

POLI 101
American Government
Spring 2024
Section 05 | 3 Credits

Instructor:	Dr. Jordan Ragusa	Location:	OAKS
Office:	JC Long Building	Meetings:	Asynchronous
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Course Description

Students enrolled in this class will develop an essential understanding of American government and politics. Over the semester, we will explore various aspects of the United States government and politics, including: our governing institutions, the history and origins of those institutions, the policies that govern our lives, and the political behaviors and attitudes of American citizens. In addition to developing your knowledge of these important topics, students should gain an interest in contemporary political issues and events.

Overview

In the first section of the course, we will review American politics from the perspective of individual citizens. We will identify key elements of American political culture, talk about the formation of political attitudes, discuss voting and elections, and review citizens' civil liberties and civil rights. In the second section, we will focus on the institutions of government. In particular, we will examine the U.S. Constitution, federalism, and the three branches of government: Congress, the presidency, and the federal courts.

Course Format

POLI 101 is an asynchronous online course. In other words, there are no scheduled meeting times, your learning will be entirely online, and you will do a substantial amount of self-study. Additionally, this course will utilize a variety of online tools and learning strategies (from reading news articles and taking public opinion polls to watching lecture videos, interacting with your classmates on discussion boards, and writing formal papers).

Although this class gives you considerable flexibility, you will need to pay attention to the online materials, keep up to date with readings and discussions, and submit assignments on time. I cannot stress this enough: it is critical that you check OAKS every few days. As far as the class organization, note that each unit will open at 6am on Wednesday and all assignments/quizzes are due by 11:59pm the following week (except for exams, which open and close on Friday). Although it will vary, you should expect 5-7 hours of work per week.

As far as the course's content, POLI 101 is considered a "survey" of American politics. A survey course is one that represents a very limited introduction to the topic. In the political science department we offer 200- and 300-level courses that go into greater detail on each of the topics covered here. If something in this course interests you, and you want to learn more, take another political science class!

Key Dates

Exam #1	3/1
Exam #2	4/26
Final Paper Due	5/3

Political Science Learning Outcomes

Students who complete this course should be able to: 1) identify and explain the central principles, institutions, procedures, and decision-making processes of the American political system; 2) evaluate the basic strengths and weaknesses of the American political system through the application of political concepts and ideas; 3) relate historical events and/or developments to contemporary political issues, debates, and outcomes in the United States; and 4) develop an analytical, social science disposition toward American politics.

General Education Learning Outcomes

Students will earn social science general education credit for completing this course. Upon completion of this course, students should be able to: apply social science concepts, models or theories to explain human behavior, social interactions or social institutions. Students will be assessed on this outcome on the second exam (held on April 26).

Required Readings

Each unit's readings can be found on the course schedule below. Standalone texts such as journal articles, book chapters, historical texts, newspaper articles, etc. will be made available on OAKS. Note that each reading is *required* and should be read in its entirety. Indeed, these texts are not supplementary, but are necessary to develop your understanding of American politics. Students who complete the following readings will receive credit per the College's "Founding Documents" requirement:

- The United States Constitution (texts spread throughout the semester)
- The Declaration of Independence
- The Emancipation Proclamation
- Federalist Essays (nos. 1, 9, 10, 51, 68)
- King "I Have a Dream"
- Blake "Overlooked Racial Dynamics of the Electoral College"
- Keele, Cubbison, and White "Suppressing Black Votes"

In addition to these standalone texts, there are two required books. Please be sure to purchase the correct version of the main textbook, with the ISBN of 9780393538847.

- Ginsburg, Lowi, Weir, Tolbert, and Campbell. "We the People" (2021, 13th Core Edition).
- Levitsky and Ziblatt. "How Democracies Die" (2018, 1st edition).

