



Course Information

Course Title: American Government
Course Number: GVPT 170
Term: *Fall 2021*
Credits: 3
Class Meeting Times: Monday/Wednesday
Course Times: 6:00 – 7:15 pm, 1102 Tydings Hall

Instructor: Amy Meli
Pronouns: she/her/hers
Email: amydmeli@gmail.com
Office Hours: Wednesday 3:00 – 5:00 pm or by appointment
Office: 1135E Tydings Hall

Course Description

This course is designed to provide an introduction to the study of American government. We will discuss the institutions that comprise the American political system, as well as the ways in which individuals and actors (such as political parties, interest groups, and the media) interact with these institutions. We will approach the topics from a theoretical and analytical perspective. In other words, we will move beyond a mere description of American government to a discussion of why the American political system is organized as it is, how the institutions have changed over time, how the American system compares with other systems, what role citizens play in the political system, and the ways in which institutions and the political system might be improved.

Learning Objectives

The learning objectives for this course include:

- The development of critical reading skills, especially the integration of theoretical argumentation and empirical evidence
- Knowledge of the structure of American government as well as the major theories and debates regarding American politics
- Development of analytical skills in political science

Required Resources

- Course Website: elms.umd.edu
- Book: Kernell, Samuel, Gary C. Jacobson, Thad Kousser, and Lynn Vavreck. 2019. *The Logic of American Politics* (9th ed.). Washington: CQ Press.
- I will also assign timely academic or news articles (or sometimes podcasts or videos) that relate to the week's content, which will be posted on ELMS at least one week prior to class. You will be expected to be familiar with this material, as we will use it for our in-class discussions.

UMD Policies and Resources for Undergraduate Courses

It is our shared responsibility to know and abide by the University of Maryland's policies that relate to all courses, which include topics like:

- Academic integrity
- Student and instructor conduct

- Accessibility and accommodations
- Attendance and excused absences
- Grades and appeals
- Copyright and intellectual property

Please visit www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html for the Office of Undergraduate Studies' full list of campus-wide policies and follow up with me if you have questions.

Course Guidelines

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is a core value of institutions of higher learning. It is your responsibility to refrain from engaging in plagiarism, cheating, and dishonest behavior. The official university honor code policy is located at: <https://academiccatalog.umd.edu/undergraduate/registration-academic-requirements-regulations/academic-integrity-student-conduct-codes/> Needless to say, assignments should reflect only your own work. But, studying and class preparation can (and should) be done with others.

Names/Pronouns and Self-Identifications

The University of Maryland recognizes the importance of a diverse student body, and we are committed to fostering inclusive and equitable classroom environments. I invite you, if you wish, to tell us how you want to be referred to both in terms of your name and your pronouns (he/him, she/her, they/them, etc.). The pronouns someone indicates are not necessarily indicative of their gender identity. Visit trans.umd.edu to learn more.

Additionally, how you identify in terms of your gender, race, class, sexuality, religion, and dis/ability, among all aspects of your identity, is your choice whether to disclose (e.g., should it come up in classroom conversation about our experiences and perspectives) and should be self-identified, not presumed or imposed. I will do my best to address and refer to all students accordingly, and I ask you to do the same for all of your fellow Terps.

Communication with Instructor

Email: If you need to reach out and communicate with me, please email me at amydmeli@umd.edu. Please DO NOT email me with questions that are easily found in the syllabus or on ELMS (i.e. When is this assignment due? How much is it worth? etc.) but please DO reach out about personal, academic, and intellectual concerns/questions. While I will do my best to respond to emails within 24 hours, you will more likely receive email responses from me on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 8:00am-10:00am EST

ELMS: I will send IMPORTANT announcements via ELMS messaging. You must make sure that your email & announcement notifications (including changes in assignments and/or due dates) are enabled in ELMS so you do not miss any messages. You are responsible for checking your email and Canvas/ELMS inbox with regular frequency.

Communication with Peers

With a diversity of perspectives and experience, we may find ourselves in disagreement and/or debate with one another. As such, it is important that we agree to conduct ourselves in a professional manner and that we work together to foster and preserve a virtual classroom environment in which we can respectfully discuss and deliberate controversial questions.

I encourage you to confidently exercise your right to free speech—bearing in mind, of course, that you will be expected to craft and defend arguments that support your position. Keep in mind, that free speech has its limit and this course is NOT the space for hate speech, harassment, and derogatory language. I will make every reasonable attempt to create an atmosphere in which each student feels comfortable voicing their argument without fear of being personally attacked, mocked, demeaned, or devalued.

Any behavior (including harassment, sexual harassment, and racially and/or culturally derogatory language) that threatens this atmosphere will not be tolerated. Please alert me immediately if you feel threatened, dismissed, or silenced at any point during our semester together and/or if your engagement in discussion has been in some way hindered by the learning environment.

