REQUIRED TEXTS:

New York Times (daily edition in boxes around campus)

REQUIREMENTS: This course in American politics focuses on the institutions of the Presidency, Congress, federal judiciary, interest groups, political parties and elections. The course will be taught in a lecture and discussion format, with occasional video interludes and outside programs. Students must read assigned items as soon as possible in each section, as lectures will presume familiarity with the reading. Students are responsible for the reading whether or not it is discussed in class. The instructor will indicate if a specific reading is to be completed before the next class session. When such an assignment is made, there will often be a brief quiz at the beginning of the hour to test students’ reading. To incorporate current events into our discussions, students must also read the New York Times articles assigned each day. These assignments will be posted on Moodle and will also be emailed to your Furman account, as will other class announcements and assignments. The instructor will provide additional reading material at times. Exams will cover all these items, so take careful notes or retain copies.

EXAMS: There will be four hour exams, on the days listed below. These will cover materials in each section of the class, but will not be cumulative. A sample test will be provided before the first exam. If you miss an exam due to death or serious illness in the family, or due to your own illness, you must arrange a make-up. All such absences must be excused by the Associate Dean’s office or by a doctor. If you miss an exam without valid excuse, you will receive an "F" on that exam. If you know you must be absent to participate in official University events, such as athletic or debate competition, you must take the exam in advance of the absence. Make sure to inform the instructor well in advance of authorized absences.

OTHER REQUIREMENTS: Not all learning about American politics occurs in the classroom. A wide variety of political events take place on campus every term. This will be especially true this spring as the presidential primaries heat up. You are required to attend six such events and write brief reflection papers (2-3 pages) on each, discussing what you learned and its relation to the class. The instructor will announce such events as they become available. These may be speakers, films, or other meetings. There will be ample options from which to choose (in terms of time, content, and political leaning). In special cases, the entire class may be asked to attend an event for class discussion. Failure to complete this requirement will result in an “F” for the course. If you see an event which you think meets the requirement, ask the instructor to include it in the authorized event list. You should write your report and turn it in soon after the event. All event reports must be turned in no later than Friday, April 22.

GRADES: Each exam counts 20%, for a total of 80% of the final grade. The last 20% will be awarded on the basis of attendance, preparation, reflection papers, quiz performance, other assignments, class discussion and participation. I am very serious about this. Miss class and your grade goes down, prepare and participate knowledgeably and it goes up.

ETHICAL CONDUCT: Your presence in this class signifies that you accept the basic rules of academic honesty discussed in Furman’s booklet, Plagiarism and Academic Integrity. You must not engage in plagiarism or cheating in any form. Such conduct will not be tolerated. Each student will be required to state on each exam that he or she has not committed academic dishonesty.

Another aspect of ethical behavior involves electronic devices. Your learning and that of others is impeded by their classroom use. You must not use cell phones, PDAs, etc. in the classroom at any time. Nor may you leave the room during class to use them. All such devices must be turned off and “stowed” before you enter class. If I hear a phone or see you using one in the classroom, I will deduct 5 points from your participation grade. If it happens a second time, you will receive an F for participation. During exams, you must
put your cell phones or PDAs in a book bag or purse and leave them at the front of the room. If I see a device in your possession once the exam begins (regardless of the reason), you will fail the exam. Laptops and tablets may be used for taking notes, but all other applications (e-mail, internet, etc.) should be closed (not merely minimized). If you use the laptop for any reason other than taking notes, you will lose 10 points from your participation grade and will no longer be allowed to use the laptop in class.

PART ONE: THE PRESIDENCY and EXECUTIVE BRANCH, January 11 to February 3.
READ: The Constitution of the United States
    Coleman, Chapters 1, 3, 14, 16, and 18
TOPICS: Alternative Ways to Understand the Presidency
    1. Constitutional and Legal Theories
    2. Delegated and Statutory Authority
    3. Political Bases of Presidential Power
    4. Power and Personality
    5. Assessment: Obama’s First Term and “Second Term Blues”

Wednesday, February 3: First Hour Examination

READ: Coleman, Chapters 13, 17; Congressional websites; CSPAN
TOPICS: Congressional Action
    1. Members of Congress (brief paper assignment)
    2. House Procedures
    3. Senate Procedures
    4. Conference Committees
    5. Influences on decision-making in Congress

Friday, February 26: Second Hour Examination

READ: Coleman, Chapters 15, and 4, 5 and 6
TOPICS: Politics, Law and the Court
    1. The Federal Courts as Political Institutions
    2. The President and the Supreme Court
    3. Setting the Agenda: How Cases Get to Court
    4. Making the Decision: Internal Procedures
    5. Implementation and Compliance with Decisions

Friday, April 1: Third Hour Examination

PART FOUR: CHANNELS OF REPRESENTATION:
    INTEREST GROUPS, PARTIES AND ELECTIONS, April 4-25.
READ: Coleman, Chapters 7-12
TOPICS: How Americans Influence Government
    1. Channels of Representation
    2. Interest Group Politics
    3. Public Opinion and the Media (brief paper assignment)
    4. Participation and Voting
    5. Parties and Campaigns
    6. Mandates and Meanings

Event Reports Deadline: Friday, April 22, 5:00 p.m.
Exam Schedule for Fourth Hour Examination: Thursday, April 28, 8:30-11:00 a.m.