Graded Items

Over the course of the semester you will complete the following assignments: (1) a midterm exam, (2) a final exam, (3) roughly a dozen quizzes, (4) about ten short assignments and discussion posts, and (5) a paper at the end of the semester on the Levitsky and Ziblatt book. Exams are worth 20% each (40% in total) and the other assignments are worth 20% each (a combined 60% of the total course grade). All quizzes will be 10 questions and you'll have 10 minutes to complete them. Although you are free to use notes and/or the textbook when taking a quiz, it is imperative that you read the material and watch the lecture videos before beginning. Exams will be the same basic structure, timed open note/book, except they will be roughly 50 questions and you will have 50 minutes to complete them. Finally, the assignments and papers will have specific instructions which will be provided at the appropriate time.

Grade Distribution

Exam #1	20%
Exam #2	20%
Final Paper	20%
Quizzes	20%
Assignments	20%

Grade Policy

≥ 93	A	80 - 82.9	B-	67 - 69.9	D+
90 - 92.9	A-	77 - 79.9	C+	63 - 66.9	D
87 - 89.9	B+	73 - 76.9	C	60 - 62.9	D-
83 - 86.9	B	70 - 72.9	C-	≤ 59.9	F

Student Responsibilities

Online course are not easy and you must stay on top of assignments and due-dates. Expect the same rigor as a regular face-to-face class. I have the following expectations: log into OAKS at least every few days; review each unit and anticipate about 5-7 hours of work per unit; review and, on occasion, respond to your classmates' discussion posts; complete assignments on time; be technologically proficient; and follow good netiquette.

Because this an asynchronous online course, attendance will not be taken. If a serious illness, death in the family, or other life-altering event causes you to miss portions of the class, I will trust your explanation and not request any documentation. I will also make reasonable accommodations for make-up work. It is imperative, however, that you communicate with me in a timely manner. Reasonable accommodations will only be given with prompt communication. Routine illnesses and minor life disruptions are unlikely to result in an accommodation. Because this is an asynchronous course, I encourage you to work on each unit days in advance of the due dates so that unforeseen events do not hamper your performance.

Netiquette

Netiquette combines the word "net" and "etiquette" and refers to how you ought to conduct yourself in this course. Netiquette is especially important in a class like this where you will interact with one another online and discuss controversial issues. Keep in mind that it is easy to misinterpret someone's intent online without the usual non-verbal communication in face-to-face interaction. In short, please treat everyone with respect, give them the benefit of the doubt, and disagree respectfully.

Honor Code and Academic Integrity

Lying, cheating, and plagiarism are violations of the Honor Code. Incidents where the instructor determines the student's actions reflect misunderstanding and/or confusion will be handled by the professor who may design an intervention or assigns a grade reduction. The response is recorded on a form, is signed both by the instructor and the student, and is forwarded to the Dean of Students office. Cases of significant academic dishonesty will be reported directly to the Dean of Students. A student found responsible by the Honor Board will receive a XXF in the course, indicating failure of the course due to academic dishonesty. This status indicator will appear on the student's transcript for two years after which the student may petition for the XX to be expunged. The F is permanent. For any questions please consult the [Student Handbook](#). When in doubt, feel free to reach out to me as well.

Center For Student Learning

The Center for Student Learning, or CSL, offers a wide variety of tutoring and other academic resources in support of students. Services include walk-in tutoring, by appointment tutoring, study strategies appointments, peer academic coaching, and supplemental instruction. All services are described and all lab schedules are posted on the [CSL](#) website.

Students With Disabilities

At the College, the Center for Disability Services, better known as the [SNAP Office](#), assists students with disabilities. SNAP provides a number of services including academic advisement and exam assistance. Any student eligible for and needing accommodations because of a disability is asked to speak with me during the first two weeks of class or as soon as they have been approved for services so that reasonable accommodations can be arranged.

COURSE SCHEDULE

What follows is each week's content, readings, and assignments. Each unit's module(s) will open at 6:00am on Wednesday and all readings, quizzes and assignments should be completed by 11:59pm the following Wednesday (except for exams, which open and close the same day, a Friday). Please check the modules as directed and complete the items in the order they appear in OAKS.

