"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, capitol, 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. We have a new president who has proven thus far to be unlike most others. The 115th Congress has struggled to pass major policy initiatives like health care or infrastructure bills despite Republican majorities in the House, Senate and a Republican president. Our government is operating in the midst of great turmoil internationally and domestically with continued terrorist threats, crisis in the Middle East, and lingering problems like immigration, the economy and increased partisan polarization. And, this past election shows that the American public is not only divided but also increasingly distrustful of most political institutions.

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.

Finally, we will also consider specifically the ethical considerations raised by 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.

***PLEASE NOTE: The New York Times is a significant portion of your reading load and you should schedule accordingly. Consider it a “textbook” for the course. 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 “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 2009). 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 three 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:
   - Immigration
   - Income Inequality
   - The Environment
   - Education
   - Health Care
   - National Security
   - The Economy
   - Campaign Finance

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, 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 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* 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 each day the names of these articles 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.

**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 3. The final exam will constitute 20% of your grade. The final exam will be at its university-scheduled time on Friday, December 8 from 8:30 a.m. – 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, PDAs, 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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Issue Papers (Three total)</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Issue Paper Group Presentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm Examination</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Examination</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></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

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:**

**August 22:** Introduction  
Review of Syllabus and Expectations

**August 24:** American Political Culture  
Read: KTR – Chapter 1, Attend *Media and Politics in a Post-Truth Era, CLP*, Younts, 6:30-8:15, register here: [https://riley.furman.edu/student-registration-only-straight-talk-media-and-politics-post-truth-era](https://riley.furman.edu/student-registration-only-straight-talk-media-and-politics-post-truth-era)

**August 29:** Introduction to Ethics and American Citizenship  
Reading: Ethics Reading Packet on Moodle

**August 31:** Library Research Instruction Room 041 in the Library and Introduction to Ethics and American Citizenship (continued)  
Reading: Ethics Reading Packet on Moodle, **Bring Laptops to library on this day**; Attend *Media*
and Politics in a Post-Truth Era – Chuck Todd of Meet the Press, CLP, McAlister Auditorium – no registration required

September 5: Ethics and American Citizenship (cont).

September 7: Guest Lecturer, Erika Hobbs, Communications Director and Program Director for the News Literacy Project, see http://www.thenewsliteracyproject.org/about before class; Attend Media and Politics in a Post-Truth Era, CLP, Younts, 6:30-8:15, register here: https://riley.furman.edu/student-registration-only-straight-talk-media-and-politics-post-truth-era

September 12: The Foundations of the American Government and Federalism
Read: KTR Chapter 2 and Appendix 1; 2 and 3: The Articles of Confederation and 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 14: Federalism (cont.)
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, sustainability issues)?

September 19: 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?

September 21: Current Events Week in Review Discussion Topic One and Quiz

September 26: Civil Liberties and Rights
Read: KTR, Chapter 4 and 5; Read “The Opportunity Gap” on Moodle
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

September 28: Civil Liberties and Rights (cont)

October 3: Midterm Exam
October 5: Political Socialization and Public Opinion; Current Events Week in Review Discussion Two and Current Events Quiz

Read: *KTR*, Chapter 10
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 10: Fall Break – No class

October 12: Congress – the Structure and Function
Read: *KTR*, Chapter 7
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 17: Congress (cont.); Current Events Week in Review Discussion Three and Quiz
Due: Issue Paper – Congress

October 19: The Presidency: Presidential Authority and Leadership
Read: *KTR*, Chapter 8
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 24: Interest Groups
Read: *KTR*, Chapter 11

October 26: Political Parties
Read: *KTR*, Chapter 11
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

October 31: Bureaucracy; Current Events Discussion Four and Quiz
Read: *KTR*, Chapter 8
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?
Due: Issue Paper – Political Parties
October 31: Campaigns and Elections
Read: KTR, Chapter 12
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 2: Campaigns and Elections (cont.); Current Events Discussion Five and Quiz

November 7: Campaigns and Elections (cont)

November 9: The Media and Politics
Read: KTR, Chapter 13
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 14: Media and Politics (cont.)

November 16: Group Presentation Issue One and Issue Two

November 21: Policy – Group Presentation Issue Three and Four

November 23: Thanksgiving – no class

November 28: Policy – Group Presentation Issue Five and Six

November 30: Policy – Group Presentation: Issue Seven and Eight

December 5: Catch up and Review, Exam Questions and Course Evaluation

Friday, December 8: Final Exam – 8:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.