Statement on Diversity and Inclusivity

The Government and Politics department deeply values the voices and perspectives of all people. We are committed to having a diverse department that recognizes and appreciates the differences in race, ethnicity, culture, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, abilities, class, nationality, and other factors. Our department prioritizes diversity and seeks to foster a diverse community reflected in its faculty, staff, and students.

In this class, students are invited to share their thoughts and a diversity of opinions is welcome. Respectful communication is expected, even when expressing differing perspectives. Supporting one's statement with research findings is encouraged. In accordance with free speech statutes, speech that contains threats of violence is prohibited.

Reporting Racism and Other Forms of Hate and Bias

If you experience racism or other forms of bias in this class or any GVPT course, we encourage you to do at least one of the following:

- Please report the experience to the instructor or teaching assistant
- Report the experience to David Cunningham, the GVPT Director of Undergraduate Studies at dacunnin@umd.edu
- Report the experience to the GVPT Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion committee, led by Professor Antoine Banks at abanks12@umd.edu

Please also report all incidents of hate and bias to the Office of Diversity and Inclusion at <https://diversity.umd.edu/bias/>.

Major Assignments

Attendance and Participation

The plan is for our course to meet in person this fall. However, I have designed this class so that our meetings, class assignments, and other class elements can be adapted to other formats.

I expect you to come prepared to attend and participate in class in a way that demonstrates comprehension of the assigned reading. This may involve pop quizzes, which will be given at my discretion. If you are reading this sentence, you qualify for extra credit. Email me and I will add one extra point to the top of your grade. Reading the syllabus is important!

IMPORTANT: Pop quizzes will take place at the beginning of the class session. If you are late, I will still collect all quizzes 15 minutes after the start of class, regardless of successful completion. Any quiz missed due to an unexcused absence will result in a zero grade (with no exceptions). An absence will only be excused if you present the appropriate documentation. If you miss a quiz due to an excused absence, you must notify me within one week following your return to class in order to arrange a makeup. Failure to arrange a makeup date within this one-week period will result in a zero grade for the missed quiz.

Government & Politics Subject Pool Participation

Scholarly discovery depends, in large part, on research methods. Exposure to research methods is a valuable learning tool for students trying to understand research in political science. Some of the most exciting and cutting-edge research is being conducted right here at Maryland, and so there’s no better opportunity to learn about research in political science than by participating in research studies. The Government and Politics department encourages students to gain hands-on research experience and knowledge. To support students in gaining this knowledge, students who take part in two studies conducted by GVPT faculty and graduate students will receive participation credit. I have allotted 5% of your final course grade to support this endeavor. Students who complete all of the required studies will receive full credit for this grade component; those who do not will receive no credit.

Each study will take about 20-30 minutes to complete. If you prefer not to serve as a participant, you may elect to satisfy the requirement by writing a 3-5 page review of a quantitative research article. (If you are under 18 years old, you must have parental assent on file for you to participate in a research study, or you may choose to write the paper instead.) However, you must notify the Research Administrator before the last day of schedule adjustment for the semester if you wish to register for the research alternative. Please note: you must participate in all of the studies this semester (or write the review paper) to receive credit.

Assignments

You will complete five written assignments over the course of the class. The assignments will ask you to apply material you learned in class and through the assigned readings to a current topic in American politics that interests you. The goal of the assignments are to apply what you have learned in class to the outside world of politics. Details for each assignment will be provided two weeks before they are due. All assignments will be due at the beginning of class on the assignment due date. Please bring a printed copy of your assignment to class with you. Late papers will be accepted, but will be subject to a 10% penalty per day beyond the due date. Your lowest assignment grade will be dropped and not counted toward your final grade.

Grading Structure

Assignment	Percentage %
Assignments	80%
Class Participation and Engagement	15%
GVPT Subject Pool	5%
Total	100%

Academic Integrity

The University's [Code of Academic Integrity](#) is designed to ensure that the principles of academic honesty and integrity are upheld. In accordance with this code, the university does not tolerate academic dishonesty. Please ensure that you fully understand this code and its implications because all acts of academic dishonesty will be dealt with in accordance with the provisions of this code. All students are expected to adhere to this Code. It is your responsibility to read it and know what it says, so you can start your professional life on the right path. **As future professionals, your commitment to high ethical standards and honesty begins with your time at the university.**

It is important to note that course assistance websites, such as CourseHero, are not permitted sources, unless the instructor explicitly gives permission for you to use one of these sites. Material taken or copied from these sites can be deemed unauthorized material and a violation of academic integrity. These sites offer information that might not be accurate and that shortcut the learning process, particularly the critical thinking steps necessary for college-level assignments.

Additionally, it is understandable that students may use a variety of online or virtual forums for course-wide discussion (e.g., GroupME or WeChat). Collaboration in this way regarding concepts discussed in this course is permissible. However, collaboration on graded assignments is strictly prohibited unless otherwise stated. Examples of prohibited collaboration include: asking classmates for answers on quizzes or exams, asking for access codes to clicker polls, etc.

