Course Description: This course is an introduction to American government. These days it is difficult to find anyone who thinks American Government is working well. Dissatisfaction with government and politics is rampant across the ideological spectrum, but each side offers its own diagnosis of the causes of the dysfunction and what it will take to fix it. Many who complain have lost sight of the realities of American government and how the political system was set up to function by the Constitution. What some consider to be problems are built into the structure outlined in the Constitution. What some offer as solutions are antithetical to what the Founders intended and in fact would exacerbate the real problems in American government today. In an effort to understand the causes of the current dysfunction, we will try to step back from the partisanship and look at what the Founders set up and how and why it has changed.

We will explore several themes throughout the course, including who has power in our political system (the president, lobbyists, Congress, ordinary citizens?) and the sources of that power, what limits the power of various groups and institutions, and how the political system has developed over time. The first section will cover the historical foundations of the American political system. The next section focuses on the role of the public in the American political process and the channels through which the public participates. The third part of the course looks at the major institutions in American government and how they interact with one another and the public. By the end of the term, you should have some understanding of how the government makes policy and why decisions are made as they are; in short, you should be able to provide some explanation for the behavior of politicians and the public in current events. And ultimately, we will evaluate possible solutions to the problems we identify in American government.

This course is also an introduction to political science. Through the readings and assignments, students will learn the kinds of questions political scientists ask about the American political system and how they investigate those questions. Students should develop stronger critical reading skills and understand the kinds of evidence used to study empirical questions about politics.

Finally, this course will help equip students to participate effectively in civic life (and the real world). Assignments and class time provide opportunities for students to learn how to evaluate critically various sources of political information in today’s media environment, to engage in civil discussion about politics and public policy, and to write effectively.

Course Evaluation: Grades will be based on a combination of exams, papers, and participation. All assignments must be completed to pass the course.

--Exams: There will be two midterm exams (10% each) on the reading and class discussion. Dates for these are listed on the syllabus. The final exam will be cumulative (20%). All reading (whether or not we discuss it in class), lectures, and class discussions are fair game for exams. The date for the final exam is listed on the syllabus. Do not ask the instructor to change the date or time of the final; she has no authority to do so.

--Congress and Social Media Project (20%): Students will follow and analyze congressional communication via Twitter and Facebook and write an 1800-word paper evaluating their findings. More information on this assignment is provided at the end of the syllabus.

--Simulation (10%): There will be a congressional simulation later in the semester. In addition to class time, it will take up one evening. The dates are listed on the syllabus, and students should plan accordingly. More information will be provided on the simulation as the term progresses.

--Homework assignments (15%): Written homework assignments will be posted on Moodle or provided via email. They will be graded on a 10-point scale. These will not be accepted after the deadline without an excuse from a doctor/trainer or the Associate Dean. Students who have a planned excused absence the day a homework assignment is due must turn assignments in on time. Students may drop the lowest homework grade if they attend three relevant outside events (see “optional events” below for details).
--Participation (15%): Learning is not a passive activity, and students have a responsibility to themselves and to each other to be prepared for and to participate in class. To be able to participate effectively, students should complete the reading and homework assignments by the date listed on the syllabus and keep up with news. To facilitate this, there will be unannounced quizzes on the reading. On these quizzes, students may use any notes they themselves have taken on the reading (not the reading itself—notes should be in a separate document or paper). The grading rubric for these quizzes and how they affect the student’s participation grade can be found on Moodle. I will drop the lowest quiz grade. Students may not make up quizzes. Excused absences on a quiz day will not affect the student’s grade. Unexcused absences will result in a zero on that quiz.

Discussion questions will be suggested at the end of each class to provide students with some focus for the next day’s reading. However, discussion will not be limited to these questions. Students should feel free to bring their own questions about the reading and relevant current events to class or email them to the professor for discussion.

Students, particularly those who are uncomfortable talking in large groups, are also encouraged to comment on the readings or class lectures and discussion by e-mailing the professor or talking to her outside of class. Merely showing up to class everyday without engaging in some of these other forms of participation will result in at best a C on participation.

