**POLS 103: American Politics (Fall 2022)**

Monday, Wednesday, & Friday 12:00-12:50pm   
Classroom: CSB 272   
Instructor: Andre P. Audette   
Email: aaudette@monmouthcollege.edu   
Andre’s Office: CSB 330   
Politics Party Time (office hours): 2-3pm Monday-Friday, and by appointment

*“Democracy is not about words, but action.” – Eleanor Roosevelt*

**Course Description**

Citizens, candidates, and commentators of all sorts throughout the history of the United States have acclaimed the virtues of democracy in America. Some have even called the U.S. the world’s leading democracy. But are these words reflected in the reality – that is to say, the actions – of our government? The question of the extent to which our government is democratic is the fundamental question in American politics, and the one which we will address in this course. Do we have too much democracy? Too little? Or perhaps the right amount? Have we always been a democracy, have we ever, or will we be in the future?

In order to answer these questions, we will examine the institutions, culture, and people that are part of the American political system. To help you develop skills in thinking about and talking about politics, we’ll also address a variety of ongoing political debates to think about how you fit into American politics today. Ultimately, *it’s up to you to decide*: is the United States truly a representative democracy?

**Course Objectives**

After successfully completing this course, you will be able to better:

Understand the basic components of American politics and government Evaluate whether the United States has a democratic system of governance Articulate your position on important ongoing debates in American politics Think critically about politics, beyond what we hear in the news   
Synthesize and intelligently express your own points of view, both orally and in writing

1

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|  | **ISS** – Inquiry in the Social Sciences courses allow students to analyze evidence to come to informed conclusions about the various ways that people interact with one another in cultures and societies across human history. |

**\*More info about the core curriculum is available on Moodle\***

**Required Texts**

The following book is available in the campus bookstore or through other online retailers. Please be sure to purchase the correct edition.

Dahl. 2003. *How Democratic is the American Constitution?*, 2nd ed.

Additionally, you can download a free copy of our main textbook for the course:

OpenStax. 2021. *American Government 3e*.

https://openstax.org/details/books/american-government-3e

Other course materials will be made available on Moodle or via email.

**Course Requirements**

To help you achieve the course objectives, final grades will be assessed through the following evaluations:

2 Exams (30%, 15% each)   
2 Lab Reports (30%, 15% each)   
2 Homework Assignments (10%, 5% each) Final Paper (20%)   
Participation (10%)

**\*Further information on these course requirements will be distributed in class\***

***Exams***   
There will be two in-class, closed-book exams this semester. They are not cumulative and will include fill-in-the-blank, multiple choice, short answer, and longer answer questions.

Exams will cover material from lectures, class activities, reading assignments, and discussion.

2

***Lab Reports***   
Nearly every week we will discuss an ongoing debate in American politics. Two times throughout the semester, you will be asked to choose one of the debates to write a short reaction defending one side of the issue. These reports should be about 3-5 pages long.

The report should include a thesis as to why one side of the debate is more correct than the other, followed by your reasons. The main focus should be your critique of the arguments, arguing for or against one side, and/or offering a perspective not taken by either side. Keep the summarizing to a minimum – only enough to show that you understand the debate. The main goal of these papers is to help you develop arguments based on logic and facts rather than unsubstantiated claims and opinions. You are not required to do any outside research (but please cite your sources if you do), and you will not be graded on which side of the debate you take. Papers should be turned in via email only.

***Homework Assignments***   
The homework assignments are two short papers (about 2-3 pages long) to prepare you for the final paper in this class. The first will ask you to select an event during your lifetime and discuss how it demonstrates whether the U.S. is or is not democratic. The second will ask you to choose a measure of U.S. democracy (provided to you) and write a summary and reaction to that measure. You will do a short in-class presentation about each homework assignment. Homework assignments should be turned in via email only.