Grades

Grades are based upon how many points you earn according to the following distribution:

A+	“Excellent mastery of the subject”	97-100 pts.
A		93-96 pts.
A-		90-92 pts.
B+	“Good mastery of the subject”	87-89 pts.
B		83-86 pts.
B-		80-82 pts.
C+	“Acceptable mastery of the subject”	77-79 pts.
C		73-76 pts.
C-		70-72 pts.
D+	“Borderline understanding of the subject”	67-69 pts.
D		63-66 pts.
D-		60-62 pts.
F	“Failure to understand the subject”	fewer than 60 pts.

All assessment scores will be posted on the course ELMS page. If you would like to review any of your grades (including the exams), or have questions about how something was scored, please email me to schedule a time for us to meet and discuss.

Course Outline

Note: Additional readings each week will be made available on ELMS.

Week	Date/Topic	Assignments	Reading Assignments
1	August 30 & September 1 Introduction, Collective Action Problems		Kernell et al Chapter 1
2	September 6 (LABOR DAY) & September 8 Founding and the Constitution		Kernell et al Chapter 2
3	September 13 & 15 Constitution & Federalism		Kernell et al Chapters 2 & 3
4	September 20 & 22 Federalism and Civil Liberties	Federalism Assignment Due 9/20	Kernell et al Chapters 3 & 5
5	September 27 & 29 Civil Rights		Kernell et al Chapter 4
6	October 4 & 6 Congress	Civil Rights/Civil Liberties Assn. Due 10/4	Kernell et al Chapter 6
7	October 11 & 13 The Presidency		Kernell et al Chapter 7
8	October 18 & 20 The Bureaucracy		Kernell et al Chapter 8
9	October 25 & 27 The Judiciary		Kernell et al Chapter 9
10	November 1 & 3 Public Opinion	Political Institutions Assignment due 11/1	Kernell et al Chapter 10
11	November 8 & 10 Participation and Voting		Kernell et al Chapter 11
12	November 15 & 17 Campaigns and Elections		Kernell et al Chapter 11
13	November 22 & 24 (THANKGIVING) Interest Groups	P.O./Elections Assignment due 11/22	Kernell et al Chapter 13
14	November 29 & December 1 Interest Groups & Political Parties		Kernell et al Chapter 13 & 12
15	December 6 & 8 Political Parties & The Media		Kernell et al Chapter 12 & 14
16	December 13 The Media & Final Wrap-Up		Kernell et al Chapter 14
17	December 17 – Final Exam	The Media Assignment due 12/17	

Resources & Accommodations

Accessibility and Disability Services

The University of Maryland is committed to creating and maintaining a welcoming and inclusive educational, working, and living environment for people of all abilities. The University of Maryland is also committed to the principle that no qualified individual with a disability shall, on the basis of disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs, or activities of the University, or be subjected to discrimination. The [Accessibility & Disability Service \(ADS\)](#) provides reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals to provide equal access to services, programs and activities. ADS cannot assist retroactively, so it is generally best to request accommodations several weeks before the semester begins or as soon as a disability becomes known. Any student who needs accommodations should contact me as soon as possible so that I have sufficient time to make arrangements.

For assistance in obtaining an accommodation, contact Accessibility and Disability Service at 301-314-7682, or email them at adsfrontdesk@umd.edu. Information about [sharing your accommodations with instructors](#), [note taking assistance](#) and more is available from the [Counseling Center](#).

Student Resources and Services

Taking personal responsibility for your own learning means acknowledging when your performance does not match your goals and doing something about it. I hope you will come talk to me so that I can help you find the right approach to success in this course, and I encourage you to visit [UMD's Student Academic Support Services website](#) to learn more about the wide range of campus resources available to you.

In particular, everyone can use some help sharpening their communication skills (and improving their grade) by visiting [UMD's Writing Center](#) and schedule an appointment with the campus Writing Center.

You should also know there are a wide range of resources to support you with whatever you might need ([UMD's Student Resources and Services website](#) may help). If you feel it would be helpful to have someone to talk to, visit [UMD's Counseling Center](#) or [one of the many other mental health resources on campus](#).

Basic Needs Security

If you have difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or lack a safe and stable place to live, please visit [UMD's Division of Student Affairs website](#) for information about resources the campus offers you and let me know if I can help in any way.

Technology Policy

Please refrain from using cellphones, laptops, and other electronic devices during class sessions unless we have designated such use as part of a class exercise.

Course Evaluation

Please submit a course evaluation through CourseEvalUM in order to help faculty and administrators improve teaching and learning at Maryland. All information submitted to CourseEvalUM is confidential. Campus will notify you when CourseEvalUM is open for you to complete your evaluations for fall semester courses. Please go directly to the [Course Eval UM website](#) to complete your evaluations. By completing all of your evaluations each semester, you will have the privilege of accessing through Testudo, the evaluation reports for the thousands of courses for which 70% or more students submitted their evaluations.