

# GOVT 201-01 Intro to American Government and Politics

Fall 2015, CRN 12388

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*Course Meetings:* MWF 11:00-11:50am, 1 Morton Hall

*Office Hours:* T 12:00n-1:30pm, F 2:00-3:30pm, and by appointment

## 1. Course description

Welcome to GOVT 201. This course is an introduction to the American political system, its institutions, people, and processes. It's also a lot more. In addition to learning about the system's basic features, this course provides opportunities for you to become a more careful thinker, speaker, listener, and writer—you'll also get a small taste of what it's like to do political science research. Thinking, speaking, listening, writing, and researching: Putting effort into developing these skills not only will help you succeed in this course and others, but it also will help you become a more effective participant in the W&M community and the world beyond campus.

Substantively, the course reaches past the here and now of news sound bites to help you understand how current events—especially puzzling ones!—reveal more general and enduring features of the American political system. In all, we will have much to learn, and, as the syllabus describes, we will engage the course material from numerous angles. My main request is that you come to class prepared each day to think hard about the interesting topics we will explore and to have lively discussions with me and your classmates about the material.

## 2. Course materials

This book is required:

- Kenneth Janda, Jeffrey M. Berry, Jerry Goldman, and Deborah Schildkraut. 2016. *The Challenge of Democracy: American Government in Global Politics (13th ed.)*. Boston: Cengage Learning. ISBN 9781285852973. This book appears on the syllabus as “COD.”

We also will use a set of on-line resources, known as MindTap, which accompany the *COD*. Buying a new copy of the book automatically provides you with access to MindTap. There are other methods available to purchase MindTap access as well, and I will discuss those in class so you are aware of all your options.

Other readings or materials will be handed out in class or posted to the course Blackboard site.

## 3. Class expectations

### 3.1 Grading

I will calculate course grades based on the following items. You will have numerous opportunities to demonstrate what you have learned in this class. Details on each assignment will be forthcoming.

Weight	Item
25%	Class engagement
	Regular attendance & participation (15%)
	Seminar discussions (5%)
	Team debates (5%)
25%	Writing
	Seminar essay (10%)
	Research project essay (15%)
25%	Midterm exam
25%	Final exam
Extra credit: 1%	Optional participation in the GOVT Omnibus Study

I will base final course grades on the following scale, with partial-percents typically rounded to the nearest full percent: A 93-100, A- 90-92, B+ 88-89, B 83-87, B- 80-82, C+ 78-79, C 73-77, C- 70-72, D+ 68-69, D 63-67, D- 60-62, F <60.

Finally, because errors sometimes creep into grade calculations—and on rare occasions papers become lost as they are handed in—please keep a copy of all work you submit until I have processed final grades.

### 3.2 Brief description of course assignments

More details on these assignments, including specific expectations for grading, will be posted on Blackboard and discussed in class.

**Regular attendance and participation:** Attending and actively participating in class each day are essential components of this class. Everyone should arrive prepared to have thoughtful and energetic discussions about the class material. If generally you are shy in classes you should see me immediately so I can help you overcome that fear of speaking out. Doing these three specific things will help you prepare to participate in class each day.

- Read the discussion questions I will post on Blackboard for each topic.
- Do the readings while thinking about the discussion questions I have posted.
- Prepare some notes on the discussion questions, and bring them to class.

**Seminar discussions:** On four separate occasions this semester we will run class in a smaller seminar format, which will allow us to explore some particular issues in depth and in a more free-flowing set of conversations. For each seminar, half the class will participate in the seminar discussion and the other half will listen and then have a chance to offer reactions at the end of the class. By the end of the semester, then, each person will have been at the seminar table twice and in the ring of listeners twice.

**Seminar essay:** This assignment will provide you with an opportunity to write a brief argumentative essay that reacts to the discussion and the readings associated with one of the seminar sessions. One seminar essay is required. A second essay is optional and you may complete it if you would like to try to improve your grade. If you choose to complete both essays, I will calculate your seminar essay mark by taking the average score across both papers. If you only complete the first essay, the score on that paper will be what I record for your seminar essay grade.

