American Government
“If men were angels, government would not be necessary.”
-James Madison

Spring 2017
American Government T and Th
Tentative Course Syllabus
Professor: Amanda Cook Fesperman
Email: amanda_cookfesperman@ivcc.edu
Web Page: http://www.ivcc.edu/cookfesperman
Phone: 815-224-0203
Office: D307

Tentative Spring Office Hours: M, W: 8-9, 11-12, Th: 1:45-2:45, or by appointment.
(Please note: I reserve the right to change office hours. If I change them, students will be notified in Blackboard and by email. Please check to make sure before coming to my office hours that I will be present. It is best to try to schedule an appointment ahead of time.)

ReaCH FaR: The bold letters in this statement represent the Core Values of IVCC. They stand for – Responsibility, Caring, Honesty, Fairness and Respect. It is expected that the students and the professor will know and carry out these values in all aspects of this course. Respect and Responsibility-- two of IVCC's core values - have been chosen as this year's campus-wide themes. Respect comes from trying to treat others as you would like to be treated and from trying to put yourself in someone else’s shoes. It is also about self-respect, which shows in taking pride in yourself and your work. Responsibility means being motivated to do what you need to do to succeed and following the rules that are established. Keep these themes in mind as you complete course activities and interact with others on campus and in the community this semester.

Syllabus Changes: I reserve the right to change the syllabus at any time during the semester. Students will be notified in class and/or through blackboard/email of any changes.

Required Texts and Materials: Geer, Schiller, and Segal, Gateways to Democracy, Cengage Publishing, ISBN 1-2858-5854-9, can be purchased in the IVCC bookstore in person or online at http://www.ivccbookstore.com (Note: This book is available for rental through the IVCC Bookstore for a significant discounted price. Contact the IVCC bookstore for further inquiries.) Information on the textbook rental program can be found at http://www.ivccbookstore.com/site_rental.asp?mscssid=124FC272454240A0A567CFE005F2DE5B

Blackboard Access: I will be using Blackboard for the purposes of group email, the plagiarism tutorial, any additional assignments/announcements, and for grading. You will be enrolled as a Blackboard user by me. Blackboard, can be linked to at https://ivcc.blackboard.com/webapps/login/ You can find information about logging into and using Blackboard by visiting the following link: http://www.ivcc.edu/studenthelpdesk.aspx?id=16943
Email Access: All students are required to login and check their IVCC emails on a regular basis. I will only accept emails from your official IVCC Outlook email account. If you do not know how to use your IVCC email or cannot gain access, you MUST visit the learning commons for assistance. I communicate with students via your Outlook email account and it is your responsibility to check that account for communications from me. I have only one email account that I check at IVCC and that is the email address listed at the top of the syllabus (Amanda_cookfesperman@ivcc.edu). If you attempt to email me at any other address, I will not receive the email. Additionally, when sending email to me, please make sure you do the following:

1) In the subject heading, put the class name and section (PSI 1000 01).
2) Address comments to Professor Cook Fesperman
3) Be specific about what it is you are emailing about (I need help finding sources for the paper. I would like to meet with you during your office hours on Monday, January 23rd at 11:00. Is this a good time for you?)
4) Be polite. Your words like please and thank you.

Students can expect an email response from me M-F when the college is open within 24 hours or 48 hours on the weekends. If you do not receive an email response from me, you should assume I did not receive it and send the email again. If you still do not receive a response, contact me by phone during my office hours, come by my office hours, or speak to me after class.

Course Objectives: To prepare the student to become a functioning citizen by becoming more aware of the United States system of government, its strengths and its limitations. To illustrate the inequalities that exist in society, analyze how the United States system of government may perpetuate these inequalities, and look for solutions to the problems of inequalities in society. To give the student an understanding of the nature and scope of political science both theoretically and historically. To make the student aware of her/his social and cultural biases in order to learn critical analysis skills. To assist students in demonstrating a competent understanding of United States government in the following ways: *Ability to describe the philosophies underlying United States governmental systems. *Ability to explain factors associated with political socialization and contemporary political activities. *Ability to describe and analyze the social and political issues besetting United States’ democracy in the 20th Century. *Ability to describe and analyze contemporary United States governmental institutions at Federal, State, and local levels.

