class simply by not showing up--read HCC policies.
9. Bring your book to class. (Yes, you do need to buy the book.)
10. Read the newspaper and news magazines. We will have class discussions about current events.
11. Turn off your cell phones during class. If you are using a computer to take notes, please see me to discuss the arrangement.
12. I reserve the right to modify the course content and/or the evaluation (testing) procedure as deemed necessary.
13. All work in this class is done under the HCC Academic Integrity Policy.
15. Any behavior that is disruptive is prohibited. Example: Eating a meatball sandwich or potato chips in class is not a good idea.

16. Do not rely on reading scores on Moodle to determine your grade. Use the formula listed in the syllabus to figure your grade. Moodle works as a repository for grades, not a calculator.

17. **Bathroom breaks should be for emergencies. It's not permissible to just leave and re-enter class for trivial reasons. I notice and frown on this behavior. Bad behavior negatively affects your participation grade.**

**Services for Students with Special Needs: SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS:**

Reasonable accommodations are provided to qualified students based on current documentation. Contact the Coordinator of Disability Support Services at 301-790- 2800, ext. 273 to request accommodation.