

POL 1100 D: Politics of the US – Spring 2021
Meeting Time: Mon/Wed. 11:00 am – 12:15 pm
Zoom Link

<https://merrimack.zoom.us/j/91847963893>

Classroom: Cushing 10

Instructor: Dr. Kirstie Lynn Dobbs

Teaching Assistant: Maeve Dubiel; dubielm@merrimack.edu

Office: Cushing Hall 17b

Office Hours: Virtual from 1:00 - 5:00 pm; also by appointment

Office Hours Zoom Link

<https://merrimack.zoom.us/j/99900279201>

Email: dobbsk@merrimack.edu

Course Description

This course is designed to be an introduction to American government, its historical foundations, institutions, and political processes. We examine how our political system was designed and how it has changed over time, which includes a discussion on democracy, the Constitution, federalism, civil liberties, and civil rights. We also discuss the role and scope of government as it was conceived by the Founders and as it is viewed today by discussing the various institutions in American government, such as Congress, the presidency, and the judiciary. The role of public opinion and the media on political socialization in politics will also be discussed. This course will place a heavy emphasis on political behavior which includes interest groups, political parties, voting behavior, nominations, campaigns, and elections. Finally, we examine public policy by focusing on domestic and economic policy in the United States. To achieve these objectives, I have chosen a textbook that uses the tools of comparison and historical analysis to help you understand American politics.

The pedagogical method applied to this class is a mixture of a lecture-based and active model of teaching. Students are expected to take notes during lectures and are also expected to be actively engaged in classroom activities and discussions. Furthermore, students will participate in an experiential learning activity that takes place over the last six weeks of the course.

Attendance will be taken at the start of each class. If a student is more than 15 min late without notice, they will be counted as tardy. Be on time!

Readings

Maltese et al., *American Democracy in Context* (CQ Press, 1st edition, 2021). You will want to purchase the Vantage Courseware for this book. The Vantage Courseware includes the ebook and all of the class multimedia exercises and quizzes. **The access code for this course when you set up your Vantage account is DOBBSV-7865.** We will set-up your account during the first week of class.

In addition to this book there will be supplemental readings that will be available on the course's blackboard course page. Readings should be completed *before* coming to class to enhance and facilitate lectures and class discussion. You should anticipate approximately 60 - 100 pages of reading per week.

Recommended Resources for Additional Exploration

The Enduring Democracy student companion website:

- <http://edge.sagepub.com/maltese>
- This site is a particularly good resource for review of course materials.

Email Correspondence

I am very flexible and more than happy to accommodate students based on their needs. Students may email me at any time during any day of the week to ask for extensions or other accommodations. However, please give me at least 24 hours to respond. Also, I typically do not answer emails on the weekends. If you email me Friday night after 5:00 pm, please do not expect a response till Monday morning. If you email me after 5:00 pm during the week, please do not expect an email till the following day. I am not your mother, your doctor, or a police woman, so I am sure nothing you have to contact me about constitutes an emergency :)

Participation and Engagement

This course includes synchronous and asynchronous instruction, and students are expected to attend the course synchronously each week, but they do have the option of watching the recorded instructions at a later time if it is not possible to make it to class. If you would like access to the recorded lectures, please contact me directly. Also, students will be able to complete the weekly engagement points if they miss class by completing the Nearpod presentation. Presentations with access codes are located on the blackboard. Students are strongly encouraged to attend synchronously as much as possible. Should you anticipate that you will not be able to attend synchronous sessions on a regular basis, please speak to your instructor.

Missing Class

Things are weird right now. You might have to miss class for a variety of reasons. Luckily for you, all of the class materials are available online. If you cannot attend class, you will need to complete the discussion questions under each module. You will also be able to access the recorded class via blackboard. If you miss class, you are expected to complete ALL asynchronous assignments in the module by SUNDAY at midnight of that module week. Accommodations can be made, but you need to alert me before the assigned due date that you need an extension!

Credit Justification Statement

In this course, students will be expected to do the following amount of work:

- Classroom hours: 1.5 per week
- Reading per week: 4-5 hours per week (on average)
- Prep work for class-based discussion: 2-3 per week (on average)

- Data analysis and writing: 2-3 per week (on average)
- Video exercises and critical thinking tasks: 1-2 per week (on average)
- Exam preparation: 1 hour per week (on average)
- Total: 11.5-15.5 hours per week

Access to Blackboard

All course materials will be uploaded to Blackboard. This includes class lectures (videos), rubrics, and assignment sheets. Grades will also be posted on this site. To access Blackboard, go to <https://blackboard.merrimack.edu/ultra/institution-page> and use your Merrimack login credentials to access the course site.

Learning Outcomes

The main goal of this course is to help students feel more **empowered** regarding their ability to understand and be active in U.S. politics and how it compares to other countries around the world. After completing the course each student should:

- ❖ Explore what makes the U.S. system work as it does, what difference it makes, and why we should care;
- ❖ Investigate the roots and evolution of the U.S. system, allowing you to more knowledgeably evaluate how and why the U.S. system came to exist in its current form;
- ❖ Understand the policymaking process in the United States;
- ❖ Understand how our particular form of democracy works and how it came to be;
- ❖ Recognize and evaluate the basic debates and issues in American government and American political history;
- ❖ Explain and critically assess the formal and informal political institutions and their respective roles in American politics;
- ❖ Identify and describe the key functions of the three branches of government; and
- ❖ Assess the causes and consequences of different forms of political participation, and outline the ways in which individuals and groups can affect political outcomes in the United States.