Grading:
Class Participation – 15% Class attendance is required and students should come to class prepared to discuss the materials assigned for that week and to discuss any news items on the United States government they come across that should be raised for discussion. I hope that students will come to class with insightful questions and/or comments about the assigned readings and news stories, and I will also be calling on students at random to answer some questions of my own. Answers to my questions should show that the student has read and understands the class materials and that she/he has the ability to apply critical thinking skills to those materials. The quality of your contributions is more important than the quantity, but both are expected.
**Research Paper - 35%**

Students will be assigned to write a 7-9 page research paper on one of the following topics:

1) Term limits are necessary in order to have a better functioning Congress/Term limits will not improve and will likely make Congress worse; (Due in Class March 7)

   - Term limits are currently not available to members of Congress, but 15 states have term limits on their state legislatures. By examining the states with term limits, what does the research say about the positive and negative effects they are having on state legislatures, and would this then apply to Congress?

2) The president has too much constitutional/extra-constitutional power/The president doesn't have enough constitutional/extra-constitutional power; (Due in Class March 14)

   - The Constitution doesn’t give presidents a lot of specific power, but presidents have become very powerful. How has this happened? In what ways do presidents still have too little power?

3) Federal justices should be elected/Federal justices should be appointed; (Due in March 21)

   - The Constitution requires that all federal justices be nominated by the President and confirmed by Congress, but most states have some form of judicial elections. Looking at the state/local judicial elections, what are the pros and cons? What are the pros and cons of the current system?

4) The United States needs a strong third party system/Third parties cannot and/or should not be elected in this country; (Due in Class April 4)

   - The U.S. is not well-designed for 3rd parties to win Congressional and Presidential elections, but some state and local governments have many 3rd party candidates who win. What are the pros and cons of the current system and do 3rd party candidates serve important roles in our elections and government?

5) Special Interest Groups control Washington/Special Interest Groups provide citizens with a way to gain access to Members of Congress; (Due in Class April 6)

   - Special Interest Groups have a big influence on government, but is this necessarily a bad thing? Large corporate interest groups may seem to threaten our democracy, but small grassroots groups may allow citizens to aggregate their opinions and gain access to members of Congress and the President.

6) The News Media is the “4th branch of government”/News is biased and unreliable and no longer serves as a check on government; (Due in Class April 25)

   - In the era of fake news, are there any sources of media that are unbiased? Is this possible? How does the media hold the government accountable and in what ways does it fail in this mission?

7) Americans are losing their right to privacy/the right to privacy should be lessened to protect the state and individuals; or (Due in Class May 2)

   - Privacy is a right not found in the Constitution, but it is imbedded in our laws and concepts about individual liberty. How much privacy from the government should Americans expect and when is it necessary for the government to forgo privacy expectations to protect the American people?

8) Racism is a problem in the United States/we are living in a post-racial society (Due in Class May 4)

   - America is a country deeply rooted in racism as an institution that systematically deprives minority groups of equal treatment under the law. However, many people believe that racism as an institution has all but disappeared and it is merely how individual acts of racism that still exist, not large scale discrimination. What evidence exists to support both contentions? (Please note: this is not a paper about so-called “reverse racism”. It is about traditional notions of racism, where whites hold power and privilege at the expense of minority groups.)

Only 2-3 people may write a paper for each question and I will take volunteers the second day of class. The paper should look at both/all sides of the debate surrounding the given question and present each side thoroughly and without bias. **This is not an opinion paper, so you should not write in the first person, nor should your personal opinion be present in the paper.** The goal is not to convince me that
one side is right or wrong, rather it is to thoroughly investigate and report both or all sides of the debate.

All of the following steps must be met in order for the paper to be accepted and graded:

