

**U.S. GOVERNMENT
POSC 225-2
Fall 2016
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Class Time:

Monday, Wednesday, Friday

1:25 pm – 2:15 pm

Miller 1101

Office Hours:

MW from 12:00 – 1:15 PM

MW from 2:30 - 3:45 PM

Fri. from 12:00 – 1:15 PM

Or by Appointment

Miller 2143

Course Description: POSC 225 is a General Education course that satisfies the Cluster Four American Experience requirement. Students completing an American Experience course in Cluster Four will be able to identify, conceptualize, and evaluate: social and political processes and structures using quantitative and qualitative data; key primary sources relating to American history, political institutions and society; the nature and development of the intellectual concepts that structure American political activity; the history and operation of American democratic institutions; the history and development of American society; and the history and development of American involvement in world affairs.

This course provides an introduction to the discipline of political science and an overview of U.S. Government. It will be divided into three main themes: (1) Constitution in Theory and Practice, (2) The Role of Citizens in our Democracy, and (3) American Public Policy. Constitution in Theory and Practice will focus on the basic principles of our government along with how it was created and evolved through our history. This will include a focus on the actual functioning of the American system, as well as its influences and applications that are not clearly spelled out within its founding documents. Role of Citizens will focus on how people learn what they want, how people are able to influence government, and how government learns what its people want. Public Policy will expose you to some of the most important policy debates that our nation has and continues to face. It will become clear that they are all interrelated – Economic, Social, and Foreign policy all affect one another in quite interesting ways.

Required Text: Ginsberg, Benjamin, Theodore Lowi and Margaret Weir. We The People: An Introduction to American Politics. Full 10th Ed. Norton Publishing, 2014.

**The book will be made available at James Madison Book Stores, but in case you prefer buying it online, here is a link. Make sure you buy the “Full” version w/policy chapters.*

http://www.amazon.com/People-Full-Tenth-Benjamin-Ginsberg/dp/0393937038/ref=sr_1_cc_7?s=aps&ie=UTF8&qid=1419270786&sr=1-7-catcorr&keywords=we+the+people+10th+edition

**Our textbook's publisher has created a website with study guides, practice exams and other materials that you may find helpful throughout the semester.*

<http://www.wwnorton.com/college/polisci/we-the-people10/full/>

Course Requirements: This 4-credit course is composed of three required class meetings per week. If you miss one of our class meetings, there is no need to inform me of that, but it is your responsibility to find out what we covered and any announcements you might have missed. Once you have obtained the class notes from another student and studied those notes, please feel free to visit me with any questions you may have.

The class periods will consist of lectures that emphasize both the assigned readings and relevant current events. Each scheduled lecture period will have a reading(s) assigned to it. The expectation is that you will have completed that assignment prior to the lectures. The lectures are designed to bring together the information presented in the textbook and summarize it in a sensible manner. The lectures will not replace the need to read the book, nor will reading the book replace the material presented in lecture. Both will present novel information about American Government that you will be expected to know.

Class Conduct: The classroom is a special environment in which students and faculty come together to promote learning and growth. It is essential to this learning environment that respect for the right of others seeking to learn, respect for the professionalism of the instructor, and the general goals of academic freedom are maintained. Student conduct, which disrupts the learning process, will not be tolerated and may lead to disciplinary action or removal from class per university policy. Disruptive behavior is inappropriate student behavior that a reasonable faculty member would view as interfering with the ability of instructors to teach and students to learn. It may constitute a violation of law, a violation of the student conduct code or a violation of an instructor's established rules of conduct for a particular class. Civil expression, disagreement or debate as permitted within the class by a faculty member is not disruptive behavior. Each student has a right to the freedom of thought and expression, including a right to reasoned dissent, in his or her classes. A student's right to exercise academic freedom carries with it concomitant responsibilities. These responsibilities are owed to other students, faculty members and the institution. Failure to live up to these responsibilities carries with it the possibility of sanctions, up to and including removal from a class, removal from a program and/or removal from the university. To view the full policy regarding class disruptions, go here (<http://www.jmu.edu/academic-affairs/documents/policies/aapolicy-12.pdf>).

Behaviors that interfere with effective teaching and learning, such as late arrival, leaving for the bathroom, early departures without instructor permission, talking to each other during the lectures, sleeping, playing with cell-phones, etc. will not be tolerated.

Absences: Attendance is vital to success in this course and students are expected to attend all classes. If you expect to miss class for an extended period of time, you should email me, but you do not need to email me if you cannot attend a single lecture. Attendance will only directly factor into your grade at the margins: if you are close to a

certain grade at the end of the course (e.g., suppose you have a high B but not quite a B+), then an excellent attendance record – together with other signs of professionalism, such as arriving to class on time, being attentive during class, etc. – will argue in favor of the B+, while a poor attendance record (and poor professionalism generally) will argue against such an adjustment.