**Team debates:** In the middle of the semester we will have three class sessions organized as debates in which two teams will square off to debate a topic. Each team will consist of 5-6 students (depending on

how large the class ends up being). Each person will participate in one debate as a debater, and participate in the others as an audience member who will ask questions of the debaters and who, at the end of the debate, will complete a ballot explaining which side was most persuasive.

**Research project essay:** This writing assignment, which will be brief but a little longer than the seminar essays, will provide you with an opportunity to learn how to use quantitative evidence to help support your claims in a written paper. As part of this assignment, I will show you how to present excellent data visualizations as well as how to write persuasively and clearly about those visualizations in your prose.

**Midterm and final exams:** These exams will be completed in class. They will contain objective questions based on resources in MindTap and short answer questions that I will write that draw on readings and class discussions. The exams will not contain any long essay questions.

**Optional extra credit for participating in the GOVT Omnibus Study:** The Department of Government has launched a collaborative subject pool for survey and experimental research conducted by students and faculty. To help introduce you to the field of political science and earn extra credit for this course, you will have the opportunity to participate as a subject in a research project this semester. Doing so will help contribute to the efforts of your fellow W&M students and faculty members in Government. Completing the requirements to earn extra credit will involve taking a brief survey and participating in a session with student or faculty researchers during a 2-3 week window that will occur sometime between October and December. It will involve about an hour of your time. An alternative assignment will be offered to students who do not want to participate in the Omnibus Project or who are not old enough to participate (you must be 18 years of age), but who still would like to seek extra credit. The maximum amount of extra credit available is 1 percentage point toward your final semester grade.

### **3.3 Appropriate use of technology in class**

Please do not let your laptops or other electronic devices distract you, your fellow classmates, or me during our in-class work. Students who use electronic devices in class inappropriately suggest that they possess neither the intellectual focus nor the respect for others needed to do real professional work. Such behavior will undercut your attendance and participation grade in this class. Further, a mounting body of research has shown that students learn less when they rely on laptops and other electronic devices for note-taking in class. I would strongly encourage you to consider taking hand-written notes, as your grade will likely improve as a result.

### **3.4 Academic misconduct**

I begin by assuming academic misconduct will not become an issue in this class. If it does, for any questions about policies regarding cheating, plagiarism, or other types of academic dishonesty please see the William & Mary Honor Council's web site and the discussion of the Honor Code in the Student Handbook. If I discover a student cheating I will initiate an Honor Council proceeding and, at a bare minimum, recommend that the student receive an F for the course.

### **3.5 What you can expect from me**

So far I have described what I expect from you. But what can you expect from me? Several things. First, I will not ask you to do things that waste your time. I am convinced that students respond best when professors encourage them to think hard about interesting ideas and questions. I will work all semester to create that kind of environment. Second, I will give you lots of honest feedback in class discussions, office hours, email exchanges, and on your written work. Finally, I promise to treat you

with respect. I anticipate that we will sometimes disagree about government and politics this semester. In fact, I hope we do because that will make the course more interesting. I will not penalize you if you do not embrace my political beliefs, nor will I reward you simply because we happen to agree on political matters.

## 4. Schedule of topics, readings, and assignments

We will adjust this schedule as needed.

BB = Reading is on Blackboard

Other important dates: The drop-add deadline is Sept. 4; the withdraw deadline is Oct. 23.

### 4.1 Introduction

W 8/26	Course overview and introduction
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### 4.2 Foundations