***Final Paper***   
The question for the final paper is the theme of the class: to what extent does American politics and government meet the requirements of a representative democracy? *(Do we have too much democracy? Too little? Or perhaps the right amount? Have we always been a democracy, have we ever, or will we be in the future?)* You should develop an argument in about 5-7 pages and cover what you believe to be the main issues in support of your argument and defending against the main critiques of your argument. Papers should be turned in via email only.

***Participation***   
A large part of our class will be based on discussion, especially during our debates; therefore, it is essential that you come to class ready to actively participate. This includes (but is not limited to): attending class regularly, carefully reading the assigned texts, sharing your thoughts, opinions, and insights in discussion, considering and raising opposing viewpoints, engaging in respectful dialogue with others, listening attentively to others’ perspectives, and following the discussion policies listed in this syllabus.

3

**Course Engagement Expectations**

Classroom activities (2.5 hours/week)   
Reading and class prep (5 hours/week)   
Papers (3 hours/week)   
Exam prep (1.5 hours/week)

Total: 12 hours/week

**Grade Scale**

A (93-100), A- (90-92.9), B+ (87-89.9), B (83-86.9), B- (80-82.9), C+ (77-79.9), C (73-76.9), C- (70-72.9), D+ (67-69.9), D (63-66.9), D- (60-62.9), F (<60)

**Course Policies and Additional Resources**

***Academic Honesty***   
It is your responsibility to be familiar with and uphold the academic honesty policy of MC, as defined in the Scots Guide (https://www.monmouthcollege.edu/offices/student-affairs/academic-regulations/). Any student found to have violated these policies of academic integrity will receive a failing grade on the assignment and may be subject to further penalties by the College, including suspension or expulsion. If you have any questions about avoiding plagiarism or any of the other policies, please come talk to me.

***Late Work/Extra Credit***   
An important part of academic and career preparation is the ability to meet deadlines and fulfill the requirements of your work. If you must be late with an assignment, please contact me before the deadline and propose a new due date, which we can negotiate. Otherwise late work will be assessed a penalty of a half letter grade per 0-24 hour period it is late. Additionally, there will be no extra credit given on an individual basis.

***Attendance***   
Class attendance is expected, but not required, in this course. Beware that it is difficult to pass this course if you have a number of unexcused absences, as it is impossible to participate if you do not attend class or make other arrangements with me. Furthermore, you are responsible for all of the material covered in class, and it is thus in your best interest to attend every class. If you must miss a class, it is your responsibility to get notes from another student and to contact me about any makeup work.

4

***Discussion Policies***   
The goal of discussion is to understand and learn from the viewpoints and experiences of others in order to better understand our own opinions and the functioning of the world around us. Specifically, our goal in this course is to consider various components of and to think critically about American democracy. Just as multiple voices are necessary for a healthy democracy, your participation is important for the learning experiences of your fellow classmates and your instructor. Therefore, participation will be graded on the quality, and not just quantity, of your contribution to this endeavor. To create an   
environment where everyone has the opportunity to participate, respect for individual differences and viewpoints will be maintained at all times. In sum, you are allowed and encouraged to disagree with other students, the professor, or the texts, but disagreement should always be expressed in a respectful manner inside and outside of the class.

***Accessibility Services***   
If you have a disability or had academic accommodations in high school or another college, you may be eligible for academic accommodations at Monmouth College under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Monmouth College is committed to equal   
educational access. To discuss any of the services offered, please call or meet with Jennifer Sanberg, Associate Director of Academic Support & Accessibility Services. The ASAS office is located in the ACE space on the first floor of the Hewes Library. They can be reached at 309-457-2257 or via email at academicsupport@monmouthcollege.edu.

***Writing Center***   
The Writing Center offers tutoring for writers from any major, of any writing ability, on any type of writing assignment, and at any stage of their writing process, from planning to drafting to revising to editing. The Writing Center is located on the main floor of the Hewes Library. No appointment is necessary! Visit   
https://www.monmouthcollege.edu/offices/writing-center for the latest information on hours of operation and writing center workshops.