If you fail to attend lectures during the first week of class, I reserve the right to administratively drop you from the course to make room for others who wish to enroll.

**Lecture Powerpoints will be posted on canvass, but you will need a password to access them. This password will be provided at the end of the lecture. This hopefully provides you with an incentive to attend class. DO NOT SHARE PASSWORDS!*

Religious Accommodations: All faculty are required to give reasonable and appropriate accommodations to students requesting them on grounds of religious observation. The faculty member determines what accommodations are appropriate for his/her course. Students should notify the faculty by no later than the end of the Drop-Add period the first week of the semester of potential scheduled absences and determine with the instructor if mutually acceptable alternative methods exist for completing the missed classroom time, lab or activity. Contact the [Office of Equal Opportunity](#) at (540) 568-6991 if you have additional questions.

Disability and Accessibility: James Madison University is committed to access, inclusion, and diversity. If you have a documented disability (or think you may have a disability) and, as a result need reasonable accommodations to participate in this class, complete course requirements, or benefit from the University's programs or services, contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) as soon as possible. To receive accommodations, you must be appropriately registered with ODS. The ODS works confidentially in partnership with students, faculty, and other University departments to ensure equal access through Universal Design and reasonable accommodations. The office is located in the Student Success Center, Suite 1202. You may contact them by phone at 540-568-6705 or through email at disability-svcs@jmu.edu.

Grading: Grades will be based upon the three (3) exams given during the semester and Film Series Reaction Papers (See below). Each exam will be worth 30% of your final grade and the Reaction Papers will be worth a combined 10%. The exams (including the final) will not be cumulative – they will only cover the material covered since the previous exam. Excused absences from exams can only be obtained for two reasons: (1) Series personal or family emergencies (you must notify me of your emergency as soon as physically possible), and (2) university approved activities (as arranged in advance with me). A slip from the health center/doctor's office saying you had an appointment is not sufficient documentation of a serious illness – you must provide a note from your doctor saying you were too sick to attend class. **An unexcused absence from an exam will result in a grade of zero for that assignment.**

Film Series Reaction Papers: There will be a film series (5 films) that all students will view as part of our POSC 225 class this semester. These films help to illustrate important points about U.S. government that we will be covering this semester, and our coverage of them helps make up the fourth credit hour of POSC 225. All of the films are available either for free or for a minimal cost, and students will view the films on their own by the dates indicated on the syllabus. After viewing the films, you will be required to write a reaction paper (5 reaction papers in total) where you answer a question that I will provide to you. You are tasked with reflecting upon the film and its relationship to topics covered in this course and contemporary political issues (within the last few years). While you will certainly talk about important aspects of the film in your papers, I DO NOT want a summary of the film. These reactions papers must be submitted by the due date indicated on the syllabus. Late papers will receive a half-letter grade deduction for each day they are late. These papers must be submitted to canvas where they will be processed through the TurnItIn.com service that examines your work for plagiarism. Reaction papers must be 2 pages in length (double-spaced with normal font and margins). These reaction papers do not require citation or outside research - they are simply **YOUR** thoughts on the film and answer to the question I provide. Reaction papers that go over or under the 2 page limit will suffer grade penalties.

Grading Scale:

93-100 = A	87-89 = B+	77-79 = C+	67-69 = D+	< 60 = F
90-92 = A-	83-86 = B	73-76 = C	63-66 = D	
	80-82 = B-	70-72 = C-	60-62 = D-	

Academic Integrity: If you have not done so already, please familiarize yourself with JMU's Honor Code: <http://www.jmu.edu/honorcode/code.shtml>. Cheating, fabrication, and plagiarism are serious offenses and will be dealt with according to the policy. I have zero tolerance! If you have any questions about the policy or what constitutes a violation, do not hesitate to ask me.

Canvass: Our class Canvass website will have a variety of resources to help you throughout the semester. You will find recommended readings, assigned readings that are not in the text book, and other useful information. The Canvass site also contains a discussion forum and chat room. Please use these areas to post materials you may find to be helpful to others as well as any questions you may have about the course. If you have a question, chances are that other people will as well, so please post them in the chat room so everyone can benefit from them. I check the chat room periodically and will answer any questions then. Please also scan through the chat room to see if others have already asked your question.