F 8/28	Values in tension <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>COD</i>, Ch. 1 Freedom, Order, or Equality?</li> </ul>
M 8/31	Models of democracy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>COD</i>, Ch. 2 Majoritarian or Pluralist Democracy?</li> </ul>
W 9/2	Forming a constitution—Historical antecedents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>COD</i>, Ch. 3 The Constitution (pp. 51-60) and Appendix: The Declaration of Independence (pp. A1-A3)</li> </ul>
F 9/4	Forming a constitution—The finished product and ratification <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>COD</i>, Ch. 3 The Constitution (pp. 61-79) and Appendix: The Constitution of the United States (pp. A3-A18)</li> </ul>
M 9/7	Forming a constitution—Launching a new nation: Tensions and uncertainties <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>COD</i>, Ch. 3. The Constitution (pp. 79-83)</li> <li>Joseph J. Ellis. 2000. Ch. 1 The duel. <i>Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation</i>. pp. 20-47. BB</li> </ul>
W 9/9	Seminar essay #1 discussion and seminar format discussion
F 9/11	The nation's federalist system <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>COD</i>, Ch. 4 Federalism</li> </ul>
M 9/14	The nation's federalist system (cont.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>James M. Cole, Deputy Attorney General. Memorandum for All United States Attorneys. Subject: Guidance Regarding Marijuana Enforcement. <a href="http://www.justice.gov/iso/opa/resources/3052013829132756857467.pdf">http://www.justice.gov/iso/opa/resources/3052013829132756857467.pdf</a></li> </ul>
W 9/16	The Bill of Rights and subsequent amendments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>COD</i>, Ch. 15 Order and Civil Liberties</li> </ul>
F 9/18	The Bill of Rights and subsequent amendments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>COD</i>, Ch. 16 Equality and Civil Rights</li> </ul>
M 9/21	Seminar A on foundations: Democracy and inequality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review relevant sections of previous readings from the <i>COD</i>.</li> <li>Adam Bonica, Nolan McCarty, Keith T. Poole, and Howard Rosenthal. 2013. Why hasn't democracy slowed rising inequality? <i>Journal of Economic Perspectives</i> 27(3): 103-124. BB</li> </ul>

W 9/23	<p>Seminar B on foundations: Federalism and the rights of legal and illegal immigrants as debated in <i>Arizona v. United States</i> (2012).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review relevant sections of previous readings from the <i>COD</i>.</li> <li>• Lyle Denniston. 2012. Argument preview: Who controls immigrants' lives? <i>ScotusBlog</i>. <a href="http://www.scotusblog.com/2012/04/argument-preview-who-controls-immigrants-lives">http://www.scotusblog.com/2012/04/argument-preview-who-controls-immigrants-lives</a></li> <li>• The Oyez Project at IIT Chicago-Kent College of Law. 2015. <i>Arizona v. United States</i>, August 22. <a href="http://www.oyez.org/cases/2010-2019/2011/2011_11_182">http://www.oyez.org/cases/2010-2019/2011/2011_11_182</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>--Listen and read along as Justice Kennedy summarizes the opinion of the court.</li> <li>--Listen and read along as Justice Scalia summarizes his dissent.</li> <li>--Not required, but also available is the audio of the oral argument before the court.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Amy Howe. 2012. S.B. 1070: In plain English. <i>ScotusBlog</i>. June 25. <a href="http://www.scotusblog.com/2012/06/s-b-1070-in-plain-english/">http://www.scotusblog.com/2012/06/s-b-1070-in-plain-english/</a></li> </ul>
F 9/25	Seminar debrief and debate format discussion

### 4.3 Political behavior

M 9/28	<p>Opinions of the masses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>COD</i>, Ch. 5 Public Opinion and Political Socialization</li> </ul>
W 9/30	<p>Opinions of the masses (cont.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No new reading</li> </ul> <p>Old and new media</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>COD</i>, Ch. 6 The Media</li> <li>• Pew Research Center. 2014. Where news audiences fit on the political spectrum [interactive resource]. October 21. <a href="http://www.journalism.org/interactives/media-polarization/">http://www.journalism.org/interactives/media-polarization/</a></li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>*SEMINAR ESSAY #1 DUE BY 5:00pm*</b></p>
F 10/2	<p>Old and new media (cont.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No new reading</li> </ul>
M 10/5	<p>Who participates in politics and how they participate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>COD</i>, Ch. 7 Participation and Voting</li> </ul>
W 10/7	<p>Who participates in politics and how they participate (cont.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No new reading</li> </ul> <p>Who runs for office and how they are elected</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>COD</i>, Ch. 8 Political Parties. Focus on “Political Parties and Their Functions” (pp. 208-211), “The American Two-Party System” (pp. 218-222), and “The Model of Responsible Party Government” (p. 233).</li> <li>• <i>COD</i>, Ch. 9 Nominations, Elections, and Campaigns</li> </ul>
F 10/9	<p>Who runs for office and how they are elected (cont.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No new reading</li> </ul>
M 10/12	No class—fall break.
W 10/14	<p>Debate A. Resolved: That new media are likely to enhance the quality of political debate by helping citizens develop more informed opinions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review relevant sections of previous readings from the <i>COD</i>.</li> <li>• Tom Price. 2012. Do Facebook and Twitter influence voters? <i>CQ Researcher</i>. Oct. 12. BB</li> <li>• Pew Research Center. 2015. The evolving role of news on Twitter and Facebook. July 14. <a href="http://www.journalism.org/files/2015/07/Twitter-and-News-Survey-Report-FINAL2.pdf">http://www.journalism.org/files/2015/07/Twitter-and-News-Survey-Report-FINAL2.pdf</a></li> </ul>