1) It must be double-spaced typed in 12 pt font, Times New Roman, with 1 inch margins and numbered.
2) It must be turned at the beginning of class on the date is due. Late papers will be accepted, but for a 10 point deduction EACH DAY they are late starting with the beginning of class for which they are due and including holidays and weekends.
3) It must be AT LEAST 7 pages long and no longer than 9. At least 7 pages means that you start at the top of the page and go all the way to the bottom of each page.
4) It must have a cover page that has your name on it.
5) You must use AT LEAST 4 credible sources that are approved by me no later than Monday, February, 6th during my office hours. You must email me links to your sources before you schedule an appointment to meet with me. If I run out of appointments on the last day, I will not extend the deadline for you. Any student who doesn't have at least 4 credible sources by Tuesday, February 7th will be withdrawn from the class. Final approved sources must be listed at the end of your paper in a reference page using APA format.
6) You must properly cite the paper using APA format. You should, however, NOT include an abstract, a running header, or section headings.
7) You must visit the writing center for assistance with your paper on at least one occasion at least 2 weeks prior to the due date of your paper. The meeting must be for at least 20 minutes, and you must attach a signed form from the writing center to your paper stating that you were there, what it is that you discussed, and the length of time you were there. Students who fail to visit the writing center at least 2 weeks prior to the due date of their paper will receive a zero on the paper and will subsequently fail the course.
8) The paper should be written formally and be grammatically correct. Spell and grammar check exists on all word type programs. You should also have someone else read your paper to make sure it makes sense. If I can’t read it, or I have to make substantial grammar changes to your paper, I will not grade it and you will receive a zero on the paper and will subsequently fail the course.
9) An electronic copy of the paper must also be submitted to me in an attachment (.rtf, .doc, or .pdf ONLY) via email the day the paper is due. The paper will be checked for plagiarism using safeassign. Any paper that is plagiarized will receive a grade of zero and the student will subsequently fail the course.
10) Students must complete the plagiarism tutorial with a score of 100 percent by the assigned due date or receive a 25 point deduction off of the top of their papers.
11) The paper cannot be all or mostly in quotation marks. If it is, the paper will receive a grade of zero and the student will subsequently fail the course.

Please feel free to stop by my office for help. I will be happy to review a draft of your paper as long as you get it to me at least 1 week prior to the due date of the paper. I will not spell or grammar check the paper. I will look at it for content only. Don’t wait to start the research. This is only a 7-9 page paper, but it must be packed with good information from start to finish.
Exams - 50%: There will be four exams throughout the semester. The dates and topic materials are listed in the syllabus. **You must bring a blue book with you to class on exam day.** Blue books can be purchased in the bookstore for a nominal fee. Exams will consist of short answer questions. Students will be given a note card 1 week prior to the exam that they may use to write down any material they want to use on the exam. Only that note card may be used, the note card must be prepared by you, in your handwriting, cannot be copied from someone else's note card/notes and must be turned in with your exam. You MAY NOT photocopy my notes or write them word for word on your card!! Please come prepared on exam day, meaning that you have a thorough understanding of the materials presented in the notes, readings, class discussions and study questions. **Make-up exams will only be granted to students who have a valid excuse that can be documented in writing and when I have approved the absence ahead of time.**

Academic dishonesty: Plagiarism, cheating or dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated. This includes so-called "cooperative work" which means work done with the assistance of another student or where students share an assignment. All words or ideas that are not your own must be cited in all of the work that is submitted for this course. Anyone caught cheating or plagiarizing may receive a failing grade for the entire course. Additionally, a report of the transgression will be filed with the Vice President of Academic Affairs. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to the following examples: 1) Turning in any work that is not your own or having someone else do the work for you. 2) Using someone else's note card (a copy, a handwritten replica, or material not from your own notes), etc. 3) Having someone else take an exam for you. 4) Cheating off of someone else's test to obtain the answers. 5) Asking another student for an answer to a test. 6) Obtaining the exam (or old versions of exams) ahead of time to know what will be on the exam. 7) Using materials other than the one note card given to you to take the exam, 8) Having another person do your paper or any other written work for you. 9) Purchasing or downloading a paper from the internet in whole or in part. 10) Failing to properly cite or give credit to sources in your paper. 11) Putting anything in your paper that is not in your own words without putting quotation marks around it. 12) Citing an article in your research paper that you did not read. 13) Lying to or trying to deceive any member of the IVCC faculty or staff for personal academic gain.

