"I am a firm believer in the people. If given the truth, they can be depended upon to meet any national crisis. The great point is to bring them the real facts."
- Abraham Lincoln

“O I see flashing that this America is only you and me,
Its power, weapons, testimony, are you and me,
Its crimes, lies, thefts, defections, are you and me,
Its Congress is you and me, the officers, capitols, armies,
ships, are you and me . . .
Freedom, language, poems, employments are you and me,
Past, present, future, are you and me.

I dare not shirk any part of myself,
Not any part of America good or bad . . .”
-Walt Whitman (as cited in Barber, 1998)

Course Objectives:

It is an important time to be studying American politics. The 2020 election season is gearing up and since South Carolina is one of the earliest and, thus, most important presidential primary states, presidential candidates are visiting our state often. Elections matter and the challenges we face as a nation are significant. We began 2019 with the longest government shutdown in our nation’s history over a dispute about border wall funding. In addition to the issue of how to secure our borders, our nation continues to grapple with substantial problems like climate change, soaring healthcare costs, frequent mass shootings, aging infrastructure, and vast economic inequality. But, with a divided government and ever increasing partisan polarization, we face both an uphill climb in solving these problems and a disillusioned and distrusting citizenry.

How should we govern in this political climate? How are and how should decisions be made? To answer these questions an important goal of the course will be to develop a greater understanding of the role of power in our political system. In particular, we will focus on the delicate balancing act between the various power holders in our democracy -- including the Presidency, Congress, the Judiciary, the states, the media and ordinary citizens. We will focus on the questions: How did the Founding Fathers envision the distribution of power in our political system? What does the Constitution say about the structure of power in our democracy? How has the struggle for civil rights and civil liberties throughout our history redefined this power distribution? How powerful is the modern media in our political system and how powerful should it be? How do the various branches of government share power and how does this contribute to (or prohibit) effective policy-making?

Perhaps most importantly, we will focus on the question: What power lies in the hands of ordinary citizens
like you to shape and determine the direction of our political system? In many ways, an effective and legitimate democracy depends on the active participation of informed and involved citizens. The goal of this course is to begin to provide you with the information and skills to become a true participatory member of our democracy.

Importantly, we will also consider specifically the ethical considerations raised for citizens in a democracy. We will review ethical theories offered by important political philosophers who have attempted in their work to answer the question, “How should I live?” We will ask ourselves the questions: What is my role as a citizen in one of the wealthiest democracy in the world? How important is voting? Staying informed? Running for office? What responsibilities do I have to my fellow man, the larger community and environment and to the rest of the world?

This course will not be a passive learning experience. You will be required to participate actively in class discussions and in-class projects. In this class, you will learn how to be an informed, involved and participatory citizen. You will learn how to engage in rational and informed deliberations about issues confronting our political system. And, in the process, hopefully you will learn about the benefits (and costs) associated with living in a democracy.

Because different students have different learning styles, this class will include a mix of teaching mediums including traditional lectures, class discussions, films and musical presentations, cooperative learning projects, and individual writing assignments.

**Required Readings:** The following book and readings are required.


*The New York Times*

Students are expected to read *The New York Times* daily and to keep up with current political events. Subscriptions to *The New York Times* are offered to students at a reduced rate and subscription information will be provided in class. In addition, *NewsHour* on PBS (Channel 8, 6pm weeknights) and National Public Radio's *Morning Edition* and *All Things Considered* on WNCW, Channel 90.1 are good sources of in-depth coverage of political news. I also recommend following other news sources (like *The Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, *The Hill*, *Politico*) and academic blogs (*Monkey Cage*, *Mischiefs of Factions*, *538blog*).

