Introduction to American Government
MWF 9:40-10:30 AM

Instructor: Kim Nguyen
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Office Hours: MW 11 AM-12 PM or by appointment
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Course Description and Objectives:
This course explores American politics at the national level and introduces students to the fundamentals of American government and politics. We will examine the constitutional origins of the American political system, the structure and function of its institutions, the political actors involved in government, and the critical relationships between government and citizens. The course has two related objectives. First, it aims to help students understand how government and politics are organized in the United States and how the political process functions in practice. Second, it is intended to help students develop skills in analyzing the decision-making processes of government and political issues. Students are strongly encouraged not only to develop informed opinions on American politics but also to discover the importance of American politics to their own lives.

Required Readings:
2. Additional course readings throughout the semester which are provided as handouts will be used to complement the lectures and your textbook.
3. Current events make up an important component of this course and are valuable supplements to the materials covered in the lectures and in your textbook. Hence, students will be required to stay informed about the current major (American national government) events making news. This can be done through several mediums:
   - Accessing the websites of major media organizations, such as CNN (cnn.com), New York Times (nytimes.com), The Washington Post (www.washingtonpost.com), Fox News (foxnews.com), USA Today (www.usatoday.com), etc.
   - Watching the news on television or listening to the news on the radio
   - Reading national and/or local newspapers

Attendance and Participation:
Students are expected to attend class on a regular basis, in a timely manner, and without disruption to other students. Those students who come in late, leave early, or do not show up for class will miss randomly administered quizzes. These students will also notice that their participation grade will reflect failure to follow attendance etiquette. In addition, during class, students are expected to turn off their cell phones or put them in vibrating/silent mode.

Students are expected to come to class having read the assigned readings and prepared for a discussion of the relevant topic(s). Students are also encouraged to ask any questions about the readings or current events.

In accordance with the philosophy of an institution for higher learning, our classroom will be a place where people can feel comfortable expressing diverse opinions without fear of ridicule or intimidation. Thus, it is expected that students will remain respectful of others, regardless of whether or not they share similar opinions and beliefs.
Grading:
Exam #1 (tentatively Friday, February 20)  26%
Exam #2 (tentatively Monday, March 30)  30%
Final Exam (Monday, May 4, 7:30-9:30 AM)  34%
Current Event Quizzes (10 short quizzes)  10%

Exams:
The exams will consist of multiple choice and short/long answer questions and will cover materials from both the lectures and readings.

Current Event Quizzes:
In order to encourage students to learn about contemporary political events, there will be 10 short quizzes about the current major (American national government) events making news in a given week. These quizzes will occur randomly (on any given day of the week). Note that students who come late to class when a quiz is in progress will not be given extra time to finish the quiz.

Make-ups:
I will only consider exam make-ups under specific and compelling documented emergencies (serious illness, accident, family crises, etc.). Make-up exams will consist of all essay questions.

There will be no make-ups for missed quizzes- NO EXCEPTIONS.

Academic Honesty:
The work done in this course is expected to be solely the effort of each individual student. Plagiarism (copying the work of another without giving proper credit) and cheating will not be tolerated. Any form of academic dishonesty will result in a zero for the course (regardless of prior class achievement) and will be reported to the Office of the Dean of Students.

Topics and Tentative Schedule of Readings:

January 12 (M)  Introduction to course

*The American System*
January 14-16 (WF)  Introduction to American Democracy (The American People)  Welch et al., Chapter 1
January 19 (M)  Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday
January 21 (W)  Introduction to American Democracy (continued)
January 23 (F)  The Constitution and Federalism  Welch et al., Chapter 2
January 26-30 (MWF)  The Constitution and Federalism (continued)

*Links between People and Government*
February 2-4 (MW)  Public Opinion  Welch et al., Chapter 3
February 6 (F)  News Media  Welch et al., Chapter 4
February 9 (M)  News Media (continued)
February 11-13 (WF)  Interest Groups  Welch et al., Chapter 5
February 16-18 (MW)  Political Parties  Welch et al., Chapter 6

**February 20 (F)**  Exam #1 (covers American Democracy through Political Parties)

February 23-25 (MW)  Mardi Gras Holiday
February 27 (F)  Elections
March 2-4 (MW)  Elections (continued)

_Institutions_
March 6 (F)  Congress
March 9-13 (MWF)  Congress (continued)
March 16-18 (MW)  Congress (continued)
March 20 (F)  The Presidency
March 23-27 (MWF)  The Presidency (continued)

_March 30 (M)  Exam #2 (covers Elections through The Presidency)_

April 1-3 (WF)  The Bureaucracy
April 6-10 (MWF)  Spring Break
April 13-17 (MWF)  The Judiciary

_American Citizens and Politics_
April 20-22 (MW)  Civil Liberties
April 24 (F)  Civil Rights
April 27 (M)  Civil Rights (continued)
April 29 (W)  Voting Rights

_May 4 (M)  Final Exam, 7:30-9:30 AM_