Extra Credit: There will be extra credit opportunities throughout the semester that I will announce in class and/or through blackboard. Extra credit usually involves attending events on-campus that I think are relevant to the course or will enhance your overall experiences as a student. Extra credit is added to the exam portion of your grade. The first extra credit assignment is as follows:

**Extra Credit Assignment 1. Point Value - 10.** Submit an entry to me for the 2017 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Writing Contest. The entry can be about any aspect of the civil rights, historic or modern, and does not have to be about Dr. King himself. The entry can be in any writing style (essay, poem, short story, etc.), but must be a serious attempt (no Haikus) and must be your own original work. Entries must be typed, include your name and phone number, and must be submitted no later than Friday, February 10th. **Please email me your entry as an attachment.**
Final grades: The grading scale for this course will be as follows:

- 90-100% = 4.0
- 80-89% = 3.0
- 70-79% = 2.0
- 60-69% = 1.0

I round grades up at .5 and down at .4 so every point counts in this class. Also, please be aware that the final grade is not based on total points, rather on weighted grades. The weighting is as follows: 20% for Class Attendance, 40% for exams, 15% for study questions, and 25% for research papers. The final weighted grade in Blackboard is the correct grade. Please note: I do not use total points. The grades are weighted so you cannot calculate your grade by adding up the points you have and dividing by the total points. The weighted grade in blackboard is your current semester grade.

**Special Needs:** If you are a student with a documented cognitive (learning disabilities), physical, or psychiatric disability (anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, AD/HD, post-traumatic stress, and others), you may be eligible for academic support services such as extended test time, texts on disc, note taking services, etc... If you are interested in learning if you can receive these academic support services, please contact Tina Hardy (tina_hardy@ivcc.edu or 224-0284). Here is a link to their website.

https://www.ivcc.edu/specialpopulations.aspx?id=10200

My hope is to create an equitable learning environment for all students. If you want to discuss your learning experience, please talk to me as early in the term as possible. If you know you have, or suspect you have a disability (learning disability, physical disability, or psychiatric disability such as anxiety, depression, AD/HD, post-traumatic stress, or others) for which you may need accommodations, please contact the Disability Services to determine if you are eligible for support.

**Course Withdrawal:** The final date to withdraw from this course is Monday, April 10th. Effective Summer 2011, students are now able to withdraw themselves through WebAdvisor. Instructions for doing so can be found at [http://www.ivcc.edu/admissions.aspx?id=1984](http://www.ivcc.edu/admissions.aspx?id=1984)

Please Note: Before withdrawing yourself from a course it is HIGHLY recommended that you speak to your instructor and the financial aid office (if you are receiving financial aid) first. Students often believe they are doing worse in a course than they are, or, if special circumstances exist, a faculty member may be able to work out an alternative to a withdrawal like an incomplete. Faculty members still reserve the right to withdraw students for violations of class polices, or to issue them a failing grade. Students cannot withdraw from a class in order to avoid receiving a punitive grade. Those who do will be reinstated.

**A Note About Respect:** IVCC is an academic institution where all sincere viewpoints are welcomed, however, this does not give you license to verbally attack or intentionally offend your fellow classmates or professor. If you disagree with a person’s point of view, please do so respectfully and by using critical thinking, not by issuing personal attacks, sarcasm, or insults. Any student who violates these class policies will be removed from class at the discretion of the instructor and will receive a failing grade for the semester. Egregious violations of this policy will be referred to the college for disciplinary action.

**Mandatory Attendance Policy:** This is a college level transfer course and I expect college level work and behavior from my students. You are expected to attend class on a regular basis, do the assigned
readings and work, take the exams and submit a research paper. A student may be automatically withdrawn by me for any of the following reasons: 1) Failure to attend classes for two weeks in a row; 2) Missing class more than 6 times during the semester; 3) Missing more than one exam; or 4) Failure to submit a gradable paper. If the failure to comply is beyond the withdrawal deadline, a failing grade may be issued instead. It is up to you to keep track of your absences. I will try to notify students if I believe they are close to being withdrawn, but this is not always possible!

A Few Rules:
1. Please turn off all cell phones/tablets before coming to class.
2. Do not text in class.
3. Do not sleep in the classroom.
4. Do not talk while I am or others in the class are talking.
5. Do not pack up your things or rustle papers until I have dismissed you from class.
6. If you have an electronic device that you will using for taking notes, you may only use it for that purpose and not to surf the internet, chat, check email, etc.
7. Do not come to class late. If you are late on occasion, please come into class quietly and do not disrupt the classroom.
9. Chewing Tobacco is not permitted in the classroom or in my office.
10. IVCC is a smoke-free campus. You may not smoke anywhere on the campus. This includes E-cigarettes.
11. If you smoke or wear perfume/cologne, please do not sit in the front of the class due to my asthma.
12. Please address me in person and in all written communication as Professor Cook Fesperman.
13. No portion of my class may be video or audio recorded and no photos may be taken without the specific written consent of me and then only for a legitimate academic need.