Syllabus

This syllabus and schedule are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances. *If you are absent from class, it's your responsibility to check on announcements made while you were absent.*

Monday (8/29) - Introductions/Overview of Course

Wednesday (8/31) - The Founding and the Constitution

- *We the People – Chapter 2*
- *Dahl – Chapter 2 (selections)*

Friday (9/2) – JMU Assessment

Monday (9/5) – Founding (Continued) and Evaluating the Constitution

- *Dahl – Chapter 2 and 3 (selections)*
- *Shalom – Selections*
- *Kingdon - America the Unusual – Chapter 2*

Wednesday (9/7) – Evaluating the Constitution (Continued)

Friday (9/9) - Civil Liberties

- *We the People – Chapter 4*

Monday (9/12) – Civil Liberties (Continued) and Civil Rights

- *We the People – Chapter 5*

Wednesday (9/14) – Civil Rights (Continued)

Friday (9/16) – Federalism

- *We the People – Chapter 3*
- **FILM SERIES REACTION PAPER 1 DUE**
 - “Trumbo” - https://www.amazon.com/Trumbo-Bryan-Cranston/dp/B018MOP8ZW/ref=tmm_aiv_swatch_1?encoding=UTF8&qid=&sr=

Monday (9/19) – Federalism (Continued) and Judiciary

- *We the People – Chapter 15*

Wednesday (9/21) – Judiciary (Continued)

Friday (9/23) – Judiciary (Continued)

Monday (9/26) – Congress

- *We the People – Chapter 12*
- *Mayhew – The Electoral Connection – Chapter 1 (Selections)*

Wednesday (9/28) – Congress (Continued) and Presidency

- *We the People – Chapter 13*
- *Kernell – Going Public – Chapter 1 & 2*

Friday (9/30) – NO CLASS

- **FILM SERIES REACTION PAPER 2 DUE**

- Judicial Philosophy Video – Principles of Constitutional and Statutory Interpretation - <http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/289637-1#>

Monday (10/3) – Presidency (Continued)

Wednesday (10/5) – Review and Catch-Up Day

Friday (10/7) – Exam I

Monday (10/10) – Political Culture/Ideology

- *We the People – Chapter 1*
- *Shalom – Chapter 2*
- *Kingdon - America the Unusual – Chapter 3*
- *Shalom – Chapter 5 & 6 - Democratic Socialism and Other Ideologies (Recommended)*

Wednesday (10/12) – Political Culture/Ideology (Continued)

Friday (10/14) - Conservatism

- *Shalom – Chapter 3 – Conservatism*

Monday (10/17) – Conservatism (Continued) and Liberalism

- *Shalom – Chapter 4 – Liberalism*

Wednesday (10/19) – Liberalism (Continued)

Friday (10/21) – Public Opinion/Political Socialization

- *We the People – Chapter 6*
- *Hershey – Chapter 6 (Party Identification)*

Monday (10/24) – Public Opinion/Political Socialization (Continued) and Media

- *We the People – Chapter 7*

Wednesday (10/26) – Media (Continued)

Friday (10/28) – Political Participation

- *We the People – Chapter 8*
- *Hershey – Chapter 5 (Party Activists)*
- **FILM SERIES REACTION PAPER 3 DUE**
 - Wag the Dog

Monday (10/31)– Political Participation (Continued) and Interest Groups

- *We the People – Chapter 11*
- *Maisel and Brewer – Chapter 4 (Interest Groups)*

Wednesday (11/2) – Interest Groups (Continued)

Friday (11/4) – Political Parties

- *We the People – Chapter 9*

Monday (11/7) – Political Parties (Continued) and Campaigns and Elections

- *We the People – Chapter 10*

Wednesday (11/9) – Campaigns and Elections (Continued)

Friday (11/11) – Review and Catch-up Day

Monday (11/14) – Exam II

Wednesday (11/16) – Economic Policy

- *Shalom – Chapter 11*
- *We the People – Chapter 16*

Friday (11/18) – Economic Policy (Continued)

- **FILM SERIES REACTION PAPER 4 DUE**
 - The Big Short

Monday (11/21) – Thanksgiving Break

Wednesday (11/23) – Thanksgiving Break

Friday (11/25) – Thanksgiving Break

Monday (11/28) – Tax Policy

- *Shalom – Chapter 13*

Wednesday (11/30) – Social Policy/Crime Policy

- *Shalom – Chapter 16*
- *We the People Chapter 17*

Friday (12/2) – Social Policy (Continued) and Foreign Policy

- *Shalom – Chapter 17*
- *We the People – Chapter 18*

Monday (12/5) – Foreign Policy (Continued)

Wednesday (12/7) – Review and Catch-up Day

Friday (12/9) – Review and Catch-up Day

- **FILM SERIES REACTION PAPER 5 DUE**
 - Charlie Wilson's War

Final Exam – Monday 12/12 from 10:30am – 12:30pm

IMPORTANT DATES/INFORMATION

- Add/Drop Courses
 - Add course without Academic Unit Permission – 9/6/16
 - Add course with Instructor and Academic Unit Permission – 9/15/16
 - Drop course with a “W” grade – 10/27/16
- Inclement Weather
 - JMU Weather Line: (540) 433-5300
 - JMU radio station 1610AM
 - [JMU's home page](#)