Attendance will be taken. More than one unexcused absence will begin to affect participation grades. Five unexcused absences will result in a 50 on participation, and for each additional unexcused absence, ten points will be deducted from the participation grade. Generally, an absence is excuses if the student has a note from the infirmary or a doctor or if the student is representing the University in some capacity. Students who know that they are going to be absent when assignments are due are expected to turn in homework and papers on time and take exams in advance. In the case of unexpected absences due to illness, students are expected to make up the work they missed, including homework assignments.

Optional Events: Students are encouraged to attend outside events that focus on politics throughout the term. For example, the Political Science Department hosts Pizza and Politics lunch discussions twice a month (the professor will let you know about these), and there are often CLP lectures relevant to politics. Attendance at such events is not required, but it can help a student’s participation grade. Attendance at 3 of these events will allow students to drop their lowest homework grade. To get credit for these events, students should email the professor a brief summary (2-3 coherent paragraphs) of what the student learned at the event and the student’s reaction to it within a week of the event’s occurrence.

Electronic devices in class: Cell phones should be turned off and put out of sight as soon as students walk in the classroom. Use the time before class to get to know your classmates. If the professor hears a phone in class or sees a student using it for any reason after class begins, she will deduct 5 points from the student’s participation grade. If it happens a second time, the student will receive an F for participation.

During exams, students should put their cell phones or other electronic devices in their book bag or purse or leave them at the front of the room with the professor. If the professor sees a cell phone or electronic device in the student’s hand once the exam begins (regardless of the reason), the student will fail the exam. Laptops, Ipad, etc. may be used for taking notes, but all other applications (e-mail, internet, etc.) should be closed (not merely minimized). If the professor finds a student using the laptop for any reason other than taking notes, the student will no longer be allowed to use the laptop in class. Before deciding to use an electronic device for taking notes, you might want to read some interesting research on the performance of students who use electronic devices in class (see “Digital Distractions” on Moodle).

General Assignment Guidelines: Unless told otherwise, the following guidelines apply to all assignments:

-- For any assignments with a word limit, you can have leeway of +/-50 words.
-- Use the Chicago Style for author/date for parenthetical citations and bibliography (http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html). Also see “Citation Guidelines” on Moodle.
-- Upload assignments to Moodle. Turn in hard copies only for homework assignments.
-- Late assignments will be penalized 10 points per day.
Assignment Deadlines and Extensions: Due dates for all assignments are listed on the syllabus. They are not suggestions; they are requirements. Failing to turn in assignments on time will result in a 10 point deduction for each day the assignment is late. Start assignments early enough to avoid stress and unexpected problems; see the professor if you encounter difficulties along the way. Back up your work and/or print it frequently to avoid catastrophes related to demon-possessed computers. Occasionally, unforeseen circumstances (for example, serious illness or family emergency) may warrant an extension on an assignment. Extensions must be requested before the assignment is due (not after). The student should be prepared to show the professor what has been done on the assignment up to that point (rough draft, research notes, etc.) and explain the reason for requesting the extension with appropriate documentation (a note from a doctor, confirmation of family emergencies from the Associate Dean’s office, or IT in the case of late night computer crash eating the final draft of the paper). The professor will determine if an extension is warranted and the length of that extension. Extensions will not be granted for procrastination, problems that could have been resolved in advance with consultation with the professor, or a common cold.

Grading scale: Plus grades end in 8 or 9 (88-89= B+). Minus grades end in zero or 1 (90-91= A-).

Academic Dishonesty: Plagiarism or any other form of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated in this class. If it occurs, it will result in a penalty ranging from a reduction of one-letter grade to a zero on the assignment or failure in the course, depending on the severity. Students should review the Academic Integrity Pledge posted in the classroom and resources available on www.furman.edu/integrity. If students are unsure what constitutes academic dishonesty or plagiarism, they should consult the professor.

Accommodation Requests: If you anticipate the need for an academic accommodation to participate in this class, please register with the Student Office for Accessibility Resources (864.294.2320 or soar@furman.edu). You can find additional information and request academic accommodations at the SOAR webpage. Please make accommodation requests as soon as possible.

Books: The following books are required and are available from the Furman bookstore.