Grading

Civic Engagement Project 25%
 Chapter Tests 12%
 Book Exercises 21%
 Weekly Engagement Points 42%

Grading Scale

A 93-100	C 73-76
A- 90-92	C- 70-72
B+ 87-89	D+ 67-69
B 83-86	D 63-66
B- 80-82	D- 60-62
C+ 77-79	F 59 and below

Assignments

Civic Engagement Project (25%)

In groups of 3-4 students, you will be assigned to a community group that is working to solve environmental issues/priorities in their local area. These groups are in need of assistance in raising awareness, gathering information, and engaging their community about their environmental projects. Throughout the semester, you will co-create an action plan with your assigned group. These action plans might include but are not limited to helping leaders access/create twitter accounts, updating their Facebook profiles, creating wikipedia pages, curating social media content to share online, writing op-eds for local newspapers, creating flyers that provide publicly accessible information. You will receive a detailed timeline in class regarding due dates. You will have several check-points throughout the semester, and a post-reflection assignment associated with this project.

You will work in groups with students in the Early College Program and with full-time Merrimack students on this project.

Semester Quizzes (12%)

You will take 12 quizzes throughout the semester. These quizzes are available on Blackboard within each course module. You are expected to take this quiz by midnight the Sunday prior to the class officially lecturing on that module.

Book Exercises (21%)

Within each chapter, there are several exercises for you to complete in order to enhance understanding of chapter material. These activities take the form of videos, data, and podcasts. You will need to complete each of these activities located within the module folder for that week of class. All activities are due by Sunday at midnight of that week.

Weekly Engagement Points (42% - 3% per week)

Each week, you will be awarded engagement points for responding to discussion questions, polls, quiz questions, and other activities in class. All of these activities are accessible in the Nearpod presentation that is used to guide the lecture in class. If you cannot attend class, you will complete the Nearpod lecture at your own pace via an accessible link on Blackboard. These links are located in the Nearpod Presentation folder. The access codes associated with each presentation are also located in the folder.

Suggested News Outlets

- *The Washington Post*
- *The New York Times*
- *The Economist*
- CNN
- NPR Politics Podcast; NPR's Up First
- New York Times' The Daily
- BBC Global News Podcast

Due Dates and Late Policy:

All assignments must be turned in on their due date through Blackboard. Students must be present for exams and the group presentations. Only unforeseen emergencies with valid documentation will permit students to remake exams and their group presentation. Any assignments that are turned in late will receive a 5 percent deduction for each day (24 hours) that the assignment is tardy.

Assignments that are five days late will no longer be accepted, and you will receive a zero on the assignment.

Please anticipate all possible contingencies (computer failure, printer issues, etc.) and please contact me before or as soon as possible if an issue arises. If a student contacts me about an issue after the assignment is a due, I can no longer make accommodations for that assignment.

Missed classes/Late Assignments: The only excusable reasons for missing a class or exam or handing in an assignment late are serious illnesses and family emergencies. In either case you must both 1) notify me of your situation in a timely manner and 2) provide appropriate documentation. Assignments handed in late without documentation will be penalized by 10% for each date they are late.

Academic Accommodations from the Accessibility Services Office

Regardless of whether the course or the student is on-campus or remote, Merrimack College provides reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities through the Accessibility Services Office. Students who have, or think they may have, a disability are invited to contact the Accessibility Services Office via the online request form found on the Accessibility Services website: www.merrimack.edu/aso, email accessibilityservices@merrimack.edu or by visiting us on the third floor of McQuade Library (subject to change if the college is remote).

Students are encouraged to contact the office as soon as possible via the website or via email at accessibilityservices@merrimack.edu to ensure adequate time to meet and create a plan. Students already registered with Accessibility Services are encouraged semesterly to request for their letters to be emailed and students are responsible to then email the letter to their instructors personally. The Accessibility Services Testing Center remains available to students whether in-person or remote. While it is understood that some students will not use all accommodations in all courses, accommodations can not be made retroactively.

Statement of Community Standards

The following statement is taken from Merrimack College's Student Handbook under Community Standards.

Before all else, the students, faculty, staff, and administration of Merrimack College form an Augustinian community that supports and challenges its members in the pursuit of truth. We declare and celebrate our common purpose, and commit ourselves:

- to serious study, generous service and courageous leadership
- to academic integrity and personal growth
- to civilized discourse in the exchange of ideas
- to friendship, diversity, and mutual respect
- to primacy of conscience and the spiritual life
- to responsibility for the common good, and
- to pride in our school and ourselves

Students have the right to express their views so long as there is neither use nor threat of force, nor interference with the rights of others to express their views (Faculty Handbook 2016, 50).

