Introduction to the US Political System (GOVT020)

Dates: May 24 - July 19, 2021

Location: This course is conducted entirely online, which means students do not have to be on campus to complete any portion of it. Students will participate in the course using Georgetown University's online learning management system called Canvas. To learn more about Canvas, please go through the <u>Canvas Guide for Students</u>.

Professor: Mark Carl Rom, Associate Professor of Government and Public Policy, McCourt School of Public Policy and Department of Government

Professor Contact Information: Please email through the Canvas Inbox. If you have issues with the Canvas Inbox, you can use - romm@georgetown.edu or text (if urgent) him at 202-213-8767

Virtual Office Hours: Professor Rom will be on Zoom every Monday from 10-noon and Wednesday from 3-5 p.m. (Georgetown time zone) and also by request. All meetings will be on his office hour Zoom (on Canvas).

COURSE GOALS

This course has four main goals.

The first is to work together with integrity, by upholding the Georgetown Student Pledge.

In pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life I commit myself to respect and to uphold the Georgetown University honor system:

To be honest in every academic endeavor, and

To conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community as we live and work together.

I also commit myself to uphold this pledge and to work with you to meet these ideals.

A second goal is for you to become a more informed and competent citizen and political activist.

To accomplish this goal, you will need to build your knowledge about American politics and to learn how political knowledge can empower political activity. We will do this by reading books and articles about politics, by discussing and reflecting on what we have read, and by taking content exams. At the end of the course, you should have a strong grasp on the facts and concepts regarding the core structural factors in American politics (the Constitution, federalism, civil rights, civil liberties), the key institutions (Congress, the presidency, judiciary, and the bureaucracy), the principal organizations (interest groups, political parties, the news media), and the important behaviors (political culture, socialization, ideology, public opinion, voting, campaigns and elections). This knowledge is essential for effective citizenship and activism.

A third goal is for you to engage in diverse explorations in and reflections on American politics while interacting with your classmates.

We will be using the Yellowdig program in this course. Yellowdig is a combination of Facebook and Twitter, with a sprinkling of Instagram and Tik Tok, and with a far more

serious purpose. You will be encouraged to post, share, discuss, applaud, and critique topics involving US politics. The more you participate, the more you will learn (I hope!) and the more points you will earn.

A final goal is for you to develop your skills as a political analyst and citizen activist.

You will develop these skills by identifying a political problem -- that is, a problem with the US political system -- recommend a way to fix this problem, and consider the political opportunities and barriers in putting your solution into place. A key element of this project will be to carefully assess the evidence regarding the problem and the solution. Partisan talking points, or simplistic diagnoses and remedies, won't count for much.

For example, a careful study of voting requirements may help you identify weaknesses in terms of ballot access or integrity and offer remedies for these problems. You will develop these skills through the readings, Yellowdig activities, and your research project. To accomplish this goal you will write a research paper in which you identify problems in the American political system, gather evidence about these problems and potential solutions, and present your evidence and answers to the class.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Course-level Learning Objective 1: You will enhance your understanding of American politics by engaging in a thoughtful exploration of the key concepts in the study of the US political system.

Module-level Learning Objective 1: You will develop factual knowledge of the formal and informal features of American politics involving political institutions and political behavior. This knowledge will be assessed through content quizzes.

Module-level Learning Objective 2: You will develop your interpretive skills regarding the formal and informal features of American political institutions and political

behavior. These skills will be assessed through your engagement in the various activities accessible through Yellowdig as well as through your research paper.

Module-level Learning Objective 3: You will develop an understanding of how institutions and behavior interact. Institutions affect behavior, and in return behavior affects institutions. This knowledge will be assessed through your Yellowdig engagement as well as through your research project.

Course-level Learning Objective 2: You will learn how political scientists think about and conduct research on political phenomena.

Module-level Learning Objective 4: You will learn the core theoretical concepts and analytical frameworks commonly used by political science scholars, including the concepts of collective action problems, coordination, rules, environment, strategies, and choices. You will be assessed on this knowledge through the content quizzes, your Yellowdig engagement, and your research projects.

