Introduction: This course is designed to be an introduction to American government, its historical foundations, institutions and political processes. We will examine how our political system was designed, how it has changed over time and how public opinion, the media and the “information age” have affected our government institutions and public policy. We will discuss the role and scope of government as it was conceived by the Founders and as it is viewed today. Finally, we will examine current social policy issues, weigh the costs and benefits of actions and engage in thoughtful discussion of contemporary policies and actions with a view toward how those issues and actions impact the current political scene. As this term coincides with the presidential primary season and interesting races in both parties, we will also consider the candidates and their strategies, the voters, and the possible consequences for candidate selection and the November 2016 presidential election.

Course Evaluation: Grades will be determined by class participation, tests and a paper. All assignments must be completed to pass the course.

Class Participation: Attendance will be taken daily. More than 2 unexcused absences and/or repeated lateness will affect your participation grade. Absences will be excused for medical reasons if the student has a note from the infirmary or doctor or for other circumstances beyond the student’s control. Absences resulting from the student representing Furman University in some capacity will also be excused.

Classes will include discussion and student participation. Keeping up with reading assignments is essential to successful class participation as is attention during lecture and discussion. Laptops and tablets are a distraction to you and those around you. Therefore, unless you have a valid reason which you have discussed with me for using electronic devices, do not bring them to class.

In addition to participation in class, the grade will include out of class observations and written summaries to be submitted no later than April 18. Read the New York Times and/or other periodicals. Keep up with political news and government activities. The first opportunity will be the State of the Union address on Tuesday, January 12 and there will
be many others. Write a brief summary of what you have found and observed, include a newspaper article on the subject that interests you and comment on it. At least 3 of these summaries are required, but more will be warmly received.

Early in the semester, South Carolina will be the focus of primary campaigns for both parties, and participation will also include your attendance at least one campaign function. Watch what is going on, pay attention to the candidates, their staffs and those who support them and attend the event. Engage some of them in a discussion by compiling a few questions to ask and recording their responses and views. Talk with your classmates about upcoming events. You may certainly attend the events together if you prefer. Find at least one article (more is better) in the *New York Times* that relates to the candidate whose campaign you observed, the issues addressed, the voters targeted and/or the possible outcome of the campaign for the candidate. Turn this in to me along with your other written summaries and observations by April 18. All your work should be submitted both electronically and as a hard copy.

So, at least 3 summaries of articles, events, etc., and at least one campaign function will fulfill the participation requirement. You may do more for this assignment, but not less. You may turn the completed assignment in earlier, but not later, and I will be glad to talk with you about the assignment at any time, review preliminary work and consider your ideas and possibilities. A good way to start is by reading the *New York Times* regularly and following this exciting and unusual campaign season. This is a very interesting time to be following politics and government, and the assignment should be more fun than you might expect.

**Exams:** (60%) There will be two tests given during the term as well as a final exam. Each will be a combination of essay questions and identification and/or short essay answers. These exercises will test your mastery of information from the readings, class lectures and class discussions. Each test, including the final exam, will make up 20% of the final grade. An unexcused absence from the final exam will result in an “F” on the exam. If you have been identified as requiring special accommodations for taking tests, please make your own arrangements with Disability Services (2322) prior to the test.

Absolutely no cell phones or other electronic devices will be permitted in the classroom during any test or exam. The penalty for disregarding this may be an “F” on the test. Cheating of any kind on any test or exam may result in a “0” on that test.

**Paper:** (20%) There will be a brief (6-7 page) paper due at the beginning of class on April 8 which should be submitted both as a hard copy and electronically to my e-mail. Based on the assigned book, *Battle for America 2008* the paper will examine events, tactics and political discourse of the 2008 election campaign. More information on the assignment will be given at a later date, but the theme of the paper will be the 2008 election, what factors most influenced the outcome and the implications for the coming election of 2016. Your research must include at least three other sources to expand on the material in the
book but should be focused primarily on *Battle for America*. Be specific, support your observations with facts and form a coherent, well-established conclusion. Your paper should be typed and double-spaced with standard margins and numbered pages. Proofread your work.

Cite the sources you have used in the body of your paper (in-text citations) and list your references alphabetically at the end of your text (works cited) using the MLA method of documentation. Your paper must be your own work. Information on plagiarism and resulting penalties is included in the handout on “Academic Integrity at Furman.” Read it carefully. If you have any questions, ask them. The penalties for plagiarism are severe.

Note that papers are due on April 8 and will be docked up to one letter grade for each day they are late.

If you have questions about any aspect of this assignment or need help getting started, I will be available to meet with you after class, during office hours or at other pre-arranged times. This paper and the book on which it is based should be interesting, challenging and maybe even fun. If you find it a struggle, talk with me, but your first step should be to read *Battle for America* and become familiar with the 2008 election campaign. After that, the paper should be easy.

**Grading Scale:**

- A 93-100, A- 90-92, B+ 88-89, B 83-87, B- 80-82, C+ 78-79, C 73-77,
- C- 70-72, D+ 68-69, D 63-67, D- 60-62. A grade below 60 will be an F.

**Required Publications:** The following books are required. They are available at the Furman bookstore. Assignments are listed below.

- Balz, David and Johnson, Haynes. *Battle for America* 2008. This book is not currently provided in the bookstore but is available in paperback on-line.

Class discussion will often be based on current event issues and public opinion. Keeping up with daily events is essential. You will need to read *The New York Times* regularly. It is available in the Johns Hall breezeway every weekday and at other campus locations.
Course Schedule and Assigned Readings

January 11  
Course Introduction

January 13-20  
Roots of American Government  
Readings: Barbour and White, Chapters 1 and 2; Canon, Chapter 1

January 25-29  
Constitution  
B/W, Chapter 3 and 4; Canon, Chapter 2

February 1-5  
Federalism  
B/W, same as above; Canon, Chapter 3

February 8-12  
Civil Liberties  
B/W, Chapter 5; Canon, Chapter 4 (#22-23)

February 15-19  
Civil Rights  
B/W, Chapter 6; Canon, Chapter 4 (#19-21)

February 22  
MIDTERM EXAM

February 24-29  
Congress  
B/W, Chapter 7; Canon, Chapter 5

March 2-14  
Presidency  
B/W, Chapter 8; Canon, Chapter 6

March 16-18  
Federal Bureaucracy  
B/W, Chapter 9; Canon, Chapter 7

March 21-30  
Judiciary  
B/W, Chapter 10; Canon, Chapter 8

April 1  
MIDTERM EXAM

April 4-6  
Public Opinion and Socialization  
B/W, Chapter 11; Canon, Chapter 9 (#45-47)

April 8  
PAPERS DUE IN CLASS (Hard Copy and E-mail)

April 8-13  
Political Parties and Interest Groups  
B/W, Chapter 12 and 13; Canon, Chapter 11 and 12
April 18  PARTICIPATION PAPERS DUE (Hard Copy and E-mail)

April 15-20  Campaigns, Elections and Voting
             B/W, Chapter 14; Canon, Chapter 10

April 22  The Media
             B/W, Chapter 15; Canon, Chapter 9 (#48-50)

April 25  Implications for the Future

May 4  FINAL EXAM  8:30 A.M.