

Virginia Military Institute  
Department of International Studies and Political Science  
PO 314-01: American Government  
MAJ Howard Sanborn, Instructor

Course Information

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Class Time: TTh 1425 - 1540

Office Hours: I maintain an open door policy. You can make an appointment in person, by phone or, preferably, by e-mail. Do feel free to stop by with any questions or concerns you may have. Cadets with scheduled appointments, however, will receive preference.

Course Goals

This class is an introduction to the institutions and processes of the American Government. Students will learn why our government was designed and how that design has evolved over time. We will discuss the branches of government and how they interact with one another. We will also discuss how and why Americans vote as they do, and conclude with an assessment of the United States' system of elections.

Requirements and Grading

There will be two tests and a final exam. Each test will be worth **10% (20% total)** of your grade. The final exam will be worth **30%** of your grade; it will be cumulative, but will focus a good deal on voting and elections.

Second, you must make three current events presentations over the course of the term. These presentations are worth **5% each (15% total)**. They should be about 5 minutes long and can be on any topic, **so long as it relates to the politics or government of the United States**. The presentation should be based on a report from a credible news source. You should submit a 500-word reaction paper at the beginning of the class period on the day you make your presentation. The first 200 words should be spent summarizing, the next 300 words should be your assessment of the issue and why you think it is important and interesting. I will not accept electronic copies of these reaction papers; **you must turn in a hard copy to me in class, no excuses**. You will lose a full grade for each day this is late. If you have any questions about whether a topic is appropriate, please contact me.

Third, you will write a series of reaction papers to essays in the New Federalist Papers. Your job will be to respond to the position taken in these essays. Your responses should be at least 900 words in length. Spend the first 350 words summarizing the chapter, and then use the next 550 words to agree or disagree with the author. You can complete up to six of these papers; I will take your top five (5% each; 25% total). I will hand out a schedule of due dates on a separate piece of paper.

For all written assignments, note the word count at the top of the page and certify the accuracy of your count with your initials. Word counts do not include your name, quotes from the author, or bibliography.

Discussion (**10%**) makes up the final component of your grade. You should never be at a loss to say something. Discuss issues or concerns you had with that day's reading. Relate the reading to current events; with the campaign season, there should be much to talk about. Compare the reading for the day to the reading from a previous day. I really want you to talk out some of the ideas you have; it is often the best way to process some of the more "heavy" topics we will cover. If I get the sense that the class is not doing the reading, I reserve the right to give unannounced quizzes that will factor into your discussion grade.

Attendance is, of course, mandatory. If you have to miss class for any reason, be sure to contact me well in advance.

Required Texts:

American Government: Power and Purpose (Brief 10<sup>th</sup> edition) (Paperback) by Theodore Lowi, Benjamin Ginsberg and Kenneth Shepsle. (2009). ISBN-13: 978-0-393-11384-6.

American Government: Readings & Cases (17th Edition) (Paperback) by Peter Woll (Author). Longman; 17 edition (February 18, 2007). ISBN-10: 0321473140. ISBN-13: 978-0321473141.

The Federalist Papers (Signet Classics) (Mass Market Paperback) by Alexander Hamilton (Author), James Madison (Author), John Jay (Author). Signet Classics (April 1, 2003). ISBN-10: 0451528816. ISBN-13: 978-0451528810. (These are also located for free online. You can find a repository of the Federalist Papers at <http://www.foundingfathers.info/federalistpapers/fedi.htm>)

New Federalist Papers: Essays in Defense of the Constitution (Twentieth Century Fund Books) (Paperback) by Alan Brinkley (Author), Nelson W. Polsby (Author), Kathleen M. Sullivan (Author). Publisher: W. W. Norton & Company (January 1997). ISBN-10: 0393317374. ISBN-13: 978-0393317374.

Redistricting and Representation: Why Competitive Elections are Bad for America. (Paperback) by Thomas L. Brunell (2008). ISBN-13: 978-0-415-96453-1

**Note:** This syllabus is subject to change as the course moves on and issues arise.

I may also post additional readings. These and articles listed with an \* will be available on Angel.