Additional Reading:
--Keeping up with the daily news is essential for this course, particularly for class discussions. Therefore, students must follow either the *New York Times* (available on campus free) or *Washington Post* (www.washingtonpost.com) daily. The *Washington Post* is available for $5/month online at the academic rate if you register with your Furman email ending in “edu.” (More information here: https://helpcenter.washingtonpost.com/hc/en-us/articles/115002035092-Academic-Rate-for-the-Basic-Digital-subscription)

--Other reading will be posted on Moodle.

Additional (reputable) news source:
www.politico.com (Politico)
www.npr.org (National Public Radio—it is an independent public affairs news organization)
http://www.pbs.org/newshour/ (The News Hour on the Public Broadcasting System—indepenedent news of the day’s events)
Course Schedule and Reading Assignments:

Jan. 8—Introduction

Jan. 10—Dysfunctional Democracy?
  Reading: Goidel, Introduction;
  Samuelson, “The Dysfunction of American Politics” (on Moodle)

I. Historical foundation
A. Creating a Government
Jan. 12—American Political Culture: what does it mean to be American?
  Reading: Warshawsky, “What Does It mean to be an American?”
  Declaration of Independence (both on Moodle)
Jan. 15—MLK Day, no class.

1. The Constitution in theory
Jan. 17—Reading: Goidel, p. 15-23; Robertson, “The Constitution and America’s Destiny” (on Moodle)
  Homework #1 due at beginning of class.
Jan. 19—Reading: The U.S. Constitution; James Madison, Federalist No. 51 (both on Moodle)

2. The Constitution in practice
Jan. 22—Reading: Goidel, p. 24-42; James Madison, Federalist No. 10 (on Moodle)

B. Federalism
  Rauch, “A Separate Peace” (on Moodle in one document)
  Watch video (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BcR_Wg42dv8)
Jan. 26: Current events discussion
  Homework #2 due at beginning of class.
Jan. 29—Reading: CSMP guidelines on Moodle (bring computer to class)
Jan. 31—Exam 1 (covers everything through Jan. 26)

C. Civil Liberties and Civil Rights
Feb. 2—Development of civil liberties
  Reading: Constitution (Amendments I-X, XIV); Sullivan, Civil Rights and Liberties, Chapt. 2 (omit Questions 5-6 if you like) (on Moodle)
Feb. 5—Current issues in first amendment liberties
  Homework #3 due at beginning of class.
Feb. 7—Civil Rights
  Reading: Brown v. Board of Education (1954) (all on Moodle)
  Schuette v. Bann (2014) and Levitt, excerpt from New State Voting Laws
Feb. 9—Reading: Cole, “Angry New Frontier” (on Moodle)
Feb. 12—CSMP Project (bring computers to class and have access to spreadsheets and documents with MC tweets and Facebook posts collected thus far)
  Reading: CSMP guidelines and CSMP content code on Moodle

II. The Public and Political Intermediaries
Feb. 14—What influence opinion?
  Reading: Goidel, Chapt. 2
Feb. 16—Party and ideology
  Reading: S&E, Chapt. 1-2
Feb. 19—Voting behavior: are people rational?
  Reading: Goidel, Chapt. 3
Feb. 21—Elections
  Reading: S&E, Chapt. 3; Goidel, p. 215-225
Feb. 23—Where do the media fit in?
  Reading: Goidel, Chapt. 4
Feb. 26—Interest groups
   Email completed CSMP spreadsheets to DV by beginning of class.

Feb. 28—Current events discussion
   Reading: Simulation paper assignment on Moodle
   Homework #4 due at beginning of class

Mar. 2—Exam 2 (Covers everything from Feb. 2-26)
Mar. 4-9—Spring break. (Please avoid collective stupidity.)
Mar. 12—CSMP analysis in class. Class in computer lab.

III. Political Institutions
A. President
   Mar. 14—Reading: S&E, Chapt. 4; Goidel, p. 135-147
   Mar. 16—Reading: Neustadt, “Power to Persuade” (on Moodle)
   CSMP paper topic due.