Module-level Learning Objective 5: You will develop an understanding of how political scientists use theory, logic, and evidence to make statements about political institutions and political behavior that are supportable and generalizable. You will be assessed on this knowledge through the content quizzes, your reflective posts, and your research projects.

After completing this course, you will have the skills necessary to identify problems in the American political system, to collect evidence that attempts to clarify the problems and recommend solutions, and to explain your answers to a public audience.

After completing the course, you will have the competence necessary to provide a moderately sophisticated interpretation of American political phenomenon. Although political interpretations are often subjective, and although political phenomena are open to multiple and often competing interpretations, a sophisticated interpretation uses both factual knowledge and conceptual understanding.

COURSE READINGS

Kernell, Samuel, Gary Jacobson, Thad Kousser, and Lynn Vavreck. 2021. *The Logic of American Politics*. 10th edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage/CQ Press.

Sides, John, Daron Shaw, Matt Grossmann, Keena Lipsitz. 2018 *Campaigns and Elections*. 3rd edition. New York: W.W. Norton.

Dahl, Robert. 2003. *How Democratic is the American Constitution?* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Baglione, Lisa A. 2015. Writing a Research Paper in Political Science. 3rd edition. Los Angeles: Sage/CQ Press.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING CRITERIA

Graded Assignments

Your grade will be based on your performance on three core elements.

Your overall score will be the average of your scores across:

Knowledge: 35 percent Engagement: 35 percent Research: 30 percent

Note: If you do not seek to earn an A, and if the highest grade you seek is a B+, then you may do only the Knowledge and Research elements, with both equal to 50 percent of your final grade.

You must complete a multiple choice quiz based on the syllabus during the first week of class and receive a score of 100 percent. This quiz will not count toward your grade, but

no other work submitted will be graded until you complete the syllabus quiz. If you do not receive 100 percent on the exam, you may take it again until you do.

Note: All assignments are due by 6 p.m. on the Monday night *after* the beginning of the module. For example, if the module begins on Monday, June 7 all tasks for that module must be completed by 6 p.m. Monday, June 14.

Why Monday, and not Sunday? Just to give you a bit more time, just in case you haven't finished up everything over the weekend.

Why 6 p.m., and not 11.59 p.m. (the default assignment deadline)? Because I hate to think about you working until midnight. So finish by 6, have dinner, and then do something enjoyable the rest of the evening (if you can).

Knowledge Component

Our first task is to develop your substantive knowledge (facts, concepts, theories) about American politics. High performance requires persistence, focus, and skill.

For each assigned reading, you can take an online quiz on Canvas. Each quiz from the *Logic* text will contain a randomized set of 25 multiple choice content questions taken directly from the book. The quiz from *How Democratic?* text contains 20 content questions taken from that book. Most quizzes from *Campaigns and Elections* contain 15 content questions taken from the text.

The Logic of American Politics contains 15 quizzes; How Democratic is the American Constitution? contains 1 quiz; Campaigns and Elections contains 14.

You will thus take 30 quizzes for the course. Yes, that's a lot. The good news is that you can retake each quiz one time if you are not satisfied with your initial score. All quizzes, including 'retakes', must be completed by Monday nights at 6 p.m.

Engagement Component

Our second task is to build your skills in applying and analyzing political concepts and content in civil and informative engagement with your peers.

You will engage in these activities through posting and sharing political material -- content you have discovered, as well as your informed reflections on this material -- through Yellowdig. You earn points each week by posting, sharing, liking, and so forth. Each week you may earn a maximum 1,250 points (for a total of 10,000) for the course. Don't worry: you'll find it interesting to engage, and the points will naturally come your way when you do.

More details are given on the Yellowdig assignment in Canvas.

You'll need to submit all Yellowdig posts for the week by 6 p.m. Mondays. But here's the deal. Although you can only earn 1,250 points each week, you can actually 'work ahead' by booking another 250 points that will be credited to the next week's total. This means that, if you post 1,500 points in one week, you need to post only 1000 points the next to earn the maximum of 2,500 points for those two weeks. Pretty cool.

Research Component

Our third task is to develop your skills as a political analyst and citizen advocate. You will write a research paper in which you propose a change in the American political system to "create a more perfect union". In making this recommendation, you will need to learn about the problem you intend to fix, the reasons we have this problem, and the prospects of fixing it.

