COURSE DESCRIPTION
The purpose of this course is to introduce you to the fundamentals of the United States government and its politics. In addition, this course will also attempt to sharpen your skills in critically evaluating and considering issues in U.S. politics. The course will be concerned with the foundations of the U.S. government (the constitution and federalism) and the ideals of democracy (civil liberties and civil rights), political institutions (public opinion, the news media, interest groups, parties, elections) and U.S. government institutions (congress, the presidency, the bureaucracy, and the courts).

COURSE OBJECTIVES
General Education courses are required to ensure that...“LSU graduates will demonstrate an understanding of factors associated with global interdependence, including economic, political, psychological, cultural and linguistic forces.” This course contributes to this goal by providing students with a basic understanding of American government, from inception through current times. My personal goal, as an instructor, is to provide a safe, productive, and professional environment in which individual thought is able to flourish. By the end of this course, you should have a good understanding of the principles, functions, structures and processes of the American political system, as well as how to critique and analyze these.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS
There will be two exams; one midterm and one final. The midterm will survey your knowledge on material covered up to that point. The final exam will survey your knowledge on material covered from the midterm through the last day of classes. Each exam will be worth 100 points and will consist of a combination at multiple choice, short answer and essay. In addition, there will be 6 random quizzes on the reading material throughout the semester, totaling 50 points. The lowest quiz grade will be dropped. You will also be required to write a final paper for the course, worth 50 points. More information on this paper will be provided later. Participation and attendance is required- if you miss more than 5 classes (unexcused) you will automatically receive an “F”.

Your final grade will be determined as follows:
TOTAL of 300 POINTS -Midterm Exam (100) + Final Exam (100) + Quizzes (50) + Final Paper (50):
270 – 300 (90%) A
240 – 269 (80%) B
210 – 239 (70%) C
180 – 209 (60%) D
Below 179 F

POLICIES
1. If a student engages in any form of academic dishonesty this will be reported to the Dean of Students. LSU’s policy on plagiarism is the following: “Plagiarism is defined to include any use of another’s work and submitting that work as one’s own. This means not only copying passages of writing or direct quotations but also paraphrasing or using structure or ideas without citation.” If you use material from a source (either one assigned from this class or something you’ve retrieved through outside research), you must cite it. Please review the University’s guidelines

2. The Americans with Disabilities Act requires that reasonable accommodations be provided for students with physical, cognitive, systemic, learning and psychiatric disabilities. Please contact me at the beginning of the semester if you are registered with disability services and need accommodation. You can find more information at http://appl003.lsu.edu/slas/ods.nsf/index.

3. Be on time. Do the readings before class. I will assume you have read the assigned materials and are ready to participate. Attendance is expected. We’ll cover topics that are not in the book and this material will be fair game on quizzes and exams. It is always in your best interest to attend class and be prepared. Any makeup exams or assignments will be allowed only in the case of university excused absences—documentation must be provided. Please do not engage in disruptive behavior (e.g. cell phones, side conversations etc.) during class.

4. About me: I am currently a fifth year PhD. Candidate in American Political Science. You may call me Cassie if you prefer- I am not a doctor yet. I received my BS in Psychology (concentration: music performance, minor: business) and my MA in Experimental Psychology from Appalachian State University; my research primarily uses psychological theories to explain political behavior. I am only in my office during office hours; however, I am always willing to make an appointment or discuss anything but grades through email… a virtual open door policy, if you will. Keep in mind that I have been and am still a student; be honest and communicate with me if you have any concerns and I will do everything in my power to address them appropriately.

REQUIRED READING
All other materials will be provided on Moodle. You are required to read the articles/text assigned on a date PRIOR to coming to class and you should be ready to discuss it and/or ask questions.

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WEEKLY SCHEDULE
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THE AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

Week 1- In the beginning...
Wednesday 1/15: Introduction
Friday 1/17: Introduction to American Politics/Research Methods Chapter 1 Essentials

Week 2- The Constitution and Federalism
Monday 1/20: MLK day- no class
Wednesday 1/22: The Constitution Chapter 2 Essentials
Friday 1/24: Federalism Chapter 3 Essentials

Week 3- Civil Rights and Civil Liberties
Monday 1/27: Liberties Chapter 4 Essentials
Wednesday 1/29: Rights Chapter 5 Essentials
Friday 1/31: Review and Catch up for first three weeks
GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS

Week 4 - Congress
Monday 2/3: Chapter 6 Essentials
Wednesday 2/5: TBA
Friday 2/7: TBA

Week 5 - The Presidency
Monday 2/10: Chapter 7 Essentials
Wednesday 2/12: TBA
Friday 2/14: TBA

Week 6 - The Executive and Federal Bureaucracy
Monday 2/17: Chapter 8 Essentials
Wednesday 2/19: TBA
Friday 2/21: TBA

Week 7 - The Judiciary
Monday 2/24: Chapter 9 Essentials
Wednesday 2/26: TBA
Friday 2/28: EXAM REVIEW TBA

END OF MATERIAL THAT WILL BE ON THE MIDTERM EXAM

POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

Week 8 - Midterm Review
Monday 3/3: MARDI GRAS HOLIDAY- NO CLASS
Wednesday 3/5: MARDI GRAS HOLIDAY- NO CLASS
Friday 3/7: Midterm exam review/Catch up

Week 9 - Midterm - Public Opinion and the News Media
Monday 3/10: MIDTERM EXAM
Wednesday 3/12: Public Opinion Chapter 10 Essentials
Friday 3/14: News Media TBA

Week 10 - Political Parties and Interest Groups
Monday 3/17: Parties Chapter 11 Essentials
Wednesday 3/19: Interest Groups TBA
Friday 3/21: Catch up

Week 11 - Campaigns, Elections, Voting
Monday 3/24: Chapter 12 Essentials
Wednesday 3/26: TBA
Friday 3/28: TBA

POLICY/SELECTED TOPICS
Week 12- Social and Economic Policy
Monday 3/31: Chapter 13 Essentials
Wednesday 4/2: TBA
Friday 4/4: TBA

Week 13- Foreign and Defense Policy
Monday 4/7: Chapter 14 Essentials
Wednesday 4/9: TBA
Friday 4/11: TBA

Week 14- Spring Break
Monday 4/14: SPRING BREAK- NO CLASS
Wednesday 4/16: SPRING BREAK- NO CLASS
Friday 4/18: SPRING BREAK- NO CLASS

Week 15- Mock Debates
Monday 4/21: Library research
Wednesday 4/23: Debate!
Friday 4/25: Discussion of the debates

Monday 4/28: LAST DAY OF CLASS- FINAL PAPERS DUE optional exam review session

FINAL EXAM: THURSDAY MAY 8th 10:00am-12:00pm

*Information on this syllabus is subject to change. Any changes will be announced in class and/or through your LSU email; it is your responsibility to be aware of these changes and turn in work (etc.) at the appropriate time.