

Instructor: Professor Kevin G. Lorentz II

Lectures: T/Th 12:30-1:45 p.m.

Location: Hartland Educational Services Center (Law & Criminal Justice classroom)

Office Hours: Before/after class @ Hartland classroom, or by appointment

Department Support Office: 220 French Hall (open M-F, 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.); (810) 762-3424

Email: kglorent@umflint.edu



COURSE DESCRIPTION & EXPECTATIONS

This course provides an introductory overview of American government and politics. Primarily, we will discuss the features and functions of American political institutions (including the Constitution), our nation's public policies and associated processes, and the role of citizens in the political process. Emphasis is placed on how and why our national institutions operate as they do (both historically and contemporarily), how our constitutional structure affects American governance, and analyzing key issues facing America today. Additionally, we will explore how ordinary citizens can participate within our governing polity and how informed participation may effect change.

The course will be delivered through a combination of styles, including lectures, discussions, and active learning exercises (e.g. group work, simulations, and debates). As such, do not expect the entire class period to be lecture. Sometimes I may assign small groups to lead class discussions, with me intermittently lecturing. Other times I may facilitate a group deliberation around a multifaceted question concerning the day's topic. Still, we may "flip" the classroom, requiring you to listen to a posted lecture before class, while class time will involve completing a mini-project. I am open to designing lessons which facilitate your learning. As such, I expect you to be prepared for class (by reading the assigned material beforehand), be engaged (i.e. participate), and give constructive feedback. In return, I promise to always be prepared to address your questions and concerns, engage with you during class, and provide prompt and helpful feedback on your progress.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After completing this course, you will be able to:

1. Describe the main political institutions, processes, and policies of the United States;
2. Compare and contrast the American political system at different stages of its development and identify the major factors that contributed to change in the political system over time;
3. Use the knowledge, concepts, and critical thinking skills gained from the course to make well-reasoned and informed political decisions;
4. Appreciate the ways in which your personal interests are at stake in the political process and ways that you might participate in that process that extend beyond voting; and
5. Make persuasive arguments about American institutions, processes, or policies supported by the course's concepts.

REQUIRED TEXT

Morone, James A. and Rogan Kersh. 2018. *By the People: Debating American Government*. Brief Third Edition. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. ISBN: 9780190654597 (Loose-leaf version)

A few notes regarding your textbook:

- The book is available from the UM-Flint bookstore and online retailers. Online booksellers often sell the text for a fraction of the price compared to the campus bookstore.
- I have opted to assign the "loose-leaf" version. I suggest using a three-ring binder to hold your book. This approach allows you to put your own notes alongside the actual text. If you prefer a regular bond copy, you may find and purchase one online (the material is the same; only the format is different).
- It is imperative that you purchase the text as soon as possible. The textbook is designed as a foundation; it will bring you up to speed on important concepts and prepare you for class lectures and activities which will build upon (i.e. extend) the textbook's information.

ASSIGNMENTS & EVALUATIONS

Grades will be determined in the following manner:

- **iCitizen Project (500 points total):** Throughout the semester, you will complete a series of assignments which will, together, form an iCitizen portfolio. These assignments will explore various facets of citizenship, including a critical assessment of what it means to be an American citizen today. Further details will be discussed in class, while due dates can be found in the course schedule (below). The portfolio is composed of the following:
 - **Part 1: POLITICAL IDEOLOGY ESSAY (100 points).** This is an analytical essay where you will be discussing your political ideology (as determined by specific online measurement tools we will discuss in class) and the ideology surrounding the Founding of our country. You will be given the exact question in class.
 - **Part 2: SERVICE GUARANTEES CITIZENSHIP APPRAISAL (100 points).** For this paper, you will watch the 1997 film *Starship Troopers* (on your own time) and provide an appraisal of how the film portrays the right to citizenship and all that comes with it. To do this, you will be asked to compare citizenship in the Federation with citizenship in the United States of America in 2018.
 - **Part 3: CHAOS OF DEMOCRACY PROJECT (200 points).** This project combines civic action with individual reflection. You will be asked to engage in two activities of citizenship out of a possible four. You can choose (two) from writing a letter to the editor supporting a political candidate or ballot initiative (federal or state); writing a letter to one of your elected representatives (federal or state) on pending legislation; attending (in person or via recording) a local government meeting and providing a written reflection on the experience; and attending a civic engagement discussion sponsored by the Political Science Department and writing a reflection essay. Further details will be discussed in class.
 - **Part 4: CREATING WE THE PEOPLE (100 points).** In this final paper, you will be given a set of facts and asked to determine how citizenship should be granted. Utilizing your knowledge of citizenship within the United States and our previous papers, you will be in a position to award or deny citizenship to others. More details will be discussed in class.
- **Exams (3 @ 100 points each):** Three (3) examinations will be given throughout the semester, each worth 100 points. Each exam will cover a selected amount of material and will be non-cumulative (although some topics build off prior concepts). Format will be non-essay questions (e.g. multiple choice, short answers, true/false, etc.), while the exams themselves will be given in class. I will provide study guides for examinations approximately one (1) week before the testing date. Makeup exams will be given ONLY for documented emergencies (e.g. a doctor's note or hospitalization record), at my discretion. Moreover, I reserve the right to modify makeup examinations to preserve the assessment's integrity. In short, please make every effort to take an exam ON TIME. (Note: Exams will cover material from BOTH lectures and assigned readings. Information which was not fully discussed in lecture does NOT preclude it from being fair game on the exam.)
- **Participation (100 points):** This course emphasizes discussion, engagement, and application of assigned readings and current events, which means you must be physically present. I will be taking attendance each day, often through completion of an in-class activity. As I know that sometimes life can be hectic and surprising, I grant you three (3) "freebies" to accommodate illness, scheduling conflicts, acts of nature, etc. Please plan accordingly, as any absences beyond three (3) will reduce your participation grade by five (5) points for each additional absence. A pattern of missing class, being unprepared, texting, arriving late, sleeping, and/or leaving early will negatively impact your participation points, as I reserve the right to count you as "absent" for disruptive or otherwise rude behavior. In short, please come prepared for class and act decorously.