***PLEASE NOTE: The New York Times and keeping up with current political events are a significant portion of your reading load and you should schedule accordingly. Becoming a daily reader of the news and keeping informed is an essential component to being a good democratic citizen.***

*Selected readings on Moodle* (See me if you need instructions on how to use Moodle; you can access it at [http://courses.furman.edu](http://courses.furman.edu))

**Learning Objectives:** Furman is a liberal arts institution devoted to “its responsibility both inside and outside the classroom to encourage students to confront the problems of contemporary society and to exercise moral judgment in the use of knowledge.” (Furman Catalog 2018). In many ways, hopefully, what you will experience at Furman and in this class particularly is a whole new way of thinking and approaching the world than what you have been exposed to in high school. Substantial research on learning shows that most students retain little of what is transmitted through lecture and texts unless they have the opportunity to be hands-on, engaged learners responsible for their own learning. In other words, my role is more than just teaching you the facts — but, also, teaching you how to think, how to collect and process information on your own, how to weigh the merits of various theories and positions and how to apply what you know in new contexts (Wirth and Perkins 2008). Gardiner (1994) developed a list of “critical competencies” required in order to be a successful member of society — developing the following
competencies in you, as you become informed about the American political system, are my main goals for this course (as cited in Wirth and Perkins 2008, p. 3):

1) personal responsibility
2) ability to act in principled, ethical fashion
3) skill in oral and written communication
4) interpersonal and team skills
5) skills in critical thinking and problem-solving
6) respect for people different from oneself
7) ability to change
8) ability and desire for lifelong learning

Course Expectations: You are expected to do all of the required reading and to come to every class session. In addition, you are expected to participate actively in the class discussions. Simply attending class but not participating actively in the class discussion will result in a participation grade of C, because I strongly believe you learn the material in a more meaningful way when you actively engage in the class discussion and are forced to articulate your thoughts orally as well as in written form. You will not do well in this class without consistent attendance, participation and the lecture information. Students who miss more than 3 days of class (unexcused) will have their final letter grade for the class lowered by 1/3 (from a B+ to a B, for example) for each day they are absent. Students who miss class for either an excused or unexcused absence will be responsible for material covered in class. Therefore, if you must miss a class, it is very important that you get the notes from another student in the class (not from me). Students are also responsible for any changes in the syllabus announced in class. A freshman who exceeds six absences or an upperclassman who exceeds ten absences for any reason (excused or unexcused) will be in violation of the maximum established by the University (p. 40 of the Furman University Catalog) and will be dropped from the course with a grade of “F.”

There are four major assignments for this course. All of these assignments are designed to help you become an informed citizen of our democracy. You are expected to complete each assignment on time. Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the day indicated in the syllabus. Late assignments will be graded down one letter grade increment (from a B+ to a B, for example) for each day they are late. Any paper handed in after class on the scheduled date will be considered one day late. Exceptions will be made only in the case of illness or other University-excused absence. Students who must miss class for a University-scheduled event must make arrangements to turn in the assignment ahead of time or have another student turn in the assignment at the scheduled time.

1) Three Issue Papers and a Presentation: You will choose (with my approval) one political issue of interest to you from the following list. If you have another political issue that is of greater interest to you, please let me know and we can discuss that as a possible choice.

- Immigration
- Income Inequality
- Gun violence
- The Environment and Climate Change
- Education
- Health Care
- National Security
- The Economy
You will write three short research papers (3-4 pages, double-spaced, 12 point font, stapled on top left hand corner (no binders or folders)) investigating the way this issue is being considered in the current American political system. Each paper will discuss how the issue has been dealt with recently by an institution in the American political system (the Supreme Court, Congress, Interest Groups, the political parties, the bureaucracy). These papers should show good understanding of how the institution you are discussing works, including discussion of the scholarly theories presented in the readings and in class. In order for a variety of issues and institutions to be considered in these papers by all of the class, I will take your top two choices for issues and assign them accordingly.

