

American National Government (POLI 201, Sec. 04)

Instructor: Dr. Steven Campbell
Office: 111 Hubbard Hall
Office Hrs: MW (9:00-10:45am; 1:30-2:30pm)
TTH (1:30-2:30pm)
Fri (9:00am-11:00am)
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Course Description:

This course (3 credit hours) is designed to introduce you to the study of American government and politics. The course will examine the constitution and characteristics of American democracy, the basic structure and functions of the three branches of government (Presidency, Congress, Judiciary), as well as significant actors in the U.S. political system (e.g., political parties, interest groups, news media). Moreover, the course will examine many of the various events and actors that have shaped—and continue to shape—our system of government.

The course design aids you in developing an understanding of the political world in which you live. You will assess the political “rules of the game,” institutions and actors to develop a holistic (big) picture of who gets what, when and how in political conflict. In doing so, you will come to realize your place in the process, regardless of your personal level of involvement in politics. In addition to accumulating substantive knowledge, you will sharpen your critical thinking, oral communication, and writing skills.

Course Learning Outcomes: Having completed this course, you will be able to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the basic structure and functioning of the three branches of government (legislature, executive, & judiciary).
2. Identify key actors and events that have shaped both political institutions and political behavior in the United States.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of the general functioning and significance of the following as they relate to U.S. government & politics: 1) public opinion/polling; 2) political parties; 3) campaigns and elections; 4) interest groups; and, 5) the news media.
4. Describe and explain the process of political socialization.
5. Describe the fundamental differences among the U.S. democratic system, other democracies, and other types of government.
6. Recognize the role “politics” plays in determining who wields influence & power in the U.S. political system.
7. Critically evaluate the content, style and source credibility of political news, articles and events.

Required Reading:

Patterson, Thomas E. We the People: A Concise Introduction to American Politics (8th Ed.), Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2009.

[*You are also expected to stay informed of current events throughout the semester*]

Learning Activities:

Learning activities will be geared toward assisting you to achieve course learning outcomes and to sharpen your reading, writing, reasoning, and oral communication skills. These activities include lecture, discussion, informal debate, videos, small group exercises, quizzes, exams, and essay papers.

Course Requirements: You will be evaluated on the basis of your performance on the following:

- 1. Participation/Assignments (100 points=20%).** You are expected to attend class & be on time, as well as complete weekly readings before class. You should be prepared to discuss readings, and are expected to keep abreast of current events and be prepared to discuss these. There will also be in-class and homework assignments throughout the semester that will revolve around communicating an understanding of course materials. *All homework assignments must be typed and turned in at start of class, or will not be accepted.*
- 2. Quizzes (100 points=20%).** There will be 7 quizzes (20 points each) throughout the semester. I will drop your two (2) lowest quiz grades. Each quiz will consist of 10 multiple choice questions covering course readings. *There are no make-ups on quizzes.*
- 3. Analytical Paper (100 points=20%).** The paper, 3-4 pages in length, will be graded based on the quality of the content and analysis as well as its written style and overall organization. The Paper is due at start of class on the due date. *Instructions for the paper are on page 4 of the syllabus.*
- 4. Exams (200 points=40%).** Four exams (50 points each) will cover approximately one-fourth of the course material, respectively. There will be three exams during the semester and a final exam (noncumulative) at the end. The exam format will consist of multiple choice and true/false questions, and will cover material in the readings and in class lectures.

Grades: Each item that constitutes your grade will be assessed on a point basis according to the above system. The final grade will be a percentage, and letter grades will be assigned as follows:

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Points</u>	<u>Percentages</u>
A	448-500	(90% and up)
B+	433-447	(87-89%)
B	398-432	(80-86%)
C+	383-397	(77-79%)
C	348-382	(70-76%)
D+	332-347	(67-69%)
D	298-331	(60-66%)
F	0-297	(0-59%)

*****Extra-Credit:** You will earn one (1) extra-credit point for each class meeting (*except exam days*) you bring a current events article—must be U.S. political news—for discussion *at start of class*. See news websites under “External Links” in Blackboard for current events articles. Be prepared to discuss your article.

Late/Make-up Policy: Assignments/papers *will not be accepted after the class due date*. Exceptions will only be made in extenuating circumstances and at the discretion of the instructor. The examinations *must be taken as scheduled* on this syllabus and as announced in class. Exceptions will only be made in extenuating circumstances and at the discretion of the instructor. *Documentation for absence will also be required in most cases.*

Attendance: University policy states that attendance at each class session is expected. Class will start promptly as designated and attendance will be taken during each class session.

Electronics Policy: Pagers, cell-phones, PDA’s or other electronic devices must not be seen or heard during class. They should be put in silent (NOT vibrate) or off mode during class. No text-messaging should be done during class time.

Academic Responsibility: Violations in this course will be handled in line with university policies.

Disability Services Statement: If you have a disability requiring special arrangements for class participation or test administration, you should notify me of the need for such arrangements at the beginning of the semester.

Syllabus: Your syllabus in ANY college class is a roadmap to success. You should always keep your syllabus with your class notes, assignments, and tests *and bring it to class daily*. Your syllabus is a legal, binding agreement between you and your instructors. Your syllabus should be readily accessible.

