**POS 2040 (Section 521): American National Government (3 credits)**
**ONLINE**
**Spring 2015**

**Instructor:** Cecilia Ferradino, Ph.D.
**E-Mail:** ceciliaf@usf.edu
**Telephone:** Please contact me via e-mail to schedule a telephone call.

**PREREQUISITES:** None

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**
This course is an analysis of basic principles and procedures of the American governmental system with emphasis on current issues and trends. Whether renewing a driver’s license, reading the newspaper, watching television, or voting, we are surrounded by politics. Therefore, as citizens, it is important that we understand not only how the American political process operates, but also why. This course will introduce students to basic concepts of American politics, such as the founding, the Constitution, institutions, the electoral process, civil liberties/rights and civil society. Students will also explore the nuances of government and its impact on society by examining policy, public opinion, media and grassroots politics. The overarching goal of the course is to demonstrate the continuous interplay between the people and the governmental institutions and practices that have evolved since the founding.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES and STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES**
The primary objective for this course is to understand how American government works from historical, institutional, procedural and cultural perspectives. To that end, the course has been designed to help students with the following:

- Develop and strengthen critical thinking and analysis skills and translate them to paper and the spoken word;
- Challenge existing assumptions from a social scientific perspective;
- Identify and apply basic social scientific approaches and methodology; and
- Understand the broader effects of politics on micro- and macro-levels.

More specifically, upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Compose position papers incorporating original thought and reputable data;
- Understand what constitutes “reputable data” and learn how to cite them; and
- Craft and defend an argument

**TEXT AND MATERIALS**
The following textbook will be used for this course: *Central Ideas in American Government* (Fifth Edition) by Jocelyn Evans & Kristy Michaud © 2014 Soomo Learning.

- *This text is web-based. You need access to the web-based version for this class.* There is also a paper version of the text, but it is only a supplement. Both formats of the text are available from the USFSM bookstore or you may order it directly from the publisher. To purchase it from the publisher, open the file “POS 2040_Textbook Access” in the First Week Announcement or Module 1.
- Any additional materials and readings will be posted on Canvas.

**CANVAS**
Since this is an online class, all materials (except for the textbook) will be available through Canvas. Similarly, all activities and participation will take place via Canvas.
TECHNOLOGICAL NOTES
The Universe occasionally likes to play tricks on us and messing with electronics is a big favorite (I think this occurs when Mercury is in retrograde). So, I advise that you have a back-up plan in place in case your computer decides to crash, gets a virus, is having a nasty fight with browser, or is zapped by a power outage. Have a few friends, family members or co-workers on hand in case you need to log on from a different computer. Or, if you have a job in which you have access to the Internet, make that your Plan B. Technical difficulties will not automatically translate into an extension, late submission of work, etc. If you do not have regular access to the required hardware and software, or do not have a basic knowledge of computers, it is advised that you drop the class.

GRADING and EVALUATION:
Your final grade is comprised of two (2) exams, two (2) short papers, one (1) reflection paper and weekly discussion posts. To keep things simple, all assignments will be graded on a point scale. The total number of points is 1000 and each assignment is worth the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exam #1:</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exam #2:</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper #1:</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper #2:</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions:</td>
<td>450 (15 posts/each post worth 30 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection paper:</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the end of the semester, your final grade will be converted to the University’s A-F scale. To calculate your grade, simply divide the number of points you have accrued and divide by 1000. For example: 860/1000 = 86%, or a final grade of B.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100-97</td>
<td>A+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96-93</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92-90</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89-87</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86-83</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82-80</td>
<td>B-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79-77</td>
<td>C+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76-73</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72-70</td>
<td>C-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69-67</td>
<td>D+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66-63</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62-60</td>
<td>D-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59-0</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you have any questions or concerns about a grade—any grade throughout the semester—please notify me ASAP; that is, within a few days of getting the assignment back. That way, the material is fresh in both of our minds and we can resolve the issue quickly.

Participation. Participation is an important component of this class and will be conducted via weekly discussion board posts. Please read the directions given each week and respond accordingly. Posts will be graded based on content and instructions. For example, if you are asked to respond to two students’ posts and you only respond to one, then your grade for that week will lower. Discussions are vital to the overall class experience and also an easy way to boost your overall grade.
**Exams.** Material for the exams will be taken from the readings, PowerPoint lectures, videos, and discussions. The tests will be open-book and comprised of multiple choice, short answers and essays. You will be given 48 hours to take the exam. **Please note that once you open the exam, you must finish it on one (1) sitting.** **Once you close the exam, it is considered finished.** I will not re-open exams based on this. However, I will give make-up exams only if you have obtained proper documentation from the University or other official source (e.g., doctor).

