Welcome to Introduction to American Politics. This course is an introduction to the constitutional framework, institutions, and political processes of American government and politics. The first objective of this course is for students to gain a deeper understanding of how fundamental aspects of American politics operate. To that end, we will examine how and why American political institutions function as they do as well as important trends in the development of non-institutional influences on the political system (such as political culture and political behavior). In addition to gaining a better appreciation of how various parts of the American political system operate, we will consider perennial questions such as: What is unique about American politics, particularly as compared to other democracies around the world? How democratic and representative is the American political system? What changes to the political system would help to improve American politics? One of my goals for this course is to spur your thinking about these sorts of bigger questions as you move forward in your college career and lives as citizens.

Required Readings: There is one required text for this course, which is available at Bookmarq:


- In addition to this text, additional required material will be made available on D2L. This will include material written by political scientists as well as relevant news articles.
- Finally, you'll want to make it a daily habit to read a newspaper with extensive coverage of American government and politics. Excellent options for following national political developments include the New York Times, Washington Post, and Wall Street Journal. Reading the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel will be helpful for following state-level politics. Other sources you might consider for up-to-the-minute political coverage include NBC News's "First Read" (http://firstread.msnbc.msn.com) and Chris Cillizza’s blog (called "The Fix") on the Washington Post website. I would encourage you to explore various other blogs as well, particularly to get different points of view from across the political spectrum. I think National Review’s "The Corner" (conservative-leaning) and Josh Marshall’s "Talking Points Memo" (liberal-leaning) are two of the best.
**COURSE EXPECTATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS:**

(1) **Class Attendance and Participation (15%).** Active participation will be an important component of your grade in this class. I expect everyone to come on time prepared for class and ready to actively discuss the readings and topics for the day. Quality participation includes engaging with the readings, expressing one’s own opinions of relevant issues on the topic (while respecting other students’ opinions and experiences), and asking questions when you need additional clarification. In the class schedule below, I have included several discussion questions useful for you to think about prior to class. While this is a fairly large class, you will have the opportunity throughout the course to work in small groups on in-class assignments. (Some, though not all, of these in-class assignments are listed on the class schedule below). Your engagement in these in-class assignments will be an important factor in your class participation grade.

(2) **Online Reading Quizzes (20%).** Prior to our class sessions, each of you will take online reading quizzes on the assigned chapters of the textbook. These quizzes will help ensure that you are concentrating on the most important aspects of each week's reading. The quizzes are available through an online system (Aplia). Instructions for accessing Aplia and the reading quizzes will be made available on D2L and will be discussed in the first week of class. You will need the following course code to access Aplia: ZM7J-DD54-STSK. Note that these assignments are due for each section before the corresponding lecture on the material. For example, I expect that you will have read the materials on Congress and taken the associated online quizzes prior to the class sessions on Congress. The class and reading assignment schedule below includes the due dates for completion of each of the quiz problem sets. Aplia allows you three attempts for each problem set, which gives you the opportunity to improve your score if you are not pleased with your first attempt. If you choose to take the online quizzes more than once, the grades for each of your attempts will be averaged.

(3) **Writing Assignments (10%).** Every student will complete two short writing assignments each worth 5% of the total grade. The first assignment will be due on **Tuesday, January 29** and the second will be due on **Tuesday, April 2**. Each short essay should be about two double-spaced pages in length. I will give you more information about these assignments early in the semester.

(4) **Constitutional Convention (15%).** The final week of the semester is reserved for a mock constitutional convention in which students will present and vote on several amendments proposed by the class. The preparation for this convention will occur throughout the second half of the semester. More information about the convention is available on the last page of this syllabus, and I will say more about this project in class.

(5) **Midterm Exam (15%).** There will be one midterm exam for this course, held during our regular 75-minute class meeting time on **Thursday, March 7**. The exam will be closed-book and will consist of a combination of multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, short answer, and long essay questions. The exam will draw from materials discussed in class and from the assigned readings. I will provide more information about the midterm in the first few weeks of the semester.

(6) **Final Exam (25%).** A final exam for the course is scheduled for **Thursday, May 9 at 1:00pm**. The exam will be very similar in format to the midterm exam. The final exam will be cumulative and, like the midterm, will draw from materials discussed in class and from the assigned readings. You will have two hours to complete the exam.
**Late assignments:**
I expect all students to complete required assignments when they are due. If you are unable to complete an assignment or take an exam for a compelling reason you must contact me before the assignment is due. Otherwise, the assignment will be marked down a half letter grade for each day past the deadline.