In this project, you will identify a problem with the American political system, propose a remedy for this problem, and assess its political prospects. In doing so, you will write a properly referenced research paper, using a diverse set of credible resources.

Some examples:

- 1. The problem: The Electoral College does not always represent the popular will. Solution: Eliminate the EC, and adopt popular vote rule.
- 2. The problem: 'Big Money' has too much influence in politics. Solution: Limit the amount that can be spent on political campaigns.

Note: Not all 'solutions' are good ones. And some good solutions are almost impossible to obtain politically. Limiting the money that can be spent on campaigns might not

produce the benefits you wish, and doing so might have unintended consequences. Eliminating the Electoral College is difficult to do and, again, will likely have consequences that might be unfortunate.

The research projects are also a collaborative part of the course: you'll be creating individual projects, but doing so while working with others. Beginning in the middle of the semester, each week you will submit a project update as specified. You will be required to provide your teammates with feedback on their progress. Both your updates and your feedback will be considered in our final assessment of your projects.

Your project will be assessed according to a rubric posted on the assignment.

Deadlines:

In developing your research project, you will have several deadlines. All deadlines are due at 6 p.m. on the relevant Monday.

Project proposals must be posted by Monday, June ?? 6 p.m. Your proposal should briefly describe the problem, a potential solution, and why you are interested in that topic. More details on your proposal appear at the bottom of this page.

To get credit for your proposal, you must also provide feedback to your other teammates. This feedback should involve questions and comments you have for them regarding their proposal. You must post your feedback no later than the following Wednesday (e.g., your first feedback must be posted by midnight Wednesday, July 1).

You must post project updates each of the next weeks, on July 5, July 12, and July 19. Each week you will be assigned specific tasks to work on for your update. The update must describe (or, better, show) the progress you have made on your research. Each week, you must also provide feedback to your teammates by the following Wednesday.

Your final project must be completed and the file posted on Canvas by 6 p.m., Friday, July 24.

Content:

You will write a research paper of approximately 3000 words with all elements (a-f) listed below.

You will identify a problem with the American political system, and propose a remedy to this problem.

Your paper carefully assesses the problem, the solution, and the prospects: it cannot be merely 'about' those things. For example, if you believe that 'big money' is a problem in American politics, you will want to address specifically what problems the money causes, whether your solution is likely to help remedy the problem, and the political prospects for your solution.

Format:

Your paper will contain the following elements:

- a. Abstract: In 250 words, you should concisely state the problem, your solution, and the political challenges to obtaining the solution..
- b. Introduction: You should provide a brief overview of the problem, the proposed solution, the political challenges to obtaining the solution, and what motivated you to conduct this study.
- c. Research methods: You should describe what you did to understand the problem, the solution, and the political challenges.
- d. Literature review: You should synthesize and summarize the literature as it relates to the problem, the solution, and the political challenges.
- e. Research findings: You should present and interpret the evidence regarding the problem, solutions, and challenges. This evidence may mainly come from your literature review.

Citation Style:

You will provide citations and references for your Research Project according to Chicago (author date: page) Style. I strongly encourage you to use RefWorks to compile your bibliography You can find a guide for using RefWorks here.

Grading Options

Students will have the option to choose one of two grading frameworks for Summer 2020 courses, either

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a letter grade (A, B, C, D, F), or
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Satisfactory (S); Credit (CR); or No-credit(NC): (S=grades A through C; CR=C-, D+, D; NC=F)

Note: If you do not seek to earn an A, and if the highest grade you seek is a B+, then you may do only the Knowledge and Research elements, with both equal to 50 percent of your final grade.

Students can make this choice in MyAccess beginning up until the last day of classes. The choice to take a class S/CR/NC can apply to any course: Core, major, minor, certificate or free elective. The choice can be made without permission from the deans (per the usual process). The S/CR/NC options will not be counted toward the stated maximum of student's degree programs (e.g., "six" as outlined in the Undergraduate Bulletin). The withdrawal date will also be extended to the last day of classes. A transcript notation will explain that S/CR/NC was instituted because of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic.