**\*\*MAKE SURE YOU CHECK YOUR E-MAIL REGULARLY FOR ANY CHANGES OR ADDED READINGS**

Schedule

Tuesday, 01 September

*Introduction to the Course*

### **1. The Origins of American Government**

Thursday, 03 September

*Individuals*

Lowi, Chapter 1

Woll, pp 3-9 (Locke)

\*Putnam, *The Prosperous Community: Social Capital and Public Life*

\*Hardin, *Tragedy of the Commons*

Tuesday, 08 September

*The Founding*

Lowi Chapter 2

Woll pp 10-29 (Roche)

Thursday, 10 September

*Federalism*

Federalist Papers 16 and 17 (Hamilton), 39 and 45 (Madison)

Woll pp 58 – 61

Tuesday, 15 September

*Federalism*

Lowi pp 45 – 63

Woll pp 74 – 84

Thursday, 17 September

*Federalism*

Woll pp 84 – 105, pp 112 – 121 (Gideon v. Wainwright), pp 437 – 438 (the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment)

Tuesday, 22 September

*Separation of Powers*

Lowi pp 63 – 71

Federalist Papers 10 and 51 (Madison)

Thursday, 24 September

*The Bill of Rights*

Federalist Papers 84 (Hamilton)

Woll pp 108 – 112 (Madison)

Tuesday, 29 September

*Civil Liberties*

Lowi Chapter 4

Woll pp 121 – 133

Thursday, 1 October

**TEST 1**

## **2. The Institutions of American Government**

Tuesday, 06 October

*The Judiciary*

Woll pp 385-409

Federalist Papers 78 and 81 (Hamilton)

>>Pay close attention to Marbury v. Madison

Thursday, 08 October

*The Judiciary*

Lowi Chapter 8

Tuesday, 13 October

*The Judiciary: Right to Privacy and Judicial Interpretation*

Woll pp 151-167, pp 409 – 421

Thursday, 15 October

*The Executive: Origins*

Federalist Papers 70, 71, 73, 75 (Hamilton)

Woll pp 258 – 268

Tuesday, 20 October

*The Executive: Presidential Power*

Lowi Chapter 6

Thursday, 22 October

*The Executive: Character, Style, and Emergency Powers*

Woll pp 268 – 279, pp 282 – 306

Tuesday, 27 October

*The Bureaucracy*

Lowi Chapter 7

Woll pp 307 - 321

Thursday, 29 October

*Congress: Origins*

Federalist Papers #52-58, 64-66

Woll pp 355 – 358 (Burke), 372 – 383 (Mayhew and Fenno)

Tuesday, 03 November

*Congress: Organization and Processes*

Lowi Chapter 5

Tuesday, 05 November

*Congress: The Least Popular Branch*

Woll pp 358 – 371 (Fenno and Polsby)

Tuesday, 10 November

**TEST 2**

#### **4. Connections to the Public**

Thursday, 12 November

*Public Opinion and Voting Behavior*

Lowi Chapter 9

Margin of Error and Sampling, lecture

Tuesday, 17 November

*Political Parties*

Lowi Chapter 11

Woll pp 192 – 205 (Mayhew and Key)

Thursday, 19 November

*Voting: Turnout*

\*Downs, *An Economic Theory of Political Action in a Democracy*

Tuesday, 24 November

**No Class; Wednesday classes meet**

Thursday, 26 November

**No Class; Thanksgiving furlough**

Tuesday, 01 December

*Elections*

Lowi 290 – 310

Brunell Chapters 1 – 3

Thursday, 03 December

*Elections: Redistricting and Representation*

Brunell Chapters 4 and 5

Tuesday, 08 December

*Elections: Redistricting and Representation*

Brunell Chapters 6 and 7

Thursday, 10 December

*Representation*

\*Lipsitz, “The Possessive Investment in Whiteness.”

Additional Concerns:

Grades

I will not discuss grades over e-mail or in the classroom. I will only discuss them during a set appointment time. This is as much to respect your privacy as it is to organize the presentation of your marks.

Disabilities and Accommodations

Please let me know within the first week of class if any of you require assistance or special consideration. I can make accommodations for those who need them but must be informed of these in advance. Any requests for accommodation based on a disability must be documented with the Registrar's office.

Turning in Assignments

You must turn your assignments in to me at the beginning of the class on which they are due. I will not accept electronic copies unless otherwise noted.

Academic Honesty

All work completed in your name must be yours and yours alone. Any work you borrow or ideas you gather from other sources must be cited properly. Please see me if you are concerned about proper citation style.

Any attempt to present someone else's work as your own will be met with the harshest consequences. You will receive an F for the assignment and an F for the course. For further information, please see the College's webpage.

