**Lakehead University (Fall 2021): POLI 2335**

**Politics, Government and Society in the United States**

**Instructor**: Marc James

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**Introduction**: The United States is one of the longest lasting democratic experiments in history. While it has faced incredible challenges including a bloody civil war, the eradication of slavery, terrorist attacks and civil rights protests, the U.S. has shown a remarkable ability (so far) to see its way through them. It has established a mostly very stable democracy, built tremendous wealth and military capacity and has usually played a leading role in world affairs. Today it is being challenged once again from within and from without and the foundations of the democratic republic are being tested. As students of political science, our task is to understand the principles embedded in those foundations, and to become familiar with its evolving political system. In order to assess the health of the American democracy and to recognize more fully some of the challenges it now (or will soon) faces, we will also need to gain a grasp of the hopes and frustrations of the American people themselves. Some of these frustrations have been evident in recent demonstrations and in the storming of the capitol in January.

**Text:**

**O’Connor & Sabato, American Government: Roots and Reform (2021 Revel edition; a hard copy of the text should also be available through the bookstore)**

<https://console.pearson.com/enrollment/efvd2g>

**Requirements:**

1. **Contributions to class discussions** (30%): You will be asked to respond to one or more questions every week based on our readings, viewing and lectures. In addition to providing your own response, you will also be asked to comment upon at least two classmates’ responses and are encouraged to follow up on each other’s responses.

2. **Revel textbook assignments** (approximately 5 X 2% = 10%): these will be accessible through your digital text for the class.

3. **Essay** (30%): Information about this requirement will be supplied in lecture early in the term.

4. **Final Exam** (30%): Your responses to questions about course themes, people and events. You will be given plenty of time to complete this requirement. More details to come.

**Topics and Readings: each lecture will provide detailed slides, notes or other media links.**

**1. September 7**: An introduction to the study of American government, politics and society. Discussion of course and requirements.

READ: ***American Government: Roots and Reform*** (***AG***), Ch. 1

**2. September 14**: The Constitution and the Federal System

READ: ***AG***, Chs. 2 & 3

**3. September 21**: Congress

READ: ***AG***, Ch. 6

**4. September 28**: Presidency and the Executive Branch

READ: ***AG***, Chs. 7 & 8

**5. October 5**: The Judiciary

READ: ***AG***, Ch. 9

**6. October 19**: Political Parties

READ: ***AG***, Ch. 11

**7. October 26**: Campaigns, Elections and Voting

READ: ***AG***, Ch. 12

**8. November 2**: The Media and Interest Groups

READ: ***AG,*** Chs. 13 & 14

**9. November 9**: Rights and Liberties

READ: ***AG***, Chs. 4 & 5

**10. November 16**: Social and Economic Policy

READ: ***AG***, Ch. 15

**11. November 23**: Foreign and Defense Policy

READ: ***AG***, Ch. 16

**12. November 30**: Review and Exam Assignment Information (no assigned reading)