A good place to start (but not end) your research is at CQ Researcher (search online). However, you should NOT rely on this site for all of your information – you should use it as a starting place and then investigate further (using the sources they recommend would be helpful) and each paper should use at least TWO scholarly sources. We will discuss further in class what constitutes a scholarly source but, if you have any questions, be sure to see me. Students are expected to use the APA in-text citation style and to have a reference page (a handout will be given in class for more information). The three papers will constitute 20% of your grade in the class. See syllabus for due dates. You will be expected to upload your paper to the Turnitin on Moodle. Turnitin is a program that evaluates papers to assure there is no plagiarism. The papers should be uploaded by noon the day the hard copy is due in class.

Students will then be assigned a day at the end of the semester where, along with the other students in the class who reviewed the same political issue, they will present to the class their findings. This way, all of the students in the class will benefit from your research and you will also hear from your group members how your issue was dealt with in the other political institutions (in addition to the two you research). A group grade will be assigned for this project. Given the issue of ‘free-riders’ (people who let others do the work, while they reap the benefit), students will be asked to evaluate the contributions of other members of their group and individual grades may be adjusted to reflect contributions. The presentation will constitute 10% of your grade in this class.

2) Current Events Quizzes: While we will discuss current events often throughout the semester, we will spend one day approximately every other week reviewing and discussing some of the major events in American politics from the previous two weeks. The class will begin with a brief quiz on the news stories chosen by your peer presenters (see below) covered in The New York Times. The quizzes will constitute 15% of your grade.

3) Current Events Group Discussion: Students are expected to keep up with current events related to American politics by reading The New York Times (and other news sources) each weekday. Every other week or so, we will spend approximately half of class discussing the major events of the past two weeks. A group of students will be responsible for leading the class in the discussion on a focus topic I will assign (see handout). The students responsible for leading the discussion should indicate to students throughout the prior two weeks the important articles they should read and pay particular attention to for the focus topic discussion. During the two weeks prior to the discussion, the group is responsible for emailing to the class and to me each weekday (Monday-Friday) the names of these articles (and the links to them) from the New York Times.

The group will be graded on the quality of the discussion and the extent to which they provide helpful guidance in terms of identifying and discussing important articles and issues relevant to American politics and the class topics. Each group will be given a broad focus topic to guide their discussion. However, with the permission of the instructor, students may stray from these topics as the events of the week may warrant. The discussion leaders are encouraged to meet with me to review their planned discussion topics. In addition, discussion leaders are encouraged to investigate other sources for more...
information on the events of interest. Given the issue of ‘free-riders’ (people who let others do the work, while they reap the benefit), students will be asked to evaluate the contributions of other members of their group and individual grades may be adjusted to reflect contributions. The discussion will constitute 10% of your grade.

4) **Reflection Paper (part of your 10% participation grade):** Students will write a one-page, double-spaced reflection piece at the end of the semester. This will be a reflection on your own personal growth in your understanding and thinking about yourself, citizenship, American politics and our democracy over the course of the semester. You should answer the questions: What have I learned about American politics that I did not know? What do I understand about power in politics that I did not know before? How have I changed since the beginning of this class? What was most helpful to me for learning the material (doing the reading, lectures, discussions, meeting with the professor)? How could I use what I have learned about myself or American politics in other classes, a future career, or my role as a citizen?

**Examinations:** There will be two exams in this class. The exams will be a combination of short answer identifications and essay questions drawing from the assigned readings as well as the lecture notes. The exams will be closed-book and closed-notes, in-class exams. You will be given a study guide a week before each of the exams. Questions on the exam will be chosen from this study guide, thus, there will be no surprises. In the spirit of cooperative learning, you are encouraged to study with your student colleagues. The midterm exam will constitute 15% of your grade in this class. The midterm exam will be during class on **Tuesday, October 8.** The final exam will constitute 20% of your grade. The final exam will be at its university-scheduled time on **Friday, December 13 from 12 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.** The final exam will be cumulative. The dates for the exams are not negotiable. Please make your travel arrangements accordingly. Absences due to illness or a death in the family must be excused by the dean’s office or a doctor. Students who must miss an exam due to a University scheduled event must make arrangements to take the exam ahead of time.