Grading Standards

$$87 - 89\% = B +$$

$$83 - 86\% = B$$

$$80 - 82 \% = B$$
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73 - 76% = C

70 - 72% = C

67 - 69% = D +

60 - 66% = D

Below 60 % = F

COURSE SCHEDULE

This course begins with an Orientation and is divided into 8 modules. Below is an outline for the Orientation and each module. Each Module will be released on a weekly basis every Sunday at 11:59 pm (ET). Students are required to move through each module in sequential order.

ORIENTATION: Opens May 28

The orientation provides an overview of the course and introduces you to your instructor and peers. You will also learn about the technology requirements and where to get support.

MODULE 1: May 24 - May 31 Introduction to the US Political System and the Constitution

MODULE 2: May 31 - June 7 Civil Rights, Civil Liberties, How Democratic is the American Constitution?

MODULE 3: June 7 - June 141 The Congress and the Presidency

MODULE 4: June 14 - June 21 The Bureaucracy and the Judiciary

MODULE 5: June 21 - June 28 Campaigns and Elections

MODULE 6: June 28 - July 5 Public Opinion and Political Participation

MODULE 7: July 5 - July 12 Political Parties and Interest Groups

MODULE 8: July 12 - July 19 The News Media and Conclusions

INFORMATION ABOUT TOOLS AND TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

As an online student your "classroom" experience will be very different than a traditional student. As part of your online experience, you can expect to:

Communicate with your professor and classmates regularly via email, discussion boards, and other platforms.

Navigate the internet using a web browser (note that certain tools may require a specific browser).

Use office applications such as Microsoft Office or Google Docs to create documents..

Submit assignments in Canvas.

Upload and download saved files (including text, audio, and video).

Use a microphone to record audio.

Use an internal or external camera to record video.

In this course we will use the following tools:

TurnItIn is a writing assessment tool that is used to detect plagiarism and allows teachers to provide assignment feedback to students.

Zoom enables users to conduct synchronous ("real-time") conferences, presentations, lectures, meetings, office hours and group chats via audio, video, text chat and content sharing.

Panopto is a cloud-based lecture capture service available to Georgetown University faculty, staff and students.

PollEverywhere is an interactive polling tool that is used to engage audiences.

Computer Requirements

You will need access to a computer (Windows or Mac) and adequate Internet service to complete this course Although you can use other devices such as smartphones and tablets for some online coursework, please note that some tools, such as Proctorio, do not work on tablets or smartphones.

You will also need an internal or external microphone and camera to complete this course. While you can use any browser to access Canvas please note that some tools only work with certain browsers (e.g., Proctorio only works with Chrome).

The minimum requirements needed to use Canvas can be found in this Canvas guide.

COURSE POLICIES AND EXPECTATIONS

Student Expectations

This course consists of 8 modules. You are expected to complete all readings, assignments, and activities on time (although I'm going to be quite flexible about this). Participation is essential to your success in this class. Students are expected to actively participate in discussions with your peers, and contribute to the group assignments. It is important to subscribe to the course announcements so that you receive notifications when new messages are posted. In order to get full credit for participation, you will have to complete all of your module assignments and quizzes on time.

You are expected to complete all the course material. Each module includes readings, Knowledge quizzes, and Yellowdig Engagement activities. Beginning midway through the semester you will also be required to post weekly updates on your progress on the Research project. You will post your Research project on the assigned date, and also participate in group activities as assigned.

Finally, I will meet with you twice during the semester, by Zoom, at mutually agreed upon times. These conversations will last about 15-30 minutes, and we will discuss how the course is going for you and how it is contributing to your learning.

Time Expectations

Our online classes are designed to meet the same academic standards as our place-based (face-to-face) courses. You can think of each module equal to the same level of participation, commitment, and academic rigor as a face-to-face class. Students should plan on spending approximately 15 hours per week on the work for each online module.

Communication Expectations

Communication with Peers

You will be expected to engage with your peers via Yellowdig and other required tools (Zoom) on a regular basis.

Communication with Professor

Please feel free to email me with your questions, concerns, and/or to schedule a time to meet over Zoom. When sending emails please remember to follow the guidelines outlined below. If you have general questions about assignments and course materials please post these questions in the <u>General Question Discussion Board Forum</u>, which you can access by clicking Discussions in the course navigation menu. This is an open forum, and you are encouraged to give answers and help each other.