Failure to obey these rules may result in a student being asked to leave the class temporarily or permanently, depending on the nature of the offense and at the sole discretion of me. Students asked to leave the class for the entire semester will receive a failing grade.

Privacy and Parents
Federal law prohibits me from releasing ANY information about a student to a third party without the specific written consent of a student. To do this, you must go to the college alone, sign a FERPA release form, and list the specific information that I can release to specific individuals. Once this is done, I will release that information. However, I want to make it clear that it is my policy that I do not meet with, communicate with, or have any discussions with parents or any other third parties. This is a college class and you are expected to behave as a responsible college student regardless of your age. If you or your parents or representatives do not want to abide by this policy, then you should not take this class. I am happy to meet with students and discuss their progress or concerns.
Class Assignment Schedule

January 12th Welcome! Class procedures and policies.  
Assignment: Plagiarism tutorial in blackboard (must be completed by Friday, January 27 at 11:59 p.m.)  
Reading Assignment – Critical Thinking and Cognitive Dissonance and Jared Diamond’s Soft Sciences are Often Harder than Hard Sciences

January 17th Pick Paper Topics, Discussion of Critical Thinking and Cognitive Dissonance and Diamond

January 19th – Class will meet in Jacobs Library. Attendance is MANDATORY or you will be withdrawn from the class.  
Reading Assignment: Geer, et al, Chapter 1

January 24th Discussion: Democracy

January 26th Discussion: Democracy continued  
Reading Assignment: Geer, et al, Chapter 2 and The United States Constitution and Amendments (Geer back of your book).

January 31st Discussion: The Constitution

February 2nd Discussion: The Constitution continued  
Reading Assignment: Federalist Papers 10 and 51 (Back of your book)

February 7th Discussion: The Federalist Papers  
Reading Assignment: Geer, et al, Chapter 3 and lecture notes

February 9th Discussion: Federalism  

February 14th Discussion: Federalism continued

February 16th Exam I – All Materials to Date (Remember your blue book, note card and blue or black pen)  
Reading Assignment: Geer, et al, Chapter 12 and lecture notes.

February 21st Discussion: Congress

February 23rd Discussion: Congress continued

February 28th Discussion: Congress continued  
Reading Assignment: Geer, et al, Chapter 13 and lecture notes.

March 2nd Discussion: The Presidency
March 7th  Discussion: The Presidency continued
Reading Assignment: Geer, et al, Chapter 15 and lecture notes.
Paper #1: Due in Class

March 9th Discussion: The Courts

March 14th Discussion: The Courts continued
Reading Assignment: Geer, et al, Chapter 9 and lecture notes.
Paper #2 Due in Class

March 16th Discussion: Political Parties

March 21st Discussion Political Parties
Paper #3 Due in Class

March 23rd Exam II – All materials post-Exam I (Remember your blue book, note card, and blue or black pen). Reading Assignment: Geer, et al, Chapter 8

March 24th – April 2nd – No Class: Spring Break

April 4th Discussion: Interest Groups
Reading Assignment: Geer, et al, Chapters 10 and 11 and lecture notes
Paper #4 Due in Class

April 6th Discussion: Elections and Campaigns
Paper #5 Due in Class

April 11th Discussion: Voting
Reading Assignment: Geer, et al, Chapters 6 and 7 and lecture notes.

April 13th Discussion: Public Opinion and the Media

April 18th Exam III - All Materials Post Exam II (Remember your blue book, note card, and blue or black pen) Reading Assignment: Geer, et al, Chapter 4 and lecture notes.

April 20th Discussion: Civil Liberties

April 25th Discussion: Civil Liberties continued
Paper #6 Due in Class

April 27th Discussion: Civil Liberties continued
Reading Assignment: Ginsberg, Chapter 5 and Civil Rights lecture notes online. Also read “I Have A Dream” online.
May 2nd Discussion: Civil Rights
Paper #7 Due in Class

May 4th Discussion: Civil Rights continued
Paper #8 Due in Class

May 11th Exam IV - All Materials Post Exam III (Remember your blue book, note card, and blue or black pen)