Analytical Paper Instructions

The analytical paper is to be 3-4 pages in length (typed, double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12 font, and 1" margins all around). In each paper you are to relate some aspect of American government we have covered in class readings to a contemporary, real-world American government/political issue (or event) through the following approach:

Select one recent news article which is lengthy enough to illustrate (relate to/connect with) one or more central ideas, statements, and/or concepts that have been covered in the readings. In about ½ of your first page, begin by summarizing—not just describing—your news article (i.e., focus on the main points, key ideas, central themes, primary arguments, etc.). In the remaining part of your paper, explicitly demonstrate how the information in your news article illustrates (relates to/connects with) the idea(s), statement(s), and/or concept(s) you chose from the readings. In essence, find “tie-ins” between your contemporary news article and material in the readings.

The information concerning the issue or event to be analyzed should be obtained through a recent news article from a credible U.S. media source (examples are listed below—also see “External Links” in Blackboard). **The paper, worth 100 points, will be graded as follows:** Full citation for news article (10 points); written style—organization/punctuation/grammar/spelling (20 points); quality of summary (30 points); quality of analysis—“tie-ins” (40 points).

The paper is due at start of class on the due date.

U.S. Media Sources (also see “External Links” in Blackboard)

Newspapers:

New York Times
Washington Post
Christian Science Monitor
Wall Street Journal
Los Angeles Times
Miami Herald

Newsweeklies:

Newsweek
Time

Cable News websites:

CNN
FOX News
MSNBC

Intellectual/Opinion Magazines:

American Prospect
Atlantic Monthly
Commentary
Dissent
Nation
National Review
New Republic
Progressive
Slate
Utne Reader
Weekly Standard

Course Outline:

Week	Date	Learning Activities
1	Jan. 9 (M) Jan. 11 (W)>>	Introduction; Course overview; Syllabus; Textbook >>Start Chpt. 1: “ <i>American Political Culture</i> ” (pp. 1-9) <i>Last day to drop a class without a grade of “W” (Fri, Jan. 13)</i>
2	Jan. 16 (M) Jan. 18 (W)>>	MLK Jr. Day (no classes) >>Finish Chpt. 1 (pp. 9-29) >>Start Chpt. 2: “ <i>Constitutional Democracy</i> ” (pp. 34-47)
3	Jan. 23 (M) Jan. 25 (W)>>	Finish Chpt. 2 (pp. 47-65) >>Read All Chpt. 3: “ <i>Federalism</i> ” (pp. 72-101)
4	Jan. 30 (M) Feb. 1 (W)>>	Start Chpt. 4: “ <i>Civil Liberties</i> ” (pp. 106-128) >>Finish Chpt. 4 (pp. 128-145)
5	Feb. 6 (M) Feb. 8 (W)>>	Exam #1 (Chpts. 1-4) >>Start Chpt. 5: “ <i>Equal Rights</i> ” (pp. 151-163)
6	Feb. 13 (M) Feb. 15 (W)>>	Finish Chpt. 5 (pp. 163-187) >>Start Chpt. 6: “ <i>Public Opinion & Political Socialization</i> ” (pp. 192-206)
7	Feb. 20 (M) Feb. 22 (W)>>	Finish Chpt. 6 (pp. 206-220) Start Chpt. 7: “ <i>Political Participation and Voting</i> ” (pp. 225-238) >> Finish Chpt. 7 (pp. 238-248) >> Start Chpt. 8: “ <i>Political Parties, Candidates & Campaigns</i> ” (pp. 253-264)
8	Feb. 27 (M) Feb. 29 (W)>>	<i>Last day to drop a course without a grade of “WF”</i> Finish Chpt. 8 (pp. 264-290) >> Exam #2 (Chpts. 5-8)
9	Mar. 5-9	Spring Break
10	Mar. 12 (M) Mar. 14 (W)>>	Read All Chpt. 9: “ <i>Interest Groups</i> ” (pp. 296-325) >> Start Chpt. 10: “ <i>The News Media</i> ” (pp. 330-343)
11	Mar. 19 (M) Mar. 21 (W)>>	Finish Chpt. 10 (pp. 343-364) >> Start Chpt. 11: “ <i>Congress</i> ” (pp. 371-384)
12	Mar. 26 (M) Mar. 28 (W)>>	Finish Chpt. 11 (pp. 384-411) >> Exam #3 (Chpts. 9-11)
13	Apr. 2 (M) Apr. 4 (W)>>	Start Chpt. 12: “ <i>The Presidency</i> ” (pp. 417-442) >> Finish Chpt. 12 (pp.442-455)
14	Apr. 9 (M) Apr. 11 (W)>>	Start Chpt. 13: “ <i>The Federal Bureaucracy</i> ” (pp. 460-479) >>Finish Chpt. 13 (pp. 479-492)
15	Apr. 16 (M) Apr. 18 (W)>>	Start Chpt. 14: “ <i>The Federal Judicial System</i> ” (pp. 489-519) >>Finish Chpt. 14 (pp. 519-530)
16	Apr. 23 (M)	<i>Last day of regular classes (TBA)</i>
	???, April ??? 11:00-1:30pm	Final Exam (#4) (Chpts. 12-14) Paper due

*The instructor reserves the right to adjust the syllabus during the semester as needed.