***Student Success at Monmouth College***   
Student Success & Accessibility Services offers FREE resources to assist Monmouth College students with their academic success. Programs include supplemental instruction for select classes, drop-in and appointment tutoring, and individual academic coaching. Their office is here to help all students excel academically, so everyone can work toward better grades, practice stronger study skills, and manage their time better.

5

***Counseling Services***   
Monmouth College provides cost-free, professional and confidential counseling sessions to support you and to help you manage challenges that may impact your personal and academic success. The Counseling Center is located in the upper level of Poling Hall, offices 204 and 216, and the hours are Monday-Friday, 8:30am-5:00pm. To request a confidential appointment online, go to https://titanium.monmouthcollege.edu/ or email   
counselingcenter@monmouthcollege.edu, Cindy Beadles at   
cbeadles@monmouthcollege.edu or Tom Caudill at tcaudill@monmouthcollege.edu.

**COVID Statement**

This semester presents many uncertain circumstances due to the ongoing pandemic. The policies and schedule outlined in this syllabus are subject to change, and I will do my best to provide advance notice for any such changes. Likewise, should your ability to fully participate in the class change over the course of the semester, please reach out to me and we can discuss the best options for moving forward. We’re all in this together!

**Questions, Concerns, Comments**

If you have any questions at any point, please do not hesitate to contact me! I encourage you to come to my office hours even if you just want to discuss politics or some other subject, and I can set up appointments if you are unable to meet during the scheduled times. (Please try to give me at least 24 hours notice if you’d like to make an appointment.)

**Course Outline and Schedule**

\*Reading assignments are to be completed before the date they are listed.

*Wednesday, Aug. 24th – What is democracy anyway (plus introductions and the syllabus)*

*Friday, Aug. 26th – More “what is democracy”: learning from the literature*

American Government 3e chapter 1

*Monday, Aug. 29th – Sick of democracy yet?*

Andre’s “Top 10” Advice for Writing   
Rao et al. “Is America a Democracy? If So, Why Does It Deny Millions the Vote?” Volokh “Is the United States of America a Republic or a Democracy?”

*Wednesday, Aug. 31st – Writing a constitution*

American Government 3e chapter 2

6

*Friday, Sept. 2nd – Lab #1: Which form of democracy better serves the people?*

Constitution lab readings packet   
*Monday, Sept. 5th – The Constitution: A unique illusion?*

Dahl chapters 1-2, appendix A   
*Wednesday, Sept. 7th – Federalism and so so many governments*   
 Dahl chapter 3   
*Friday, Sept. 9th – Lab #2: What should we do about marijuana and who should decide?*

Marijuana lab readings packet   
*Monday, Sept. 12th – Democracy in your lives*   
 **HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT 1 DUE VIA EMAIL BY 12PM (presentations today!)** *Wednesday, Sept. 14th – Pirates, privacy, and protecting your rights*   
 American Government 3e chapter 4   
*Friday, Sept. 16th – Lab #3: Should the U.S. enact stricter gun control laws?*

Gun control lab readings packet   
*Monday, Sept. 19th – Civil rights and America’s original sin*   
 American Government 3e chapter 5   
 Hannah-Jones “America Wasn’t a Democracy, Until Black Americans Made It One” *Wednesday, Sept. 21st – Under the influence?*

American Government 3e chapter 10, pgs. 339-350 only   
*Friday, Sept. 23rd – Lab #4: You decide*   
 Readings will be selected after we decide on the topic for this lab   
*Monday, Sept. 26th – More money, more problems*   
 Knispel “Corporate Money in Politics Threatens US Democracy – Or Does It?” *Wednesday, Sept. 28th – Now the party starts!*