GRADING POLICY

The following letter scale will be utilized:

A+	97-100%	C+	77-79%
A	93-96	C	73-76
A-	90-92	C-	70-72
B+	87-89	D+	67-69
B	83-86	D	63-66
B-	80-82	D-	60-62
C+	77-79	E	59-0

Some important notes regarding your grade:

- You will receive a failing grade for this course if you do not complete all course requirements in a satisfactory manner. If you have difficulties completing the course, you may elect to withdraw, but I suggest speaking to both myself and the financial aid office before doing so. The University deadline to withdraw is Friday, November 2, 2018 at 5:00 p.m.
- The course ends promptly at 11:59 p.m. on Thursday, December 13, 2018. No additional opportunities for extra credit, turning in late work, and/or similar petitions will be entertained or accepted past this time.
- I make every effort to return graded work within one (1) week after receiving it, and I highly encourage students to meet with me during my office hours to discuss grading decisions and merits.

LATE WORK POLICY

To receive full credit, assignments must be turned in on time. Due dates are noted on the assignment's directions and on the course schedule (below). Assignments received late will be assessed a five (5) point penalty per day late. I will NOT accept assignments which are more than seven (7) days late. I highly encourage you to submit your work on time.

EXTRA CREDIT & COMMON READ

Extra credit opportunities will be available throughout the semester and will be announced in class and/or via Blackboard. You should take advantage of them as you can but bear in mind that extra credit is NOT a substitute for normal class work or participation. Additionally, I will offer the following extra credit opportunities for participating in this year's UM-Flint Common Read. This year's text is Elizabeth Kolbert's *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History*. The Common Read website describes the book as follows: "...the reader follows Kolbert on her travels to endangered ecosystems throughout the world, meets numerous species on the verge of extinction, and listens to conversations between the author and leading scientists in a wide range of fields." Kolbert argues that "humans are currently living through and drastically accelerating another era of mass extinction, which she calls the sixth extinction." You may purchase the book through online retailers or at the UM-Flint campus bookstore. This book is NOT required for this class; however, you can earn extra credit points for:

- **Attend Common Read Events.** Visit the Common Read [website](#) to learn about upcoming events, which you may attend for extra credit. If you attend, please submit a 1-2-page reflection on the event. (10 points/each)
- **Book Review.** Write a book review on *The Sixth Extinction*. Reviews should be roughly 3-4 pages, double-spaced, and both introduce the reader to the book and critically evaluate it (i.e. give me your reaction to the book, connect it with our course's concepts, etc.). Please let me know if you pursue this opportunity. (10 points)

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY & PLAGIARISM

Students are responsible for independent work, which means you must be honest and forthright in your academic studies. Academic misconduct essentially means that one deliberately or intentionally uses unauthorized materials, information, or assistance (i.e. cheating) in any academic exercise. The most common form of academic misconduct is plagiarism. Plagiarism is the intentional or unintentional act of using another's work (e.g. specific words, phrases, ideas/arguments, and/or data/evidence) without appropriate attribution. As college students, it is your responsibility to ensure that you are aware of what qualifies as plagiarism AND to avoid it. A simple solution: when in doubt, CITE. Any instance of cheating, plagiarism, or other forms of academic misconduct will result in an "F" grade for the assignment or exam and may lead to further disciplinary action with the University.