**SUMMARY OF GRADING COMPONENTS:**

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<th>Component</th>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
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<td>Online Reading Quizzes</td>
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<td>Writing Assignments</td>
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<td>Constitutional Convention</td>
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<td>Mid-Term Examination</td>
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<td>Final Examination</td>
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**GRADING SCALE:**

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**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:** If you have a disability for which you are requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact the University's Office of Disability Services within the first week of classes. For more information, contact the Office of Disability Services in Marquette Hall, Suite 005 or at (414) 288-1645. If you require any accommodations for exams or other assignments, you must notify me (along with all required documentation) at least one week in advance of the assignment due date.

**ACADEMIC HONESTY:** As noted in the Undergraduate Bulletin, Marquette University demands the strictest honesty and integrity of students in their various academic tasks. Academic dishonesty of any type, including plagiarism, is completely unacceptable and will result in a failing grade for both the assignment and the course.

- **What is Plagiarism?** The Undergraduate Bulletin defines plagiarism in the following manner: "Plagiarism is intellectual theft. It means use of the intellectual creations of another without proper attribution. Plagiarism may take two main forms, which are clearly related: 1. To steal or pass off as one’s own the ideas or words, images, or other creative works of another and 2. To use a creative production without crediting the source, even if only minimal information is available to identify it for citation." If you use another person’s writings or ideas in your own writing, you must provide a citation to the original material. If you have any doubt about the need to provide a citation, it is better to be on the safe side and provide a citation. If you have any questions about this policy, please discuss it with me.
CLASS AND READING ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE:

Disclaimer:
There may be times when minor amendments to the reading schedule are necessary. I expect that any such changes will be rare, but in this event I will notify the class of any and all changes well in advance.

NOTE:
In this schedule, "GSS" refers to the main textbook for the course. An asterisk ("*") next to a reading indicates material I will post on D2L prior to class.

### PART ONE: FOUNDATIONS OF AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

#### January 15 (Tuesday): Course Introduction

**Reading:**
1. No Reading Assignment

**In Class Assignment:** What do you think are the biggest challenges facing the American political system today?

**Assignment Due:**
1. After class, sign up for and familiarize yourself with the online Aplia system, as you'll be accessing Aplia throughout the semester to complete your online reading quizzes.

#### January 17 (Thursday): Purposes of American Government

**Readings:**
1. GSS, Chapter 1 (pp. 2-29)
2. *Mancur Olson, The Logic of Collective Action* (excerpt)

**In Class Assignment:** Brainstorm examples of collective action problems in modern American politics.

**Assignment Due:**
1. Aplia Chapter 1 Problem Set due by Sunday, January 20 at 11pm. Note that because this is the first time you are using Aplia, I will grade this assignment on a pass/fail basis. All subsequent Aplia assignments will be graded.

**Discussion Questions:**

People everywhere with sufficient money are usually able to satisfy their private needs quite easily: just go to the supermarket and use your credit card. Not so for their collective needs, including security, good schools, and clean environments. How do the institutions of government seek to provide these collective goods? What is a "collective action problem"? How does the American political system seek to balance liberty and order? Do you think it succeeds in doing so?
### January 22 and 24 (Tuesday/Thursday): The American Constitution

**Readings:**
- (1) GSS, Chapter 2 (pp. 30-63)
- (2) Declaration of Independence (GSS, pp. 576-579)
- (3) Federalist #10 and #51 (GSS, pp. 596-603)

**In Class Assignment:** Outline Federalist #10 (1/22); examine provisions in other nations’ constitutions (1/24).

**Assignment Due:**
- (1) Aplia Chapter 2 Problem Set due by Tuesday, January 22 at 11am.

**Discussion Questions:**
What were the central problems the Framers of the Constitution faced at the constitutional convention and how did they resolve them? Which issues were left unresolved? In your own words (drawing upon Federalist #10), what is a "faction"? What are modern examples of factions? In Federalist #51, why did Madison argue that it was necessary to separate governmental authority among several branches? What explains the simplicity and durability of the Constitution? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the document’s simplicity?

### January 29 (Tuesday): American Exceptionalism and Culture

**Readings:**
- (1) *John Winthrop, excerpts from "A Model of Christian Charity" [1630]*
- (2) *Louis Hartz, excerpt from "The Liberal Tradition in America"
- (3) *Sven H. Steinmo, "American Exceptionalism Reconsidered: Culture or Institutions?"