American Government 3e chapter 9, pgs. 303-325 only

7

*Friday, Sept. 30th – …and the party ends the next class.*

Dahl chapter 4 (pgs. 73-91)   
 **LAB REPORT 1 DUE VIA EMAIL BY 12PM**   
 **(Choose from labs 1-4)**   
*Monday, Oct. 3rd – The fourth branch of government*   
 American Government 3e chapter 8, pgs. 265-289 only   
*Wednesday, Oct. 5th – Lab #5: Should the government put an end to fake news?*

Fake news readings packet   
*Friday, Oct. 7th – Review for learning funtime #1 Monday, Oct. 10th – Show me what you know*  **EXAM 1**

*Wednesday, Oct. 12th – Friday, Oct. 14th –* **NO CLASSES (FALL BREAK)**

*Monday, Oct. 17th – At long last…the people!*

Get started on the rest of Dahl (pgs. 91-177) *Wednesday, Oct. 19th – President Tom Brady?*

American Government 3e chapter 6   
*Friday, Oct. 21st – Lab #6: Should Americans know more about politics?*

Political knowledge lab readings packet   
*Monday, Oct. 24th – More public opinion and starting elections*  Finish Dahl by today (pgs. 91-177)   
*Wednesday, Oct. 26th – The one with the most votes (usually) wins*  American Government 3e chapter 7   
*Friday, Oct. 28th – Lab #7: Should we abolish the Electoral College?*

Electoral College lab readings packet   
 8

*Monday, Oct. 31st – Getting involved in politics*   
 Pgs. 386-408 Bond & Smith “Political Participation & Voting Behavior” *Wednesday, Nov. 2nd – Not getting involved in politics*   
 Pgs. 408-420 Bond & Smith “Political Participation & Voting Behavior” *Friday, Nov. 4th – Lab #8: Is low voter turnout a problem for American elections?*

Voter turnout lab readings packet   
*Monday, Nov. 7th – Miley Cyrus, head lice, and Congress*  
 Start American Government 3e chapter 11   
*Wednesday, Nov. 9th – Just a bill*   
 Finish American Government 3e chapter 11   
 Come prepared to discuss last night’s election and the future of U.S. politics *Friday, Nov. 11th – Just scores and scores of democracy*   
 **HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT 2 DUE VIA EMAIL BY 12PM (presentations today!)** *Monday, Nov. 14th – The presidency then and now*   
 American Government 3e chapter 12   
*Wednesday, Nov. 16th – A democracy refresher (cuz we just can’t forget about democracy)*  Beauchamp & Douthat “Is American Democracy Really in Peril?”   
 More In Common “The United States of America: A Democracy Divided?

Romano “Poll: Half of Americans Now Predict U.S. May ‘Cease To Be A Democracy’ Someday”   
*Friday, Nov. 18th – Lab #9: Your choice!*

Readings will be selected after we decide on the topic for this lab *Monday, Nov. 21st – A bureaucracy game*   
 **LAB REPORT 2 DUE VIA EMAIL BY 12PM**   
 **(Choose from labs 5-9)**

*Wednesday, Nov. 23rd – Friday, Nov. 25th –* **NO CLASSES (THANKSGIVING BREAK)**

9

*Monday, Nov. 28th – The least dangerous branch?*

Start American Government 3e chapter 13   
*Wednesday, Nov. 30th – More on the court*   
 Finish American Government 3e chapter 13   
 **Plan to have your thesis for the final paper ready by today!**

*Friday, Dec. 2nd – A conversation on polarization and extra credit*  Polarization readings packet   
*Monday, Dec. 5th – Public policy*   
 Moyo “Ten Warning Signs that Democracies Are Under Siege” Schmitter & Karl “What Democracy Is…And Is Not”

*Wednesday, Dec. 7th – The last day* ☹

**FINAL PAPER DUE VIA EMAIL BY 12PM** *Friday, Dec. 9th – Final exam*   
 **EXAM 2 AT 3PM**

10