Work for Grade Policy

Development of the spirit as well as the skills of academic inquiry is central to the mission of VMI's Academic Program. As a community of scholars, posing questions and seeking answers, we invariably consult and build upon the ideas, discoveries, and products of others who have wrestled with related issues and problems before us. We are obligated ethically and in many instances legally to acknowledge the sources of all borrowed material that we use in our own work. This is the case whether we find that material in conventional resources, such as the library or cyberspace, or discover it in other places like conversations with our peers.

Academic integrity requires the full and proper documentation of any material that is not original with us. It is therefore a matter of honor. To misrepresent someone else's words, ideas, images, data, or other intellectual property as one's own is stealing, lying, and cheating all at once.

Because the offense of improper or incomplete documentation is so serious, and the consequences so potentially grave, the following policies regarding work for grade have been adopted as a guide to cadets and faculty in upholding the Honor Code under which all VMI cadets live:

**Cadets' responsibilities**

"Work for grade" is defined as any work presented to an instructor for a formal grade or undertaken in satisfaction of a requirement for successful completion of a course or degree requirement. All work submitted for grade is considered the cadet's own work. "Cadet's own work" means that he or she has composed the work from his or her general accumulation of knowledge and skill except as clearly and fully documented and that it has been composed especially for the current assignment. No work previously submitted in any course at VMI or elsewhere will be resubmitted or reformatted for submission in a current course without the specific approval of the instructor.

In all work for grade, failure to distinguish between the cadet's own work and ideas and the work and ideas of others is known as plagiarism. Proper documentation clearly and fully identifies the sources of all borrowed ideas, quotations, or other assistance. The cadet is referred to the VMI-authorized handbook for rules concerning quotations, paraphrases, and documentation.

In all written work for grade, the cadet must include the words "HELP RECEIVED" conspicuously on the document, and he or she must then do one of two things: (1) state "none," meaning that no help was

received except as documented in the work; or (2) explain in detail the nature of the help received. In oral work for grade, the cadet must make the same declaration before beginning the presentation. Admission of help received may result in a lower grade but will not result in prosecution for an honor violation.

Cadets are prohibited from discussing the contents of a quiz/exam until it is returned to them or final course grades are posted. This enjoinder does not imply that any inadvertent expression or behavior that might indicate one's feeling about the test should be considered a breach of honor. The real issue is whether cadets received information, not available to everyone else in the class, which would give them an unfair advantage. If a cadet inadvertently gives or receives information, the incident must be reported to the professor and the Honor Court.

Each cadet bears the responsibility for familiarizing himself or herself thoroughly with the policies stated in this section, with any supplementary statement regarding work for grade expressed by the academic department in which he or she is taking a course, and with any special conditions provided in writing by the professor for a given assignment. If there is any doubt or uncertainty about the correct interpretation of a policy, the cadet should consult the instructor of the course. There should be no confusion, however, on the basic principle that it is never acceptable to submit someone else's work, written or otherwise, formally graded or not, as one's own.

The violation by a cadet of any of these policies will, if he or she is found guilty by the Honor Court, result in his or her being dismissed from VMI. Neither ignorance nor professed confusion about the correct interpretation of these policies is an excuse.

### **Department of International Studies & Political Science Work for Grade Policy**

Work for Grade in this department is generally of the following types.

1. Written quizzes, tests, or examinations
2. Book reviews
3. Research Papers, policy memoranda, briefing papers, and discourse analysis-- identification and analysis of the critical differences in the findings and opinions of scholars on issues of interest to the discipline.

Cadets are permitted and encouraged to study with their peers to prepare for quizzes, tests and exams. However, when a cadet takes either written or oral quizzes, tests, and examinations, answers must be his/her own work without help from any other source including notes or consultation with others.

In the case of book reviews, research and other papers, as described in "2" and "3" above, research and composing of such works must be done by the cadet alone. Cadets are permitted to use spell and grammar-checking facilities.

IS cadets are encouraged to make use of all VMI tutoring services to receive critical comments (defined above). Cadets who do so and mark "Help Received" will not receive a lower grade on an assignment. Cadets are also permitted to seek critical comments on their written work from their peers. However, proof-reading and editing (**defined above**) of a cadet's written work is not permitted.

Any exceptions to these rules, including the use of tutors, collaboration among cadets, and the use of computer style, spell and grammar checkers; must be explained in writing by the course instructor. Instructors are at liberty to stipulate exceptions only with the written approval of their department head.

**If you have any questions about the application of these rules, consult your instructor. Do not leave anything to chance.**

**Colonel James J. Hentz, Professor and Head**