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE

Discussions concerning political issues oftentimes invoke controversial opinions and passionate feelings. In order to facilitate a conducive environment for such political discussions, I ask that all students exhibit a respectful disposition throughout the semester. Failure to respect differences of opinion, or otherwise displaying profanity, angry words, or demeaning language in either verbal or written medium, will result in appropriate and immediate disciplinary action. Additionally, please refrain from disrupting class. Disruptive behavior includes, but is not limited to, utilizing an electronic device that disrupts the classroom environment; talking too loud during the delivery of instructional material; violation of the human dignity of a student, the instructor, or guest; and coming late to class or leaving early without prior approval. My goal is to engender a constructive dialogue which allows our differences to surface, providing an opportunity for common ground to be found, all within a conducive environment.

ACCOMODATIONS

The University of Michigan-Flint strives to make learning experiences as accessible as possible and complies with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act. The University provides individuals with disabilities reasonable accommodations to participate in educational programs, activities, and services. Students with disabilities requiring accommodations to participate in class activities or meet course requirements should self-identify with [Disability and Accessibility Support Services](#) as early as possible at (810) 762-3081 or accessibility@umflint.edu. The office is located in 285C University Pavilion, inside the Student Success Center. Students are expected to discuss course accommodations with their professors as early as possible.

STUDENT SERVICES

The University offers several resources for student success:

- The [Marian E. Wright Writing Center](#) (located on the third floor of the Thompson Library) provides individual tutoring and consultations (free of charge) for students seeking guidance on composing writing assignments. Visit their website for more information and to schedule an appointment (they offer both in-person and remote sessions).
- The [Thompson Library](#) offers online access to various scholastic databases and resources, in addition to its physical book, document, and multimedia collections. Please note that you will need your unique name and UM-Flint password to access the library's online databases.
- The [Student Success Center](#) (located in 285 University Pavilion) offers students various amenities meant to bolster and encourage academic success, including tutoring, academic advising, and supplemental instruction. Visit their website to see how they can assist you.

BLACKBOARD

Regular class announcements, course materials, grades, and assignments will be posted to Blackboard. You are responsible for maintain a presence on Blackboard and being aware of updates and additions. I will usually include email alerts when I post items to the Blackboard shell, but failure to receive an email does NOT constitute an excuse.

TECHNOLOGY POLICY

Cell phones, laptop computers, and similar devices (e.g. tablets) are **PROHIBITED** during lecture. Longhand notetaking (i.e. writing by hand) is empirically better for you than the digital alternative. Moreover, "extracurricular" activities (e.g. Facebook, Netflix, general surfing, etc.) during lecture using electronic devices are not just a detriment to the learner herself; it also disrupts nearby learners. Lecture is NOT meant to be a passive experience; you should engage with the professor, your peers, and the course concepts – which requires active participation (and not trying to catch the nearby Pokémon, for instance). If you are expecting a phone call because of an emergency or another situation, please clear it with the instructor beforehand. Note: There may be times that I ask you to have your technology out (such as group work days); such times will be designated by me in advance.

EMAIL COMMUNICATION & ETIQUETTE

Email is the best way to contact me outside of office hours and class time. I routinely check my email throughout the day and evening but please allow 24 hours for a reply before sending a follow-up email. When contacting me, please observe the following guidelines:

- Use **ONLY** your UM-Flint email (i.e. @umflint.edu). I do not respond to other personal emails (e.g. Gmail, Yahoo, Outlook, etc.).
- Include the course designator (i.e. POL 120) in your subject line.
- Identify yourself in the email along with your course. Example: "This is Jane Doe from your POL 120 T/Th class...."
- Refrain from using informal language and/or slang. Emails which use such language tend not to be answered. In short, treat your email as a professional communique between two adults, not as an informal conversation among friends.

LECTURE RECORDING PROHIBITED

Recording of class lectures is strictly proscribed. Exception: Students with an accommodation from Disability and Accessibility Support Services will be allowed to record lectures if part of their accommodation. Such recordings are subject to the personal use of the student ONLY. Wider posting of the recordings, such as on the internet, constitute a breach of this syllabus.

CLASS CANCELTION POLICY

This class will meet regularly as noted on the syllabus unless: (1) the instructor cancels class; (2) UM-Flint closes or otherwise suspends classes for the morning/day; or (3) Hartland Consolidated Schools closes or suspends classes for the afternoon/day. When a cancelation is necessary, the instructor will announce the cancelation both via email and through a Blackboard announcement (as soon as possible, preferably before 11:30 a.m.). If another school district other than Hartland closes or does not have school on a regularly scheduled class day, YOU ARE STILL EXPECTED TO ATTEND CLASS. If UM-Flint or Hartland Consolidated Schools are closed for a scheduled holiday or break, then our class will not meet (these dates are noted on the course schedule, below). Note: Michigan weather is notoriously schizophrenic, with varying conditions just miles apart. As such, I trust that each of you will use your best judgment when traveling to and from class. I take regional road and weather conditions into consideration when deciding to cancel class.