Section I: Individuals

Course Introduction

1/10 - 1/17

Reading(s)

→ None

Assignment(s)

→ Watch the course introduction video(s)

→ Complete the syllabus quiz

→ Complete the democracy in America essay

American Political Culture

1/17 - 1/24

Reading(s)

→ Jefferson "Declaration of Independence"

→ Williams "Jefferson's Anti-Slavery Passage"

→ King "I Have a Dream"

→ We the People "Chapter 1"

Assignment(s)

→ Complete the liberty essay

→ Watch the lecture video(s)

→ Complete the American political culture quiz

Public Opinion

1/24 - 1/31

Reading(s)

→ We the People "Chapter 6"

→ Hetherington & Weiler "Prius or Pickup?"

Assignment(s)

→ Watch the lecture video(s)

→ Complete the Pew political typology survey

→ Complete the political typology discussion post

→ Complete the public opinion quiz

Voting

1/31 - 2/7

Reading(s)

→ We the People "Chapter 8"

Assignment(s)

→ Interview a friend or family member

→ Complete the voting discussion post

→ Watch the lecture video(s)

→ Complete the voting quiz

Elections

2/7 - 2/14

Reading(s)

→ We the People "Chapter 10"

→ Blake "Overlooked Racial Dynamics of the Electoral College"

→ Hamilton "Federalist 68"

→ Constitution "Amendments 12, 19, 20, 23 & 26"

Assignment(s)

→ Watch the lecture video(s)

→ Complete the elections quiz

Civil Liberties	2/14 - 2/21
Reading(s)	
→ We the People “Chapter 4” (pgs. 102-133)	
→ Constitution “Amendments 1-10” (the Bill of Rights)	
Assignment(s)	
→ Complete the debate assignment	
→ Complete the civil liberties quiz	
 Civil Rights	 2/21 - 2/28
Reading(s)	
→ We the People “Chapter 5” (pgs. 141-158)	
→ Lincoln “Emancipation Proclamation”	
→ Constitution “Amendments 13-15”	
→ Constitution “Amendment 24”	
→ Keele, Cubbison, and White “Suppressing Black Votes” (pgs. 694-697 & 698-700)	
Assignment(s)	
→ Complete the civil rights quiz	
 Exam 1	 3/1 (Friday)
 No Class (Spring Break)	 3/4 - 3/8
 <u>Section II: Institutions</u>	
 Founding Era	 3/13 - 3/20
Reading(s)	
→ We the People “Chapter 2” (pgs. 34-46)	
→ Hamilton “Federalist 1”	
→ Hamilton “Federalist 9”	
→ Madison “Federalist 10”	
→ Madison “Federalist 51”	
Assignment(s)	
→ Watch the lecture video(s)	
→ Complete the Founding era quiz	
 U.S. Constitution	 3/20 - 3/27
Reading(s)	
→ We the People “Chapter 2” (pgs. 46-63)	
→ Constitution “Articles V-VII”	
→ Constitution “Amendments 18 & 21”	
Assignment(s)	
→ Complete the Constitution poll and essay	
→ Watch the lecture video(s)	
→ Complete the Constitution quiz	

Federalism	3/27 - 4/3
Reading(s) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → We the People “Chapter 3” → Constitution “Article IV” → Constitution “Amendments 11 & 16” Assignment(s) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Watch the marijuana legalization debate videos → Complete the marijuana legalization post → Complete the federalism and your daily life post → Watch the lecture video(s) → Complete the federalism quiz 	
The Congress	4/3 - 4/10
Reading(s) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → We the People “Chapter 12” → Constitution “Article I” → Constitution “Amendments 17 & 27” Assignment(s) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Complete the organizational theory post → Watch the lecture video(s) → Complete the Congress quiz 	
The Presidency	4/10 - 4/17
Reading(s) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → We the People “Chapter 13” → Constitution “Article II” → Constitution “Amendments 22 & 25” → Amira, Johnson, McCray, and Ragusa “On the #NeverTrump Movement” Assignment(s) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Complete the theories of presidential power essay → Watch the lecture video(s) → Complete the presidency quiz 	
The Courts	4/17 - 4/24
Reading(s) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → We the People “Chapter 15” → Constitution “Article III” Assignment(s) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Watch the lecture video(s) → Complete the federal courts quiz 	
Exam 2	4/26 (Friday)
How Democracies Die Papers Due	5/3 (Friday)