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.

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

Class Participation: (15%) 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 for using electronic devices, do not bring them to class.

Occasionally attendance at an on-campus meeting in the evening may be required. The participation grade is based not only on attendance but also on positive involvement in class discussion. Students will be expected to read The New York Times regularly, focusing on articles and op-ed pieces that pertain to American politics.

Exams: (65%) 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 will make up 20% of the final grade, and the final exam, 25%. 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 will result in a “0” on that test.
There will be a brief (4-6 page) paper due at the beginning of class on April 16 which should be submitted both as a hard copy and electronically to my e-mail. Based on the assigned book, *Collision 2012: Obama and Romney and the Future of Elections in America*, the paper will examine events, tactics and political discourse of the recent election campaign. More information on the assignment will be given at a later date. Your research must include at least two other sources but should be focused primarily on the book. 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 and list your references alphabetically at the end of your text (works cited) using the APSA method of documentation. (The *American Political Science Association Style Manual* is on permanent reserve in the library.) 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 at the beginning of class on April 16 and will be docked 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 fun. If you find it a struggle, talk with me, but your first step should be to read *Collision 2012* and become familiar with the 2012 election campaign. After that, the paper should be easy.

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


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 13 | Course Introduction |
| January 15-22 | Roots of American Government |
| Readings: Barbour and White, Chapters 1 and 2; Canon, Chapter 1 |
| January 24-29 | Constitution |
| B/W, Chapter 3 and 4; Canon, Chapter 2 |
Jan. 31-Feb. 5  Federalism  
B/W, same as above; Canon, Chapter 3

February 7-12  Civil Liberties  
B/W, Chapter 5; Canon, Chapter 4 (#22-23)

February 14-19  Civil Rights  
B/W, Chapter 6; Canon, Chapter 4 (#19-21)

February 21  MIDTERM EXAM

February 24-28  Congress  
B/W, Chapter 7; Canon, Chapter 5

March 3-7  Presidency  
B/W, Chapter 8; Canon, Chapter 6

March 17-21  Federal Bureaucracy  
B/W, Chapter 9; Canon, Chapter 7

March 24-28  Judiciary  
B/W, Chapter 10; Canon, Chapter 8

March 31  MIDTERM EXAM

April 2-4  Public Opinion and Socialization  
B/W, Chapter 11; Canon, Chapter 9 (#45-47)

April 7-10  Political Parties and Interest Groups  
B/W, Chapter 12 and 13; Canon, Chapter 11 and 12

April 14-16  Campaigns, Elections and Voting  
B/W, Chapter 14; Canon, Chapter 10

April 16  PAPERS DUE IN CLASS (Hard Copy and E-mail)

April 23  The Media  
B/W, Chapter 15; Canon, Chapter 9 (#48-50)

April 25-28  Social and Economic Policy  
Canon, Chapter 13-15

May 6  FINAL EXAM  8:30 AM
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Barbour and Wright, Keeping the Republic (Essentials), 6th edition (2013)


Balz, David, Collision 2012: Obama and Romney and the Future of Elections in America

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