F 10/16	<p>Debate B. Resolved: That strict policies designed to limit voter fraud will enhance the legitimacy of the electoral process in the U.S.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review relevant sections of previous readings from the <i>COD</i>.</li> <li>• Peter Katel. 2012. Should photo IDs be required at the ballot box? <i>CQ Researcher</i>. May 18. BB</li> <li>• Kenneth Jost. 2014. Are U.S. elections being conducted fairly? <i>CQ Researcher</i>. Feb. 21. BB</li> </ul>
M 10/19	<p>Debate C. Resolved: That the electoral college system for choosing the president should be abolished.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review relevant sections of previous readings from the <i>COD</i>.</li> <li>• Kenneth Jost and Greg Giroux. 2000. Electoral college: Should it be abolished? Should it be changed? <i>CQ Researcher</i>. December 8. BB</li> <li>• Richard A. Posner. 2012. In defense of the electoral college. <i>Slate</i>. November 12. <a href="http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/view_from_chicago/2012/11/defending_the_electoral_college.single.html">http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/view_from_chicago/2012/11/defending_the_electoral_college.single.html</a></li> <li>• David Stewart. 2013. Abolish the electoral college. <i>US News</i>. February 6. <a href="http://www.usnews.com/opinion/articles/2013/02/06/abolish-the-electoral-college">http://www.usnews.com/opinion/articles/2013/02/06/abolish-the-electoral-college</a></li> </ul>
W 10/21	Debate debrief and midterm exam Q&A
F 10/23	<b>*MIDTERM EXAM IN CLASS*</b>

#### 4.4 Institutions of government and governance

M 10/26	Research project overview and writing with empirical evidence discussion
W 10/28	<p>Legislative politics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>COD</i>, Ch. 11 Congress</li> </ul>
F 10/30	<p>Legislative politics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class guest: Prof. Francis Shen, University of Minnesota Law School <a href="https://www.law.umn.edu/facultyprofiles/shenf.html">https://www.law.umn.edu/facultyprofiles/shenf.html</a></li> <li>• Reading to be announced</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>*IDEA FOR RESEARCH PROJECT ESSAY DUE BY 5:00PM*</b></p>
M 11/2	<p>Presidential politics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>COD</i>, Ch. 12 The Presidency</li> <li>• Not required, but fun! Paul Manna and Jerry Goldman. 2009. <i>Presidential Baseball</i>. <a href="http://www.prezbaseball.org/">http://www.prezbaseball.org/</a></li> </ul>
W 11/4	<p>Presidential politics (cont.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stephen Skowronek. 1997. <i>The Politics Presidents Make</i>. Ch. 3 Structure and action. pp. 33-58. BB</li> </ul>
F 11/6	<p>Seminar A on institutions of government and governance: Polarization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Michael Barber and Nolan McCarty. 2013. Ch. 2 Causes and consequences of polarization. In Jane Mansbridge and Cathie Jo Martin (eds.) <i>Negotiating Agreement in Politics: American Political Science Association Task Force Report</i>. pp. 19-46. <a href="http://www.apsanet.org/Portals/54/APSA%20Files/publications/MansbridgeTF_FinalDraft.pdf">http://www.apsanet.org/Portals/54/APSA%20Files/publications/MansbridgeTF_FinalDraft.pdf</a></li> <li>• Pew Research Center. 2014. Political Polarization in the American Public. Overview. pp. 6-17. <a href="http://www.people-press.org/files/2014/06/6-12-2014-Political-Polarization-Release.pdf">http://www.people-press.org/files/2014/06/6-12-2014-Political-Polarization-Release.pdf</a></li> </ul>
M 11/9	<p>The party system</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>COD</i>, Ch. 8 Political Parties</li> </ul>
W 11/11	<p>Interest group politics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>COD</i>, Ch. 10 Interest Groups</li> </ul>
F 11/13	<p>Bureaucratic politics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>COD</i>, Ch. 13 The Bureaucracy</li> </ul>

