I. Course Overview

Public opinion polls show that we Americans actually know very little about our political system. We know who the President of the United States is but a large number of us cannot name the vice president and even fewer of us know the names of our U.S. senators and representatives. We know little about the policymaking process and almost nothing about the federal budget. We are critical when congress and the president bicker and fail to address what we believe are the important issues of the day.

This class is designed to help students get a start in knowing more about the challenges of governing in a democratic system, the structure of our federal government, the relationship of the states to the national government, the powerful influence of the media and interest groups, the importance of civil rights and liberties, and the growing significance of the global economy and international affairs. And finally, we will try to draw some conclusion about what kind of government we actually have – pluralist or majoritarian democracy, or maybe an elitist plutocracy.

II. Class Dates

September 04 Introduction to the class
Chapter 1: Freedom, Order or Equality
Chapter 2: Majoritarian or Pluralist Democracy
11 Chapter 3: The Constitution
Chapter 4: Federalism
18 Chapter 5: Public Opinion and Political Socialization
Chapter 6: The Media
25 Chapter 7: Participation and Voting
Chapter 8: Political Parties
October 02 Chapter 9: Nominations, Elections, and Campaigns
Chapter 10: Interest Groups
Review for 1st Exam
09 Mid-Semester Exam - Text Chapters 1-10
III. Textbook, Tests and Other Important Information

Books: There are three books for the class.

Janda, Kenneth, et.al., *The Challenge of Democracy* (Houghton Mifflin, 11th edition, 2010). We cover this textbook chapter by chapter as the syllabus indicates. The text has six main parts. Part One discusses the purposes of government and the models of democracy. The authors then discuss why they think the United States is a pluralist democracy and not a majoritarian democracy or elitist plutocracy. Part Two covers the U.S. Constitution and our federal system. Part Three discusses the role of the media, special interest groups, political parties and other important elements in our participation in the political process. Part Four deals with the structure of our national government with chapters on each branch and the federal bureaucracy. Part Five deals with our civil liberties and civil rights. Part Six treats the process of making public policy by discussing how public policy is developed and implemented. This section then discusses three major public policy arenas: economic policy, domestic policy, and global policy. Both the mid-semester and final exams are based on this text.

Richard Beeman, *Plain, Honest Men: The Making of the American Constitution*. This book tells the story of the four-month constitutional convention held in Philadelphia during the summer 1787 where the constitution of the United States was hammered out by some 50 men with strong and differing opinions of what the nation of the United States should be. A book review is due on the date noted in the syllabus.
Thomas Friedman and Michael Mandelbaum, *That Use To Be Us*. This thought provoking book is written by two very distinguished authors. Thomas Friedman is a New York Times communist and three-time winner of the Pulitzer Prize. Professor Michael Mandelbaum (Johns Hopkins University) is one of American’s most distinguished foreign policy experts. The two combine to write a very critical analysis of the very serious problems the United States has got itself into and a proposal for how to get us out of them. The book received critical acclaim when it came out in 2011 and continues to be an important point of discussion among scholars, pundits and analysts.

**Tests**

Both tests are a combination of fill-in-the-blank or short answer essays. You are expected to take the tests as scheduled. If circumstances prevent this, and you notify me ahead of the scheduled test, arrangements can be made for a different test time without penalty. Any student missing the test on the scheduled date and who has not notified me ahead of the test may still take a make-up test within a week but will be penalized 15 percent. No test may be made up after a week has passed. Each test is worth 100 points.

**Book Review**

Book reviews are required for both *American Lion* and *Plain*, and *Honest Men*. These book reviews are to be no longer than three pages, typed and double spaced. Each book should provide: a short overview of the author, his purpose writing the book, your evaluation of how well he accomplished his task, and finally whether you think the professor should continue to use this book for this class or find a new one. Each book review is worth 50 points.

**Attendance and Bonus Points**

I take attendance and will provide bonus points equal to 3 percent of the total points possible for all who have perfect attendance and 2 percent for all who miss only one class.

**Points Possible and Extra Credit**

Each of the two tests is worth 100 points. Each of the two book reviews is worth 50 points. The total points possible for the class, then is 300 points. There will be no extra credit reports, papers, etc. other than the bonus points possible for perfect attendance.

**Contacting the Professor**

I am an adjunct professor and therefore have no campus office or phone. However, I want to be available and accessible. I encourage you to email me when you have questions or concerns and I will respond quickly, usually within 24 hours. You can also call me at my home anytime. If I am not there (which is usually the case) leave me a message and I will call you back, usually that evening when I get home from work. If all else fails you may call me at work, but I prefer to have this as a last option. If you miss class, I strongly encourage you to
contact me as soon as possible to see what you missed. Since my work sometimes forces me to change the agenda at short notice, consistent attendance or immediate contact with me after missing a class is to your definite advantage.