Check the syllabus. Before sending your email or message, be sure that your question has not already been addressed in the syllabus or announcements.

Be patient. If you have a concern and send me a message, you can expect a response within 24 hours. You should expect feedback on assignments within 48 hours.

Specify subject. Subject line should be "USPS 'what I'm writing about' (like USPS Questions about Yellowdig)

Greet & Close. E-mails should begin with "Hello Professor" or something like that and end with your name.

Check writing. Proofread (i.e. grammar and spelling) your message before sending.

Netiquette Guidelines

To promote the highest degree of education possible, we ask each student to respect the opinions and thoughts of other students and be courteous in the way that you choose to express yourself. Students should be respectful and considerate of all opinions.

In order for us to have meaningful discussions, we must learn to genuinely try to understand what others are saying and be open-minded about others' opinions. If you want to persuade someone to see things differently, it is much more effective to do so in a polite, non-threatening way rather than to do so antagonistically. Everyone has insights to offer based on his/her experiences, and we can all learn from each other. Civility is essential.

Absences

There are no absences in an online course. You are expected to complete all work by the due date. If you can. It's in your best interest to meet the deadlines, so that your assignments don't build up.

Make-up policy

Just let me know if you need an extension, and I'll probably grant you one.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Students with Disabilities

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, individuals with disabilities have the right to specific accommodations that do not fundamentally alter the nature of the course. Some accommodations might include note takers, books on tape, extended time on assignments, and interpreter services among others. Students are responsible for communicating their needs to the <u>Academic Resource Center</u>, the office that oversees disability support services,(202-687-8354; arc@georgetown.edu/disability/) before the start of classes to allow time to review the documentation and make recommendations

for appropriate accommodations. The University is not responsible for making special accommodations for students who have not declared their disabilities and have not requested an accommodation in a timely manner. Also, the University need not modify course or degree requirements considered to be an essential requirement of the program of instruction. For the most current and up-to-date policy information, please refer to the <u>Georgetown University Academic Resource Center website</u>. Students are highly encouraged to discuss the documentation and accommodation process with an Academic Resource Center administrator.

Accessibility and Inclusion

One of the central tenets of Georgetown's educational mission is *cura personalis*, a Latin phrase meaning "care of the whole person." Georgetown is committed to showing care and concern for each student by creating an inclusive and accessible learning environment that follows universal design principles to meet the needs of its diverse student body.

I am committed to creating a learning environment for my students that supports a diversity of thoughts, perspectives and experiences, and honors your identities (including race, gender, class, sexuality, religion, ability, etc.). If your name or pronoun needs to be corrected, please let me know early in the semester so that I can make the appropriate changes to my records.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Students at Georgetown University are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic and personal integrity. Although most Georgetown students conduct themselves in accordance with these standards, occasionally, there are students who violate the code of conduct. Cheating harms the University community in many ways. For example, honest students are frustrated by the unfairness of cheating that goes undetected and students who cheat can skew the grading curve in a class, resulting in lower grades for students who worked hard and did their own work.

Academic dishonesty in any form is a serious offense, and students found in violation are subject to academic penalties that include, but are not limited to failure of the course, termination from the program, and revocation of degrees already conferred. All students are expected to fully adhere to the policies and procedures of <u>Georgetown's Honor System</u> and to take the Honor Code Pledge.

Honor Code Pledge

In pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life I commit myself to respect and to uphold the Georgetown University honor system; to live out a commitment to integrity in all my words and actions; to be honest in every academic endeavor; and to conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community as we live and work together; to live out the ideals of Georgetown University I commit myself to be a person for others in my daily life, respectful of difference and disagreement; To care for this venerable campus and all of those with whom I share it; and to fulfill in all ways the trust placed in me to carry on the Georgetown tradition.

Plagiarism

Stealing someone else's work is a terminal offense in the workplace, and it will wreck your career in academia, too. Students are expected to work with integrity and honesty in all their assignments. The Georgetown University Honor System defines plagiarism as "the act of passing off as one's own the ideas or writings of another." More guidance is available through the <u>Gervase Programs</u>. If you have any doubts about plagiarism, paraphrasing, and the need to credit, check out <u>Plagiarism.org</u>.