**Papers.** Students will write two (2) short papers (4-6 pages) throughout the semester. Paper assignments will be posted on Canvas and will be due on the date noted on the syllabus. Written assignments are designed to give you the chance to be creative and comment on relevant political issues. I am always happy to review drafts, outlines, or even random thoughts. Papers are expected to be typed and conform to the specifications given. Late papers will NOT be accepted unless you have permission from me.

**Citations.** Anything you take out of books (including the textbook) and/or other sources—directly quoted or paraphrased—must be cited. **Even if it is unintentional, failure to cite is seen as plagiarism and will result in a lower, or possibly failing, grade.** The easiest format to use is MLA, although any format is acceptable as long as you are consistent. If you have any questions about what should be cited or how to cite, ask. If it’s 3 a.m. the night before the paper is due and you don’t know whether or not to cite, err on the side of caution: when in doubt, cite.

**Late work.** As a rule, no, I will not accept late work, re-open closed modules or grant extensions. Missed assignments will result in a zero. But...every rule has an exception. The only way I will allow any flexibility is if you have proper documentation from the University or other official source. However, please note until I see something in writing, you will have a zero for that assignment(s).

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Professionalism.** Please treat this class as you would a job and maintain a high level of professionalism throughout the semester. Specifically, submit assignments on time, respect others’ opinions, actively contribute to the conversations and keep the lines of communication between you and me open. Part of the college experience is learning to adapt to life outside of the classroom—a.k.a. the “real world”—and there is no better time to hone this skill than the present.

**Questions.** Any and all questions are encouraged. If you are unclear about any of the material we are covering in class that week, or have already covered, please do not hesitate to ask. I am available via e-mail and return e-mails quickly. Or, if you’d prefer, we can schedule a telephone call. I’d rather have you ask than lose points on an exam or paper, especially when your confusion could have been easily cleared up with a quick e-mail.

**Drafts.** I am always happy to look at drafts, outlines or even random thoughts relating to your writing assignments. Feel free to e-mail if you want me to review a section, paragraph, etc. However, please note that my reviewing your draft does not guarantee you an A.

**Academic Support Services.** Information Commons provides students with individual and group study spaces, computers, printers, and various media equipment for temporary use. Information Commons is staffed with a librarian, learning support faculty, tutors, and technology and e-learning specialists. Students challenged by the rigors of academic writing, mathematics, or other course content are urged to contact their professors early in the semester to chart out a plan for academic success, and/or regularly use the tutoring services provided by the Learning Support Services, which are provided at no cost to students.
USFSM and USF SYSTEM POLICIES

Academic Dishonesty: The University considers any form of plagiarism or cheating on exams, projects, or papers to be unacceptable behavior. Please be sure to review the university’s policy in the USFSM Catalog, the USF System Academic Integrity of Students, and the USF System Student Code of Conduct.

Academic Disruption. The University does not tolerate behavior that disrupts the learning process. The policy for addressing academic disruption is included with Academic Dishonesty in the USFSM Catalog, USF System Academic Integrity of Students, and the USF System Student Code of Conduct.

Contingency Plans. In the event of an emergency, it may be necessary for USFSM to suspend normal operations. During this time, USFSM may opt to continue delivery of instruction through methods that include but are not limited to: Canvas, Elluminate, Skype, and email messaging and/or an alternate schedule. It’s the responsibility of the student to monitor Canvas site for each class for course specific communication, and the main USFSM and College websites, emails, and MoBull messages for important general information. The USF hotline at 1 (800) 992-4231 is updated with pre-recorded information during an emergency. See the Campus Police Website for further information.

Disabilities Accommodation. Students are responsible for registering with the Office of Students with Disabilities Services (SDS) in order to receive academic accommodations. Reasonable notice must be given to the SDS office (typically 5 working days) for accommodations to be arranged. It is the responsibility of the student to provide each instructor with a copy of the official Memo of Accommodation. Contact: Disability Coordinator, 941-359-4714, disabilityservices@sar.usf.edu, http://usfsm.edu/disability-services/

Religious Observances. USFSM recognizes the right of students and faculty to observe major religious holidays. Students who anticipate the necessity of being absent from class for a major religious observance must provide notice of the date(s) to the instructor, in writing, by the second week of classes.