B. Congress
   Mar. 19—Goals of members of Congress
   Reading: S&E, Chapt. 5; Vinson (on Moodle)
   Mar. 21—Legislative process
   Reading: Goidel, p. 148-163
   Mar. 23—Simulation in class—committees
   Simulation paper due.

Mar. 26—Gridlock in Congress
   Simulation in JH 101 7:00-10:00 p.m. (dress professionally)
   Mar. 28—No class. Homework #5 due by noon.

Mar. 30-Apr. 2—Easter break, no class.

C. The Bureaucracy
   Apr. 4—Reading: Reich, “Locked in the Cabinet”; Heclo, “The Changing Presidential Office”; Rourke, “Bureaucracy in the American Constitutional Order” (on Moodle in one document)
   Apr. 6—Reading: Look for news coverage of the White House staff and the bureaucracy.

D. The Judicial Branch
   Apr. 9—Reading: S&E, Chapt. 6; Marbury v. Madison (on Moodle)
   Apr. 10—Furman Engaged!
   Apr. 13—CSMP paper due at beginning of class. Current events discussion.

IV. Assessing American Government (and fixing it?)
   Apr. 16—Reading: Goidel, Chapt. 6; S&E, Chapt. 7
   Apr. 18—Reading: Goidel, Chapt. 7
   Apr. 20—Solutions
   Homework #6 due by beginning of class.
   Apr. 23—Wrap up
   Apr. 25—Study Day

POL 101-01 (9:30 class): Final Exam Mon. April 30, 8:30-11:00 a.m.
POL 101-02 (11:30 class): Final Exam Sat. April 28, 12:00-2:30 p.m.
Congress and Social Media Assignment

This assignment accomplishes several goals of the course. First, it introduces students to another source of political information and allows them to keep up with current events. Second, it helps them see how elected officials communicate and connect with constituents and the media. Third, it gives students an opportunity to do political science by systematically gathering data (the content of members’ tweets and Facebook posts) and analyzing it to answer a research question.

Each student will be assigned to follow two members of Congress on Twitter and Facebook Sunday, Tuesday, and Thursday from January 28-February 15, 2018. Students will collect and electronically save all Facebook posts and tweets on those days during the time period. Students, working in pairs, will use the content code provided on the CSMP assignment guide on Moodle to code each tweet and FB post and enter the data on the excel spreadsheet provided on Moodle. Students will upload their data to Moodle (see timeline below). The professor will combine all the data and move it to SPSS where we can analyze it more easily.

Students will write a paper analyzing some aspect of the content of members’ social media messages. More information on the paper will be provided in class and can be found on the CSMP guide on Moodle.

Timeline for this assignment:
Jan. 29—Discuss collection of tweets/posts in class.
Jan. 28-Feb. 15—Collect tweets and posts only from Sunday, Tuesday, and Thursday each week.
Feb. 12—Discuss content analysis of tweets/posts in class. Begin coding.
Feb. 26—Email DV: 1) spreadsheet with completed analysis for tweets/posts and 2) FB documents for each MC.
Mar. 12—Discuss how to analyze social media data and the paper assignment in class.
Mar. 16—Email professor your research question for your paper.
Apr. 13—Papers are due by the beginning of class April 13. Upload it to Moodle. Late papers will be penalized 10 points per day (each day of the weekend is a separate day).

Congressional Simulation

We will do a simulation of the House of Representatives. Students will be assigned to portray a particular member of the House (it will be one of the members you’re following for the CSMP assignment). Each of my POL 101 classes will be a congressional committee and will spend one day in class trying to pass a bill on a current topic. After each bill is passed out of committee, we will have one evening session with both classes combined to conduct floor debate, amend, and vote on the bills that came out of committee. The professor will make a decision on the issues to be addressed later in the semester based on what is going on in the real world. Students will be provided with information and proposals to use as starting points to write their bill. Throughout the simulation, students will assume the perspective and political context of the MC they are assigned. The simulation will take place in class and on the evening of March 26. To prepare for the simulation, students will write a simulation paper to acquaint them with their assigned MC (more information will be provided on Moodle). The simulation grade will be based equally on the simulation paper and the student’s performance during the simulation.