**ACADEMIC DISHONESTY and FURMAN’S STATEMENT REGARDING ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:**

“Integrity gives the educational enterprise its legitimacy. Honesty, respect, and personal responsibility are principles that guide academic life at Furman, in and out of the classroom. Academic misconduct in any form (plagiarism, cheating, inappropriate collaboration, and other efforts to gain an unfair academic advantage) threatens the values of the campus community and will have severe consequences, such as failure in the course, and/or suspension or dismissal from the university.

If you have any question about what constitutes plagiarism or any other form of academic misconduct, it is your responsibility to consult with me so that you will fully understand what I expect of you in this course. If you have any doubts, ask! You should also be familiar with the Academic Integrity & Plagiarism and Academic Integrity at Furman materials available at [www.furman.edu/academics/academic_integrity](http://furman_notes.furman.edu/p&p.nsf). Furman’s policy on academic dishonesty can be found at [http://furman_notes.furman.edu/p&p.nsf](http://furman_notes.furman.edu/p&p.nsf) Standard>Search>121.5.”

Due to the barrier and distractions as well as potential for cheating offered by laptops, cell phones, PDAs, Apple watches, etc., these items are not allowed to be used in the classroom at any time.

**Additional resources in the Center for Academic Success (CAS; LIB 002):**

The Writing & Media Lab (WML) is staffed by student Consultants who are trained to help you improve your writing and multimodal communication skills. The consultation process is non-directive and intended to allow students to maintain ownership of their work. In addition to helping with the nuts and bolts, WML Consultants also
support you in developing your own ideas thoughtfully and critically, whether you’re writing an essay or planning a video or other multimedia project. You may drop into the WML during its regular hours (LIB 002; 9 AM to 10 PM) or visit wml.furman.edu to make an appointment online.

Peer Tutors are available free of charge for many classes and may be requested by dropping by CAS (LIB 002) or online here: www.furman.edu/CAS. Tutors are typically recommended by faculty and have performed well in the class.

Professional Academic Assistance Staff in CAS can provide students assistance with time management, study skills, and organizational skills.

The Writing and ESL Specialist provides professional writing support as well as support for students whose primary language is not English.

**Accommodation Requests:** The Student Office for Accessibility Resources is committed to helping qualified students with disabilities achieve their academic goals by providing reasonable academic accommodations under appropriate circumstances. If you have a disability and anticipate the need for an accommodation in order to participate in this class, please register with the Student Office for Accessibility Resources. They will assist you in getting the resources you may need to participate fully in this class. You can contact the SOAR office at 864.294.2320 or at soar@furman.edu. You can find additional information and request academic accommodations at the SOAR webpage.

**Grades:** Grades will be calculated on the following basis:

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<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Issue Papers (Three total)</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Issue Paper Group Presentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>New York Times Quizzes</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Current Events Week in Review Discussion</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Examination</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Examination</td>
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<td>Participation</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td>93-100</td>
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<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92</td>
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<td>B+</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>83-86</td>
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<td>B-</td>
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<td>C+</td>
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<td>C</td>
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<td>C-</td>
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<td>D+</td>
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Although it is unlikely, students should be aware that this syllabus is subject to change. Any changes will be announced in class. It is the responsibility of the student to be aware of any changes. Please note that the dates are approximations. My primary interest is that you learn the material and learn it well. If we decide to spend more or less time on a topic (because you find it easy, difficult or just particularly interesting), so be it. If you are feeling uncertain about where you should be with the reading, just ask me.
Preferred Names/Pronouns: I will gladly honor students’ requests to be addressed by an alternate name or pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

Assignment Outline:

August 27: Introduction
Review of Syllabus and Expectations

August 29: Being a Savvy Consumer of the News: How to distinguish fake news from real news
Read for today: AmGov– Chapter 1
Attend on this evening: CLP, “Nationalist Fervor, Authoritarian Rule, and the Future of Democracy;” 6:30-8pm, Younts Conference Center (attend and write a 250 word essay summarizing and reflecting on what you learned for 10 points extra credit on a current events quiz)

September 3: American Political Culture, the 2016 Election and American Democracy

September 5: Introduction to Ethics and American Citizenship
Read: Ethics Reading Packet on Moodle
Attend this evening: CLP, “Multiculturalism and the Future of White Identity”, Younts Conference Center, 6:30-8pm, (attend and write a 250 word essay summarizing and reflecting on what you learned for 10 points extra credit on a current events quiz)

September 10: Ethics and American Citizenship (cont).
Read: Ethics Reading Packet on Moodle

September 12: Library Research Instruction Room 041 in the Library; Bring your laptops to the library on this day
Attend this evening: CLP, “Blood and Soil: When Nationalist Fervor is Racism,” Younts Conference Center, 6:30-8pm, (attend and write a 250 word essay summarizing and reflecting on what you learned for 10 points extra credit on a current events quiz)

September 17: The Foundations of the American Government and Federalism
Read: AmGov, Chapter 2: The Declaration of Independence and The Constitution; The Federalist Papers 10, 51 (on Moodle)

Consider: What is a government based on consent of the governed? What were the problems under the Articles of Confederation? What role did the Founding Fathers envision for ordinary citizens in the United States? How did the Constitution formally distribute power among groups, institutions, and individuals in American society? What did James Madison mean when he was talking about
the violence of factions? How effective would you say the Constitution has been in controlling factions in today’s political system?

September 18: Extra Credit – Attend Constitution Day Event, “The Expanding Powers of the Presidency,” Andrew Rudalevige, 4 pm, location TBD, submit a 250 word summary of what you learned for 10 points extra credit on a current events quiz

September 19: Federalism (cont.)
Read: Michener. 2018. Fragmented Democracy, Chapter 1, 3 and 8;

Consider: How have opinions about the distribution of power in a federalist system changed over time? Whose interests have been served by these visions of the distribution of power? What recent events and policies illustrate the conflicts inherent in our federalist system (e.g., immigration, the issue of state-recognition of same-sex marriages, sustainability issues)?

September 24: The Judiciary and the Supreme Court
Read: AmGov, Chapter 6;
Obergefell et al. v Hodges. Supreme Court of the United States. 2015. (On Moodle)
Listen to “The Roots of Judicial Activism” All Things Considered. 2009. (4 minutes);

Consider: What is judicial activism and judicial restraint? Does the Supreme Court violate its Constitutional role when it takes an activist role? What factors do/should influence the judicial decision-making process?

September 26: Current Events Week in Review Discussion Topic One and Quiz

October 1: Civil Liberties and Rights
Read: AmGov, Chapter 3;
Listen to (or read transcript) - Totenberg, Nina. 2018. “In Major Privacy Win, Supreme Court Rules Police Need Warrant to Track Your Cellphone.”
Consider: What does political inequality mean? The text outlines the struggle for political equality for women and blacks, but have we achieved this equality? What other ways, if any, do you see political inequality in our system (Rights of young people? Rights of the working class? Etc.)

DUE: Issue Paper – the Court

October 3: Civil Liberties and Rights (cont)

October 8: Midterm Exam

October 10: Political Socialization and Public Opinion; Current Events Week in Review Discussion Two and Current Events Quiz
Read: AmGov, Chapter 8;
Huang and Cornell. 2019. “School Teasing and Bullying after the 2016 Presidential Election” https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.3102/0013189X18820291;
Erikson and Stoker, “Caught in the Draft? The Effects of the Vietnam Draft Lottery on Political Attitudes;”

Consider: What are your first political memories? How did/do you learn about the political world? What kind of influence would you say your parents, teachers, friends have had on your political thinking? To what extent should public opinion shape public policy? How should politicians assess public opinion (polls, town meetings, mailings)?