Academic Integrity Code

The following excerpt is taken from Merrimack’s Faculty Handbook and addresses issues surrounding plagiarism. “Plagiarism is intellectual theft. At Merrimack, the failure to acknowledge the intellectual contributions of others is considered plagiarism. It is important to avoid even unintentional plagiarism by being familiar with accepted ways to acknowledge sources and by developing good note-taking and research habits.” Violations of academic integrity also include cheating on exams, fabrication, complicity, appropriation, multiple submissions, and unsanctioned collaboration. Please refer to the following link for a detailed review of the academic integrity code and penalty procedures.
<https://www.merrimack.edu/live/files/365-faculty-handbook>.

A student who violates the academic integrity code in a course may receive an F for the course, or, at the discretion of the instructor, a less severe penalty. If you withdraw from any course in which you have been accused of an academic integrity violation for which the penalty is F for the course, the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs will record the grade of WF on your transcript (Faculty Handbook 2016). Further action will be taken at the college level.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week of 2/1 Course Intro

- Module 1 (in-class)
 - Class lecture

- Asynchronous Work DUE SUNDAY FEBRUARY 7
 - Read Maltese Ch. 1
 - Ch. 1 Book Exercises
 - Ch. 1 Test

Week of 2/8 Democracy and American Politics

- Module 2 (in-class)
 - Class lecture (ch. 1)

- Asynchronous Work DUE SUNDAY FEBRUARY 14 <3
 - Read Ch. 2
 - Ch. 2 Book Exercises
 - Ch. 2 Test

Week of 2/15 The Founding and the Constitution

- Module 3 (in-class)
 - Class lecture (ch. 2)

- Asynchronous Work DUE SUNDAY FEBRUARY 21
 - Read Maltese Ch. 3
 - Ch. 3 Book Exercises
 - Ch. 3 Test

Week of 2/22 Federalism

- Module 4 (in-class)
 - Class lecture (ch. 3)

- Asynchronous Work DUE SUNDAY FEBRUARY 28
 - Read Maltese Ch. 4
 - Ch. 4 Book Exercises
 - Ch. 4 Test

Week of 3/1 Civil Liberties

- Module 5 (in-class)
 - Class lecture (ch. 4)
 - Students matched with community groups

- Asynchronous Work DUE SUNDAY MARCH 7
 - Read Maltese Ch. 5
 - Ch. 5 Book Exercises
 - Ch. 5 Test

Week of 3/8 Civil Rights

- Module 6 (in-class)
 - Class lecture (ch. 5)
 - Watch *After Selma* and complete blackboard questions

- Asynchronous Work DUE SUNDAY MARCH 14
 - Read Maltese Ch. 6
 - Ch. 6 Book Exercises
 - Ch. 6 Test
 - Civic Engagement Project Check-Point 1

Week of 3/15

- Module 7 (in-class)

- Class lecture (ch. 6)
- Asynchronous Work Quiz DUE SUNDAY MARCH 21
 - Read Maltese Ch. 7
 - Ch. 7 Book Exercises
 - Ch. 7 Test

Week of 3/22

- Module 8 (in-class)
 - Class lecture (ch. 7)
 - Watch “Dark Money” and complete guiding and critical thinking questions
 - Read “Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens” by Martin Gilens and Benjamin Page
- Asynchronous Work DUE SUNDAY MARCH 28
 - Read Maltese Ch. 8
 - Ch. 8 Book Exercises
 - Ch. 8 Test
 - Civic Engagement Project Check-Point 2

Week of 3/29

- Module 9 (in-class)
 - Class lecture (ch. 8)
 - Fault Lines: “Should the Electoral College Be Replaced?”
- Asynchronous Work DUE SUNDAY APRIL 4
 - Read Maltese Ch. 9
 - Ch. 9 Book Exercises
 - Ch. 9 Test

Week of 4/5

- Module 10 (in-class)
 - Class lecture (ch. 9)
- Asynchronous Work DUE SUNDAY APRIL 11
 - Read Maltese Ch. 10
 - Ch. 10 Book Exercises
 - Ch. 10 Test
 - Civic Engagement Project Check-Point 3

Week of 4/12

- Module 11
 - Class lecture (ch. 10)
 - Read Fault Lines Ch. 9: Public Opinion and the Media
- Asynchronous Work DUE SUNDAY APRIL 18

- Read Maltese Ch. 11, 12, 14
- Ch. 11, 12, and 14 Book Exercises
- Ch. 11, 12, and 14 Test

Week of 4/19

- Module 12 (in-class)
 - Class lecture (ch. 11, 12, 14)
- Asynchronous work DUE SUNDAY APRIL 25
 - Read Maltese Ch. 15 and 15
 - Ch. 15 Book Exercises
 - Ch. 15 Test
 - Civic Engagement Project Check-Point 4

Week of 4/26

- Module 13 (in-class)
 - Class lecture (ch. 15)
- Asynchronous Work DUE SUNDAY MAY 2
 - Wrap-Up Civic Engagement Project with Groups

Week of 5/3

- Module 14
 - Civic Engagement Project Post-Reflection (Due by the end of final exam period)