M 11/16	Bureaucratic politics (cont.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lael R. Keiser, Vicky M. Wilkins, Kenneth J. Meier and Catherine A. Holland. 2002. Lipstick and logarithms: Gender, institutional context, and representative bureaucracy. <i>American Political Science Review</i> 96(3): 553-564. BB</li> </ul>
W 11/18	Seminar B on institutions of government and governance: Government by proxy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Paul L. Posner. 2002. Accountability challenges of third-party government. In Lester M. Salamon (ed.) <i>The Tools of Government: A Guide to the New Governance</i>. pp. 523-551. BB</li> <li>John J. DiIulio, Jr. 2014. Want better, smaller government? Hire another million federal bureaucrats. <i>Washington Post</i>, Aug. 29. <a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/want-better-smaller-governmenthire-1-million-more-federal-bureaucrats/2014/08/29/c0bc1480-2c72-11e4-994d-202962a9150c_story.html">https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/want-better-smaller-governmenthire-1-million-more-federal-bureaucrats/2014/08/29/c0bc1480-2c72-11e4-994d-202962a9150c_story.html</a></li> </ul>
F 11/20	Judicial politics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>COD</i>, Ch. 14 The Courts</li> </ul>
M 11/23	Judicial politics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lee Epstein and Andrew D. Martin. 2012. Is the Roberts court especially activist? <i>Emory Law Journal</i> 61: 737-758. BB</li> </ul> <p><b>*SEMINAR ESSAY #2 (OPTIONAL) DUE BEFORE YOU LEAVE FOR BREAK*</b>  <b>*NOTE: If you are not completing the Seminar Essay #2, I would encourage you to consider organizing your time so you can finish (or be almost finished with) the Research Project Essay by this time, which will lighten your load during the final weeks of the semester.*</b></p>
W 11/25	No class—Thanksgiving break.
F 11/27	No class—Thanksgiving break.

## 4.5 Conclusion

M 11/30	Contemporary and persistent challenges of democracy: Achieving educational equality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Broader, Bolder Approach to Education. A broader, bolder approach to ESEA reauthorization [press release]. <a href="http://www.boldapproach.org/uploads/db_files/BBA%20statement%2002_04%20letterhead.pdf">http://www.boldapproach.org/uploads/db_files/BBA%20statement%2002_04%20letterhead.pdf</a></li> <li>The Education Trust. More than 25 civil rights groups and education advocates release principles for ESEA reauthorization [press release]. <a href="http://edtrust.org/press_release/more-than-20-civil-rights-groups-and-education-advocates-release-principles-for-esea-reauthorization-the-federal-role-must-be-honored-and-maintained/">http://edtrust.org/press_release/more-than-20-civil-rights-groups-and-education-advocates-release-principles-for-esea-reauthorization-the-federal-role-must-be-honored-and-maintained/</a></li> </ul>
W 12/2	Contemporary and persistent challenges of democracy: Budgeting to meet society's needs and wants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>COD</i>, Ch. 17 Economic Policy. Focus on the figures on pp. 500-512 (you can skim the text, but do read carefully the section "Public Policy and the Budget" on pp. 500-505).</li> <li>Government Accountability Office. 2013. What is the federal debt? <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u2iPcCmtbFQ">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u2iPcCmtbFQ</a></li> <li>Brookings Institution. 2014. The federal debt: All you need to know in three minutes. <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SgQ3WG7myY4">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SgQ3WG7myY4</a></li> <li>Howard Gleckman. 2015. Two economists debate whether the federal budget deficit matters. <i>Urban Wire</i>. January 15. <a href="http://www.urban.org/urban-wire/two-economists-debate-whether-federal-budget-deficit-matters">http://www.urban.org/urban-wire/two-economists-debate-whether-federal-budget-deficit-matters</a></li> </ul>
F 12/4	Course evaluations and wrap-up

**\*FINAL EXAM: Monday, December 7, 9:00am-12:00noon\***

**\*RESEARCH PROJECT ESSAY DUE: Wednesday, December 9 by 5:00pm\***