**In Class Assignment:** Discussion of writing assignment due today.

**Assignment Due:**
- (1) Writing Assignment #1 due by class on Tuesday, January 29.

**Discussion Questions:**
How different is the United States as compared to other industrialized democracies such as those in Western Europe? What helps to explain these differences? Institutional structures? Culture? What is the "liberal tradition" in America and how did it affect the founding era? How does it affect modern-day American politics?
### January 31 (Thursday): American Federalism

**Reading:**
- (1) GSS, Chapter 3 (pp. 64-101)

**In Class Assignment:** Analysis of recent initiatives to legalize marijuana in Colorado and Washington State.

**Assignment Due:**
- (1) Aplia Chapter 3 Problem Set Due by Thursday, January 31 at 11am.

**Discussion Questions:**
Which powers belong to the states, which belong to the federal government, and which powers are shared? What is the proper balance between state and federal government powers and authority? What are the advantages and disadvantages of having a strong central government? How has the balance of power between the states and the national government evolved over time? Is federalism just a relic of a time long past or does it have a purpose in the modern era? Is direct democracy, including initiatives and referenda, a good way of making public policy?

### February 5 and 7 (Tuesday/Thursday): Civil Liberties and Rights

**Readings:**
- (1) GSS, Chapter 4 (pp. 102-137)
- (2) GSS, Chapter 5 (pp. 138-175)
- (3) The Bill of Rights [Amendments 1 to 10 of the Constitution] (pp. 588-589)

**In Class Assignment:** Discussion of gun rights and gun control (2/5); Brainstorming the meaning of "discrimination" (2/7).

**Assignments Due:**
- (1) Aplia Chapter 4 Problem Set Due by Tuesday, February 5 at 11am.
- (2) Aplia Chapter 5 Problem Set Due by Thursday, February 7 at 11am.

**Discussion Questions:**
Should the Bill of Rights apply to the states as well as the federal government? Why? How should we best balance civil liberties with security and order? Do you think we have the right balance, or are we undermining civil liberties too much or ignoring security too much? What is the conceptual distinction between civil liberties and civil rights? What sorts of discrimination ought to be prohibited? Which American institutions do you think are best able to protect civil rights?
## Part Two: The Institutions of American Government

**February 12 and 14 (Tuesday/Thursday): Congress**

### Readings:
1. GSS, Chapter 12 (pp. 396-441)
2. Article I of the Constitution (GGS, pp. 580-584)

### In-Class Assignments:
- Checklist of differences between Congress and Parliament;
- Analysis of gerrymandered congressional districts.

### Assignment Due:
1. Aplia Chapter 12 Problem Set Due by Tuesday, February 12 at 11am.

### Discussion Questions:

In the modern era, Congress is consistently the least popular national political institution. Why do you think this is? If voters hate Congress so much, why do they nevertheless tend to support their own congressperson? Congress operates as a national legislature but its members are locally elected. From the perspective of American democracy, is this tension a fundamental weakness, preventing members of Congress from acting in the national interest? Or is it a fundamental strength, assuring local and regional interests a voice in national affairs? Is it a good thing that Congress is both bicameral and separate from the executive? Would it be better to have a system more similar to the British Parliament? What is "gerrymandering," and how much of a problem is this in modern American politics?
**February 19 and 21 (Tuesday/Thursday): The Presidency**

**Readings:**
1. GSS, Chapter 13 (pp. 442-485)
2. Article II of the Constitution (GGS, pp. 584-585)

**Assignments Due:**
1. Aplia Chapter 13 Problem Set Due by Tuesday, February 19 at 11am.
2. Analyzing Elections Problem Sets Due by Thursday, February 21 at 11am.

**In-Class Assignment:** What determines presidential success and failure? How would you rank the presidents? What criteria might you use?

**Discussion Questions:**

The modern president wears many hats: head of state, commander and chief, and leader of a national political party. Is there a tension between these many roles and the president’s power under the Constitution? Put differently, do we have an imperial presidency or an office weakened by high and often conflicting expectations? What would the Constitution’s Framers say about the current state of the presidency? Has it become too powerful? Do you believe that President Obama won a "mandate" in 2008 and 2012? What does it mean for a president to have a mandate, and what would the president have to do to fulfill it?

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**February 26 (Tuesday): Bureaucracy**

**Readings:**
1. GSS, Chapter 14 (pp. 486-523)

**Assignment Due:**
1. Aplia Chapter 14 Problem Set Due by Tuesday, February 26 at 11am.

**Discussion Questions:**

To what extent is the federal bureaucracy a part of the executive branch and to what extent is it a separate "fourth branch" of government? How does the bureaucracy affect our everyday lives? Is it possible to "run government like a business," as many politicians argue? Have civil service exams and career bureaucrats helped or hurt the system? Why would politicians ever delegate responsibility to bureaucrats? If everybody hates "red tape," why does it still flourish?
### February 28 (Thursday): The Judiciary

**Readings:**
1. GSS, Chapter 15 (pp. 524-563)
2. Article III of the Constitution (pp. 585-586)

**Assignment Due:**
1. Aplia Chapter 15 Problem Set Due by Thursday, February 28 at 11am.

**In-Class Assignment:** Debate about judicial review and when it should be exercised.

**Discussion Questions:**
Federal judges are not elected, but inevitably make policy on critical policy issues. How is judicial policy-making different than legislative policy-making? Is there any way to square the policy-making role of the federal courts with our democratic ideals? Was Alexander Hamilton wrong when he described the judiciary as the "least dangerous" branch of government? What features of the Court make it appear undemocratic?