COURSE SCHEDULE: The following is a preliminary schedule for the class. The professor reserves the right to modify this schedule to meet course goals and needs, including augmenting the reading list. Readings are to be completed BEFORE class. Note that only the first day of discussion for some readings is listed below; we will continue to address some chapters and articles beyond an initial day. Supplemental readings beyond the textbook are available on Blackboard under the “Course Material” tab (BB, as noted) in the relevant week’s folder.

Week	Date	Topic	Reading(s)	Assignments
1	9/4/18	Introduction and Expectations		
	UNIT 1: FOUNDATIONS OF AMERICAN GOVERNMENT			
	9/6/18	Political Traditions and Culture I	Evans, “One Choice Can Transform You” (BB)	
2	9/11/18	Political Traditions and Culture II	Locke, <i>Second Treatise on Government</i> (excerpt) (BB)	iCitizen PART 1 (Political Ideology Essay) assigned
	9/13/18	The Founding	Chapter 2 (pp. 41-54) Declaration of Independence (Appendix I in textbook)	
3	9/18/18	The U.S. Constitution	Chapter 2 (pp. 55-79) Federalist 10 (Appendix III in textbook)	
	9/20/18	Federalism	Chapter 3 (all) Federalist 51 (Appendix III in textbook) Brutus 6 (BB)	iCitizen PART 1 (Political Ideology Essay) DUE 9/25/18 @ 11:59 p.m.
4	9/25/18			
	9/27/18	EXAM 1 – Thursday, 9/27/18		
UNIT 2: INSTITUTIONS				
5	10/2/18	Congress I	Chapter 10 (pp. 325-335) Mayhew, <i>Congress: The Electoral Connection</i> (excerpt) (BB) Fenno, <i>Home Style</i> (excerpt) (BB)	iCitizen PART 2 (Service Guarantees Citizenship) assigned
	10/4/18	Congress II	Chapter 10 (pp. 335-357)	
6	10/9/18	Presidency I	Chapter 11 (pp. 361-368) Neustadt, <i>Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents</i> (excerpt) (BB) Schlesinger, <i>The Imperial Presidency</i> (excerpt) (BB)	
	10/11/18	Presidency II	Chapter 11 (pp. 368-387)	
	10/16/18	Fall Study Break – NO CLASS		
7	10/18/18	Bureaucracy	Chapter 12 (all)	iCitizen PART 3 (Chaos of Democracy) assigned
8	10/23/18	Judiciary I	Chapter 13 (pp. 429-444) Federalist 78 (BB) Brutus 15 (BB)	iCitizen PART 2 (Service Guarantees Citizenship) DUE 10/23/18 @ 11:59 p.m.
	10/25/18	Judiciary II	Chapter 13 (pp. 445-455)	
9	10/30/18	EXAM 2 – Tuesday, 10/30/18		

Week	Date	Topic	Reading(s)	Assignments	
UNIT 3: POLITICAL BEHAVIOR AND PARTICIPATION					
9	11/1/18	Public Opinion	Chapter 6 (pp. 185-198) Dowling, "Idiocracy: Do You Need to be Informed to Vote in a Democracy?" (BB)		
10	11/6/18	Political Participation	Chapter 6 (pp. 199-219)	Election Day!	
	11/8/18	Politics and the Media	Chapter 7 (pp. 221-238) Mutz, <i>How the Mass Media Divide Us</i> (excerpt) (BB)		
11	11/13/18	Campaigns and Elections I	Chapter 8 (pp. 251-258) "Debate: Abolishing the Electoral College" (BB)		
	11/15/18	Campaigns and Elections II	Chapter 8 (pp. 268-281) Wasserman, "Hating Gerrymandering is Easy. Fixing It Is Harder." (BB)		
12	11/20/18	Interest Groups	Chapter 9 (pp. 283-300)		
	11/22/18	Thanksgiving Recess – NO CLASS			
13	11/27/18	Political Parties	Chapter 9 (pp. 301-323) APSA, <i>Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System</i> (excerpt) (BB)	iCitizen PART 3 (Chaos of Democracy) DUE 11/27/18 @ 11:59 p.m.	
	11/29/18	Civil Liberties	Chapter 4 (pp. 107-112) Federalist 84 (BB) Brutus 1 (BB)		
14	12/4/18	Civil Rights	Chapter 5 (pp. 143-147; 165-170)	iCitizen PART 4 (Creating We the People) assigned	
	12/6/18	EXAM 3 – Thursday, 12/6/18			
15	12/11/18	Study Day – NO CLASS			
	12/13/18	iCitizen PART 4 (Creating We the People) DUE by 12/13/18 @ 11:59 p.m.			