All submissions must be your original work. Any submission suspected of plagiarism will be immediately referred to the Honor Council for investigation and possible adjudication. All students are expected to follow Georgetown's honor code unconditionally. If you have not done so, please read the honor code material located online at the Honor Council website.

SUPPORT SERVICES

Georgetown recognizes that COVID-19 has a significant impact on everyone in the Georgetown community. Georgetown offers a variety of support services for students that can be accessed online and has put together this newsletter which aims to provide you with information about well-being resources and virtual meetings that can connect you with mental health professionals on and off campus during this time. Below are some resources available to you:

Academic Resource Center

202-687-8354 | arc@georgetown.edu

Counseling and Psychiatric Services

202-687-6985

Institutional Diversity, Equity & Affirmative Action (IDEAA)

(202) 687-4798

Sexual Misconduct

Georgetown University and its faculty are committed to supporting survivors and those impacted by sexual misconduct, which includes sexual assault, sexual harassment, relationship violence, and stalking. Georgetown requires faculty members, unless otherwise designated as confidential, to report all disclosures of sexual misconduct to the University Title IX Coordinator or a Deputy Title IX Coordinator. If you disclose an incident of sexual misconduct to a professor in or outside of the classroom (with the exception of disclosures in papers), that faculty member must report the incident to the Title IX Coordinator, or Deputy Title IX Coordinator. The coordinator, will, in turn, reach out to the student to provide support, resources, and the option to meet. [Please note that the student is not required to meet with the Title IX coordinator.]. More information about reporting options and resources can be found on the Sexual Misconduct Website.

Title IX Pregnancy Modifications and Adjustments

Georgetown University is committed to creating an accessible and inclusive environment for pregnant and parenting students. Students may request adjustments based on general pregnancy needs or accommodations based on a pregnancy-related complication. SCS students must complete the Pregnancy Adjustment Request Form and submit it to the SCS Deputy Title IX Coordinator at titleixscs@georgetown.edu. Upon receiving the completed form, the Deputy Title IX Coordinator will schedule a meeting with the student to discuss the requested adjustments and implementation process. More information about pregnancy modifications can be found on the Title IX at Georgetown University Website.

Georgetown Library

If you have a question for a librarian you can go to their "Ask Us" page where you will have the option to chat online, send an email, or schedule a Zoom appointment to discuss a research topic, develop a search strategy, or examine resources for projects and papers. Librarians offer an overview of and in-depth assistance with important resources for senior or master's theses, dissertations, papers and other types of research. This service is available to currently enrolled students who need assistance with Georgetown-assigned projects and papers. Please review the Services & Resources Guide for Online Students for additional information.

eResources

Students enrolled in courses have access to the University Library System's eResources, including 500+ research databases, 1.5+ million ebooks, and thousands of periodicals and other multimedia files (films, webinars, music, and images). You can access these resources through the <u>Library's Homepage</u> by using your NetID and password.

Learning Resources

Georgetown offers a host of <u>learning resources</u> to its students. Two that you might find particularly helpful in this course are the <u>Writing Center</u> and <u>Refworks</u>.

<u>The Writing Center</u> offers peer tutoring by trained graduate and undergraduate students who can assist you at any point in the writing process. They help at any stage of your writing process, from brainstorming to revision. Tutors can offer advice on

thesis development, use of evidence, organization, flow, sentence structure, grammar, and more. The Writing Center will not proofread or edit papers; rather, they will help to improve your proofreading and editing skills to become a better writer. Appointments can be booked online through their website.

<u>Refworks</u> is an online research management tool that aids in organizing, storing, and presenting citation sources for papers and projects.

Technical Support

All students have 24/7 access to Canvas technical support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, including live chat and a support hotline at 855-338-2770. Use the 'Help' icon in the lower left of your Canvas window to view all available support and feedback options. If you're looking for help on a specific feature, check out the <u>Canvas Student Guide</u>.

For technical assistance with other tools used in this course, click on links below:

TurnItIn

Zoom

<u>Panopto</u>

PollEverywhere

Google Apps