### March 5 (Tuesday): Law in America

**Readings:**

**In-Class Assignment:** Analysis of tort reform proposals.

**Assignment Due:**
1. No assignments due – you can use this time to study for the midterm exam.

**Discussion Questions:**
Politicians frequently argue that American society suffers from a "litigation explosion." Is it true that Americans are more likely to turn to the courts to solve their problems? If so, why might this be the case? What is "adversarial legalism"? Should we consider limiting the ability of people to bring lawsuits? Why might this be a good or bad thing?

### March 7 (Thursday): MIDTERM EXAM

The midterm will start promptly at 11am, and could include questions concerning any of the materials covered in the readings or class periods to date. You will have 75 minutes to complete the exam.

### March 9 to 17: SPRING BREAK
### Part Three: Citizen Gateways in a Democracy

#### March 19 and 21 (Tuesday/Thursday): Political Parties

**Readings:**
1. GSS, Chapter 9 (pp. 282-321)
3. *Excerpt from American Political Science Association: "Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System: A Report of the Committee on Political Parties" (pp. 15-19)

**Assignments Due:**
1. Aplia Chapter 9 Problem Set Due by Tuesday, March 19 at 11am.
2. Proposed constitutional amendment due by class on Thursday, March 21 (no more than 1 page)

**Discussion Questions:**
Why did the Framers distrust parties? How has the role of political parties changed since the time of Tammany Hall? What are the major differences between the modern-day Democratic and Republican Parties? Is it a good thing that both parties have become more polarized in recent years? What have caused party realignments? What is the likelihood of having future realignments? Would our system benefit from stronger third parties? Why or why not? Why do third parties have a tough time surviving in our country?

#### March 26 and April 2 (Tuesday/Tuesday): Interest Groups and Social Movements

**Note:** There is no class on Thursday, March 28 because of Easter Break.

**Readings:**
1. GSS, Chapter 8 (pp. 248-281)

**In-Class Assignment:** Discussion of findings from the interest group assignment.

**Assignments Due:**
1. Aplia Chapter 8 Problem Set Due by Tuesday, March 26 at 11am.
2. Writing Assignment #2 due by class on Tuesday, April 2.

**Discussion Questions:**
(see top of next page)
Do interest groups do more to protect the rights of minorities or simply reflect the collective interests of the nation? Should anything be done to create a more equal balance of interest groups representing interests across the nation? How much do "special interests" threaten American democracy? What do social movements offer that interest groups do not? Why might social movements be more limited than interest groups? What strategies are used during social movements? What helps social movements succeed in general?

### April 4 (Thursday): Elections and Campaigns

**Readings:**
- (1) GSS, Chapter 10 (pp. 322-357)

**Assignment Due:**
- (1) Aplia Chapter 10 Problem Set Due by Thursday, April 4 at 11am.

**Discussion Questions:**

To what extent do elections encourage accountability and responsiveness in government? What factors explain the decline in voter turnout around the 1960s? Why has it increased again in the most recent elections? How important is money to electoral campaigns? Where does the money required to finance modern campaigns come from? Are Americans fairly represented in the American political system? Why or why not?

### April 9 (Tuesday): Voting and Participation

**Readings:**
- (1) GSS, Chapter 11 (pp. 358-395)

**In-Class Assignment:** Analysis of voter identification laws in Wisconsin.

**Assignment Due:**
- (1) Aplia Chapter 11 Problem Set Due by Tuesday, April 9 at 11am.

**Discussion Questions:**

How do voters decide for whom to vote? What benefits do people get from voting? Who tends to participate in American politics? Which groups have lower rates of civic engagement? What helps to explain this? Would it be a good thing to have mandatory voting, as Australia requires? Are there any other reforms to voting procedures that would be beneficial to American democracy?
**April 11 (Thursday): Public Opinion**

**Reading:**
(1) GSS, Chapter 6 (pp. 176-209)

**In-Class Assignment:** Analysis of recent poll results.

**Assignment Due:**
(1) Aplia Chapter 6 Problem Set AND "Analyzing Elections" Problem Set Due by Thursday, April 11 at 11am.

