Course Objectives:

It is an important time to be studying American politics. Our nation finds itself in a difficult time. Arguably, our government is experiencing the greatest partisan polarization in our history. We face a large national debt and serious threats to our nation including the economic crisis, immigration issues, concerns about our educational system, environmental issues and more.

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.

This course will provide you with the opportunity to explore the purpose and meaning of good citizenship further through participation in a service learning activity. In particular, a requirement of this course is regular service work (see Course Requirements section of this syllabus for specifics) at the Greenville Literacy Association. The purpose of this service work is to enhance your own political learning and skills while at the same time contributing to your community. In class, we will discuss the relationship between what we are reading about politics and citizenship and what you are learning through your service in the “real world.” Through critical reflection, we will consider such issues as: What skills are needed by citizens in order that they may be participants in the political world? What are some of the causes and consequences of illiteracy in the United States? How does illiteracy affect the balance of power in our political system? What is the role of government in a democracy in terms of solving social problems?

Additionally, we will consider specifically the ethical issues raised by your experience at the Greenville Literacy Association. 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 the wealthiest democracy in the world? Do I have an obligation to serve others and my community? Why should I serve others? What are the costs and benefits of such service – to me, to those with whom I work, to my community? What moral or ethical principle best guides you in the decisions you make regarding your own personal role in the political community?

This course will not be a passive learning experience. In addition to your active participation in the service-learning project, 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 books are required and available for purchase in the bookstore.


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

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 with Jim Lehrer 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.
Learning Objectives: Furman is a liberal arts institution devoted to “engaged learning, a problem-solving, project oriented and research-based educational philosophy that encourages students to put into practice the theories and methods learned from texts or lectures. The university is committed to liberal learning within a moral and ethical context” (Furman Catalog 2011, p. 4). 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. Your attendance and participation in class discussions will constitute 10% of your grade. 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.

There are three major assignments for this course. 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) Service-Learning Project: Students are expected to devote two hours per week to service work for the Greenville Literacy Association. You will sign up for your service work on Thursday, January 16. You will be
given a variety of options of service work at a variety of times and locations. Orientation will begin Thursday, January 23rd. Students are expected to honor their commitment to GLA and show up each week on time. The project coordinators will keep track of your volunteer hours and will evaluate your performance and commitment as a volunteer. Their evaluation will constitute 15% of your grade in this class. Because it becomes a logistical nightmare for the project coordinators, students may not change their schedules once they have been set. However, given that unforeseen circumstances may arise, students will be allowed to change their volunteer time one time during the course of the semester. It is your responsibility to find another student in the class to switch days with you for that one week. The last day of service work will be on Friday, April 25th.

2) **Service Learning Reflection Papers:** You are expected to write three (out of 5 assigned), 3-4 page reflection papers on your service learning experience and its relationship to the course material. The reflection papers should include three sections denoted by three different colors of ink (or three different fonts).

- **In black** ink, you should describe what you actually have been doing at the GLA - what were your tasks? How did you complete these tasks? With whom did you work? Etc. While what you do from week to week will be similar, don’t just copy and paste this section for each paper. Be specific and tell me about what you did during this time – what kinds of interactions did you have? What new obstacles did you face?
- **In blue** ink, you should write your more affective or subjective reactions to what happened at the GLA - how did you feel about your experiences? Why?
- Finally, in **red** ink, you should reflect thoughtfully on the relationship between the things that happen “out there” and what we are reading about or discussing in class. **Specific guiding questions for the red section for each of the reflection papers are noted on the syllabus on the due date for the paper.** You should answer those questions in the **red section.** You may also want to consider the following questions generally in your red section: What connections can be made to the reading, to the class discussion? How do your experiences at GLA help you to understand the political world better? How do they help you to understand the balance of power in our political system? The role of the citizen? The moral and the ethical underpinnings for your actions and your answer to the question “How should we live?”

Your grade will reflect the degree to which your entries are thoughtful and complete. All reflection papers should include all three sections (black, blue and red), however, the most emphasis in terms of your grade will be placed on the portion written in red ink as this will reflect critical thinking about the project and the issues of democracy, citizenship, and power.

The papers will constitute 15% of your grade in this class. Due dates are indicated in the assignment outline portion of the syllabus.

**Please note:** you are expected to use proper citation style and include a reference section in these writing assignments. We will go over in class how to cite properly and I will post a handout on Moodle in case you have any questions. You can also consult the *American Political Science Review Style Manual* which is available online. Your grade will be affected negatively by incorrect or incomplete citations. Paper should be uploaded to TURNITIN on Moodle and a hardcopy should be turned into class.

3) **Current Events Quizzes and Discussion:** 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 covered in *The New York Times* that week. Students are expected to participate in the class discussion and will be called upon to summarize and discuss articles of interest to them during that week (the articles should relate to the study of American politics). The quizzes will constitute 15% of your grade.
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 20% of your grade in this class. The midterm exam will be during class on **Thursday, February 27**. The final exam will constitute 25% of your grade. The final exam will be at its university-scheduled time on Thursday, **May 1 from 8:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.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 information]. Furman’s policy on academic dishonesty can be found at [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, IPads, etc., these items are not allowed to be used in the classroom at any time.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service Learning Reflection Papers</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Service Learning Participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>(assessment based on Ms. Cherry’s and Ms. Woodham’s and your project coordinator’s reports of your involvement)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Current Events Quizzes</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Examination</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Examination</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100%</td>
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93-100 = A  
90-92 = A-  
87-89 = B+  
83-86 = B  
80-82 = B-  
77-79 = C+  
73-76 = C  
70-72 = C-  
67-69 = D+  
63-66 = D  
60-62 = D-  
Below 60 = F
Students who need special accommodations should see me at the beginning of the term and meet with Gina Parris in the Office of Disability Services.