October 15: Fall Break – No class

October 17: Congress – the Structure and Function
Read: AmGov Chapter 4;
Schier and Eberly, Polarized, Chapter 5;

Consider: Discuss the issue of the complex role of the representative. Should the representative be a trustee or a delegate or something in between? How is the policy-making process affected by more access and democratization? Would term-limits serve to make Congress more or less effective? What about
reforming the Senate filibuster?

October 22: Congress (cont.); Current Events Week in Review Discussion Three and Quiz
Due: Issue Paper – Congress

October 24: The Presidency: Presidential Authority and Leadership
Read: AmGov, Chapter 5;
Appelbaum, Binyamin and Michael D. Shear. 2016. “Once Skeptical of Executive Power, Obama has
Pomerleau, Mark. 2014, “Are signing statements another example of executive overreach?” TheHill.com

Consider: What powers and authority does/should the President of the U.S. exercise?
What are the responsibilities and requirements of a President in his personal and public life?

October 29: Interest Groups
Read: AmGov, Chapter 7;
and average citizens.” Perspectives on Politics;
Matthews, Dylan. 2016. “Remember that study saying America is an Oligarchy? 3 rebuttals say
Drutman, Lee. 2015. “What We Get Wrong about Lobbying and Corruption.” Monkey Cage,

Consider: What role do interest groups play in the American political system? How do these
interest groups attempt to influence the politics and the policy making process? Do these interest
groups help or hinder the democratic process? What insight do ethical theories like the categorical
imperative or consequentialism and ethics of care provide for answering these questions regarding
interest groups?

October 31: Political Parties
Read: AmGov, Chapter 7;
Chicago Press, Ch. 1, 2 and 8;
Listen to “Partisan Psychology: Why Do People Choose Political Loyalties over Facts.” (NPR,
Shankar Vedantum; 4 minutes)
https://www.npr.org/sections/itsallpolitics/2012/05/09/152287372/partisan-psychology-why-are-
Consider: What are the policy positions of the two major parties in the American political system on two issues of primary concern to you? How does the two-party system shape the balance of power in our political system? What are the causes and consequences of increased partisan polarization in our system?

Due: Issue Paper – Interest Groups

November 5 (Election day): Current Events Discussion Four and Quiz
Due: Issue Paper – Political Parties

November 7: Voting Behavior, Campaigns and Elections
Read: AmGov Chapter 8;
https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2004/08/30/the-unpolitical-animal

November 12: Campaigns and Elections (cont.): Current Events Discussion Five and Quiz
Listen to This American Life online “Take the Money and Run for Office.” (about 60 minutes) – the written transcript is also available. https://www.thisamericanlife.org/461/transcript
Consider: What role should money play in elections? What are the arguments in favor of campaign finance reform? What are the arguments against campaign finance reform? What are the political obstacles to reform? Who are the supporters and opponents of campaign finance reform and why? What should be done?

November 14: Campaigns and Elections (cont.); Gerrymandering
Read: Williamson et al. “This is How We get Rid of Gerrymandered Districts”
Play: Redistrictingame.org, watch the video and play Mission 1 and 2

November 19: The Media and Politics
Read: AmGov, Chapter 9;
Forgette, News Grazers, Chapter 3
Consider: What role does/should the media play in setting the agenda for the nation? Is the media biased? What insight do ethical theories like the categorical imperative or consequentialism and ethics of care provide for answering these questions regarding the media?

**Due: Issue Paper – Bureaucracy**

November 21: Media and Politics (cont.)

November 26: Film

November 28: Thanksgiving – no class

December 3: Policy – Group Presentation and Catch up day

December 5: Policy – Group Presentation

December 10: Review

  **Due: Reflection paper**

Friday, December 13: **Final Exam – 12:00 pm – 2:30 pm**