**Discussion Questions:**
How much does public opinion influence public policy? Should politicians make decisions based upon polling results? How well do polls capture public opinion? How well informed are voters? What differences in opinion exist among different demographic groups?

**April 16 and 18 (Tuesday/Thursday): The Media**

**Readings:**
(1) GSS, Chapter 7 (pp. 210-247)
(2) *Michael Schudson, "Is Journalism Hopelessly Cynical?"* (1999)
(3) *Dannagal Goldthwaite Young, "The Daily Show as the New Journalism: In Their Own Words"* (2008)

**Assignments Due:**
(1) Aplia Chapter 7 Problem Set Due by Tuesday, April 16 at 11am.
(2) "Analyzing Elections" Problem Set Due by Thursday, April 18 at 11am.

**Discussion Questions:**
How does the media impact governing? How has the role of media changed over the past 20 years, especially with the rise of social media? How should the media's role in politics be changed, if at all? What resources do politicians have that might allow them to "go around" the press and communicate with the public directly? In general, how successful are those attempts? Is the media "biased"? How would this be measured?

**PART FOUR: RECONSIDERING AMERICAN GOVERNMENT**

**April 23 (Tuesday): Domestic Policy and the Budget Battles**

**Readings:**
(1) *To be announced*

**In-Class Assignment:** Discussion of proper levels of taxing and spending. How would you adjust the budget?

**Assignment Due:**
(1) No assignment due
Discussion Questions:
The first major political battle of 2013 concerned the so-called "fiscal cliff" and debates about proper levels of taxing and spending. By this time in the course, we'll know more about how the fights over the debt ceiling have played out. Inevitably, however, battles over the budget will continue to be a central part of domestic policy in the United States. What are the major issues in the budget debates? Why is it so difficult to reach consensus? What does the federal government spend money on? How should the budget be reformed?

April 25 (Thursday): The Prospects for Institutional Reform

Readings:
(1) GSS, Chapter 16 (pp. 564-575)
(2) *Exchange between Pietro Nivola ("In Defense of Partisan Politics") and William Galston ("One and a Half Cheers for Bipartisanship"), Brookings Institution (April, 2009)

Assignments Due:
(1) Aplia Chapter 16 Problem Set Due by Thursday, April 25 at 11am.
(2) Outlines for Constitutional Convention due by class on Thursday, April 25.

Discussion Questions:
Reflecting on everything we've discussed in this course, what do you think the most important challenges to American government are today? Has your answer to this question changed since the start of the course? How do you think that the Framers of the Constitution would evaluate the modern American political system? Is increased partisanship a positive or negative development in modern American politics?

April 30 and May 2 (Tuesday/Thursday): Constitutional Convention

The final week of the course is reserved for our constitutional convention. There are no reading assignments or online quizzes due for this week, but you are expected to play an active role in the convention. At the conclusion of the convention, I will distribute an evaluation form asking about each group member's contribution and participation in the exercise.

May 9 (Thursday): FINAL EXAM (1pm-3pm)
**Mock Constitutional Convention**

At the end of the semester, we will have a mock constitutional convention. During that convention, we will debate several proposed amendments developed by the class and then vote for ratification. Portions of this project will be due throughout the semester. Several of the key dates pertaining to the convention are listed below.

**3/21: Submit constitutional amendment.**

Each student will write up a constitutional amendment. Your amendment should be no more than one page, double-spaced, and 12-point font. After you turn in your amendments in class on March 21, I will choose the ten or so that we will debate at the end of the semester.

**3/28 to 4/25: Work in small groups on presentation.**

Once I select the slate of amendments, I will ask you to rank them in terms of which you would like to research and present on. Based on the rankings, I will place students in groups (about 8 to 10 students in each group) for each amendment. Once in the groups, students will divide themselves into smaller groups to put together a brief presentation for or against each amendment. The small groups are required to do some outside research, prepare an outline of their arguments, and prepare their presentation. Each student should be prepared to answer questions from their fellow delegates at the constitutional convention.

**4/25: Outlines due.**

**4/30 and 5/2: Mock constitutional convention.**

**5/2: Individual assessments due.**

At the end of the constitutional convention, I will provide an evaluation for students to complete. The evaluation form will ask about each member's level of contribution and extent of participation, as well as an overall grade for each team member (only I will see these evaluation forms). These evaluations count for half of a student's grade for the convention portion of the project. The remaining half will consist of my assessment of the group's argument and outline, observations of the individual, and his or her handling of questions.