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.**

**Assignment Outline:**

January 14: Introduction
Read: *KTR* -- Chapter 1
Consider: What does it mean to be an American? What is unique about American political culture?

January 16: **Introduction to the Greenville Literacy Association and service learning** (Ms. Cherry and Ms. Woodham): What is GLA? Who are the students at GLA? What will your responsibilities be?
Read: Reading Packet #1, Discussion Questions for Packet 1, and articles “Thinkfinity: Quick Facts about Adults and Literacy” and “What Beginning Teachers and Tutors of Adult English Language Learners Need to Know” on Moodle (http://courses.furman.edu)
Consider: What are my goals for the service learning project? What can I learn by participating in this project?

January 21: **Introduction to the Greenville Literacy Association and service learning** (Ms. Cherry and Ms. Woodham): What is GLA? Who are the students at GLA? What will your responsibilities be? (CONTINUED)
Read: Reading Packet #1, Discussion Questions for Packet 1, and articles “Thinkfinity: Quick Facts about Adults and Literacy” and “What Beginning Teachers and Tutors of Adult English Language Learners Need to Know” on Moodle (http://courses.furman.edu)
Consider: What are my goals for the service learning project? What can I learn by participating in this project?

January 23 and 28: Introduction to Ethics and American Citizenship
Reading: Ethics Reading Packet on Moodle; and *KTR* – Chapter 2

January 30: The Foundations of the American Government – The Declaration of Independence and the Articles of Confederation
Read: *KTR* Chapter 2; Appendix 2,3,4,5 *The Declaration of Independence* and *The Constitution; The Federalist Papers 10, 51*
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?

February 4: The Price of Federalism: Tentative Film: “Crossing Arizona”
Read: *KTR*, Chapter 3
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)?

February 6: **Current Events Quiz** and Discussion and The Judiciary and The Supreme Court
Read: *KTR*, Chapter 9
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?

February 11: Service Learning Project - Initial Debriefing with Ms. Cherry and Ms. Woodham
Read: Reading Packet #2 and Discussion Questions
Due: Service Learning Contract

February 13 and 18: Civil Rights and Liberties
Read: *KTR*, Chapter 4 and 5
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 February 13: Reflection Paper #1:** What do we mean by *equality* in the American political system? What institutions (including social and political) promote or interfere with equality? Who has power in our system and why?

February 20: Political Socialization and Participation; **Current Events Quiz**
Read: *KTR*, Chapter 12
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?

February 25: Political Socialization and Participation (continued): Film “Corridor of Shame”

February 27: **Midterm Exam**

March 4: Political Parties: The Purpose and Structure of Political Parties
Read: *KTR*, Chapter 11, pp. 356-374
Consider: What are the policy positions of the two major parties in the American political system on two issues of primary concern to you? What about on the issue of illiteracy? How does the two-party system shape the balance of power in our political system? What are the root causes of the increased partisan polarization in Congress? What are the effects of this increased polarization?

March 6: **Current Events Quiz** and Discussion; Public Opinion
Read: *KTR*, Chapter 10
Consider: To what extent should public opinion shape public policy? How should politicians assess public opinion (polls, town meetings, mailings)?
Due March 6: Reflection Paper #2 - What is the role of a good citizen in the United States? Why? What kinds of obligations do citizens have to contribute to organizations like the GLA? What insight do ethical theories like the categorical imperative or consequentialism and ethics of care provide for answering these questions regarding citizenship?

March 11 and 13: Spring Break

March 18: Service Learning and Citizenship: Guest Speaker – Carol Browning, Executive Director of GLA
Read: Reading Packet #3 and Discussion Questions
Consider: What is the critique of service-learning? How might proponents of service-based learning respond to this critique?

March 20: Interest Groups: Theoretical Perspectives and Their Role in the Political System
Read: KTR, Chapter 11, pp. 375-394
Due: Reflection Paper #3: Find a web site for at least two interest groups concerned with the issue of illiteracy. Be careful that you define clearly the concept of a political interest group before you search the web. What role do interest groups play in the struggle against illiteracy? How do literacy 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?

March 25 and 27: Campaigns and Elections
Read: KTR, Chapter 12 (review it)
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?

April 1: Current Events Quiz and Discussion and Service Learning Discussion – Volunteerism, Guest Speaker
Read: Reading Packet #4 and Discussion Questions

April 3: The Media and Politics
Read: KTR, Chapter 13

April 8: Media and Politics
Due: Reflection Paper #4: What role does/should the media play in setting the agenda for the nation? How has the media shaped how we think about the problem of illiteracy and/or immigration and the solutions to these problems? What have you learned about at the GLA that you think could be given better coverage in the media? What insight do ethical theories like the categorical imperative or consequentialism and ethics of care provide for answering these questions regarding the media?

April 10: No class – attend a political science related Furman Engaged Day presentation and write a one paragraph summary

April 15: The Presidency: Presidential Authority and Leadership
Read: KTR, Chapter 7
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?

April 17: Congress – The Structure and Function
Read: KTR, Chapter 6
Consider 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?

April 22: Congress (cont.) – Guest Speakers – Vista Volunteers and Final Debriefing with GLA

Due Reflection Paper #5: Visit the AmeriCorps web site and get updated information on the AmeriCorps*Vista program. What is going on with the program? How useful and important do you think programs like this are given your experience with the GLA? What insight do ethical theories like the categorical imperative or consequentialism and ethics of care provide for answering these questions regarding programs like AmeriCorps?

April 24: Current Events Quiz and Discussion and catch up

April 29: Catch up and Review, Exam Questions and Course Evaluation

Thursday, May 1: Final Exam – 8:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.