Web Portal Information. Every enrolled USF student receives an official USF e-mail account. Students receive official USF correspondence and Canvas course information via that address.
IMPORTANT NOTES ABOUT THE READINGS, MATERIAL AND SCHEDULE:

• Modules open on Tuesdays at midnight and close Mondays at 11:59 P.M. Discussion posts are due by this time. Other assignments are due by the date noted on the syllabus.

• All readings are from the textbook, Central Ideas in American Government, unless noted.

• Throughout each chapter there are sections called “Get the Gist” and “Your Turn.” These are optional. However, I highly encourage doing the “Get the Gist” sections because some of these questions will appear on exams. They are also a good way to make sure you understand the material without having to be graded. As far as comments, you will have ample opportunity to do so via the discussion posts, which are graded.

• The work we will be doing each week is outlined in the modules below. Because this is an online class, when you do the work is at your discretion, provided it is completed by Monday at 11:59 P.M. of that week, unless noted otherwise. As with all classes, some weeks will be more labor intensive than others, so please plan accordingly. I will not re-open modules because of poor planning.

I. FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS

January 5 – 12, 2015

**DO THIS FIRST:** Go to the “Discussions” tab and click on “Welcome and Introduction Post.” Then, please post a brief introduction by Sunday, January 11, 2015 by 9:00 P.M. This post will count as your First Day Attendance required by the University. Failure to post by the deadline will result in you being dropped from the class.

• Skim PowerPoint slides, “Historical Background.” Can look at these over Modules 1 and 2
• Reading: Ch. 01, Sec. 1.1 – 1.6
• Discussion Post 1

January 13 – 19, 2015

• Reading: Ch. 01, Sec. 1.7 – 1.12
• Discussion Post 2

January 20 – 26, 2015

• Reading: Ch. 02
• Discussion Post 3

*Heads-up: Exam #1 next week (open book). Topics include: Historical background, the Founding, Constitution and federalism
II. INSTITUTIONS

January 27 – February 2, 2015  MODULE 4: The Presidency + Exam #1

• Exam #1: DUE by February 1, 2015 @ 11:59 P.M.
• Reading: Ch. 06
• Discussion Post 4

February 3 – 9, 2015  MODULE 5: Congress

• Reading: Ch. 05
• Discussion Post 5

February 10 – 16, 2015  MODULE 6: Judiciary

• Reading: Ch. 08
• Discussion Post 6

February 17 – 23, 2015  MODULE 7: Bureaucracy

• Reading: Ch. 07
• Discussion Post 7

*Heads-up: Paper #1 due next week

III. SHARING POWER

February 24 – March 2, 2015  MODULE 8: Political Parties + Paper #1

• Reading: Ch. 13
• Discussion Post 8
• Paper #1: DUE by March 2, 2015 @ 11:59 P.M.

March 3 – 9, 2015: NO CLASSES—SPRING BREAK!!!!

March 10 – 16, 2015  MODULE 9: Campaigns and Elections

• Reading: Ch. 12
• Videos (TBD—Will post in Announcements)
• Discussion Post 9

March 17 – 23, 2015  MODULE 10: Voting and Political Participation

• Reading: Ch. 11
• Discussion Post 10
• Note: Saturday, March 21, 2015 by 5:00 P.M.—Last day to withdraw from courses with a “W”; no refund and no academic penalty
MODULE 11: Interest Groups

- Reading: Ch. 14
- Discussion Post 11

*Heads-up: Exam #2 next week (open book). Topics include: Political parties, campaigns and elections, voting and political participation, interest groups

IV. LINKING PEOPLE, POLITICS AND PROCESSES

MODULE 12: Public Policy + Exam #2

- No reading—Handouts and Power Point instead
- Discussion Post 12
- Exam #2: DUE by April 6, 2015 @ 11:59 P.M.

April 7 – 13, 2015

MODULE 13: Civil Liberties and Civil Rights

- Reading: Chapters 04 and 05
- Discussion Post 13

April 14 – 20, 2015

MODULE 14: Media

- Reading: Ch. 10
- Discussion Post 14

*Heads-up: Paper #2 due next week

April 21 – 27, 2015

MODULE 15: Politics and Culture + Paper #2

- Reading: Dale (2010), “The Revolution is Being Televised: The Case for Popular Culture as Public Sphere”
- Discussion Post 15
- Paper #2: DUE by April 27, 2015 @ 11:59 P.M.

April 28 – Sunday, May 3, 2015

FINAL MODULE: Taking Stock

- REFLECTION PAPER: DUE on SUNDAY, MAY 3, 2015 by 9:00 P.M.