

**American Government  
Political Science 101  
Section 04  
Spring 2016**

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Dr. Jordan M. Ragusa  
114 Wentworth Street, Room 106  
Office Hours: Weds, 2:00pm-4:00pm; Thurs, 1pm-4pm (or by appointment)  
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Course Meetings  
MWF (9:00-9:50)  
Maybank Hall room 316

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Course Objective—Students in this class will develop an essential understanding of American government and politics. During the semester we will explore various aspects of the United States government including its institutions, the history and constitutional origins of those institutions, the laws and policies which govern our daily lives, and the political behaviors and attitudes of Americans. In addition to developing your knowledge of these important topics, students should gain an interest in contemporary political issues and events.

In this class, there are four sections. In the first section we will briefly talk about the discipline of political science, focusing on how political scientists study politics and discuss career paths for political science majors. In the second section we will review American politics from the individual level. We will identify key elements of American political culture, talk about the formation of political attitudes, and discuss the important act of voting. In the third section we will focus on the Constitution, core principles in our political institutions, and briefly discuss U.S. political history. In this section the goal is to understand the normative and practical reasons for our government's structures and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of our political system. In the final section of the semester we will focus more narrowly on the specific institutions of government (from parties, the bureaucracy, and interest groups to the legislative, executive, and judicial branches). In this section students should come away with an understanding of the structures and decision-making processes of the various institutions and understand how each "fits" within our larger system of government.

#### 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 Social Science 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 third exam (held on April 29).

Course Format—POLI 101 is considered a "survey" course. What this means is that this class represents a very limited introduction to American government and we will briefly touch upon various topics. As such, students will be evaluated largely on the basis of three exams and three papers (in addition to in-class exercises, writing assignments, and quizzes).

Required Texts (3)—Ginsberg, Lowi, Weir, and Tolbert. *We the People*, 2013, (9<sup>th</sup> full edition).  
Mann and Ornstein. *It's Even Worse Than It Looks*, 2013.  
Bruce Watson. *Freedom Summer*, 2010.

OAKS— This course will rely on the OAKS reserve system. The primary purpose of OAKS is to provide students access to a handful of additional readings and other course material in the most efficient manner possible. All additional readings are clearly noted on the syllabus. In addition, the three reaction papers for the outside events are to be uploaded to OAKS.

Grades—(1) The bulk of your grade will be determined by three exams, each worth 11.6%. Exams will be given during regularly scheduled class periods and are closed notes. Note that the second and third exams are *not* comprehensive. Exam material will come from the required readings and class lecture and will consist of true/false, multiple choice, and essay questions. (2) You will also have three papers due during the semester. Papers will be about 5-6 pages in length and each is worth 10% of your grade. Paper #1 will be a “position paper” on the Constitution. For this paper there is no right answer; you must simply formulate an opinion and defend it. Paper #2 will be a “reflective essay” tied to the book *Freedom Summer*. For this paper you will identify and describe a political issue that affects/has affected your life, explain your position on the issue, and articulate your preferred solution(s) to the issue. And finally, paper #3 will be an “analytical essay” evaluating the American political system. In two respects, this last paper will be like a comprehensive final exam: it will be conducted at the end of the semester and incorporate material from throughout the semester. However, the bulk of the paper material will come from the book “It’s Even Worse Than It Looks.” (3) You will also be required to complete a series of in-class exercises, writing prompts, and current events quizzes. While there is no fixed number of these in-class assignments, they will count as 10% of your grade. On some occasions these assignments will simply require you to attend class and write about the day’s issue(s). On other days, you will need to complete assigned or emailed readings (for the current events quizzes, I will email you articles a day or two before the class). Because there is one “bonus” assignment that takes the place of your lowest in-class assignment grade, these assignments cannot be made up. (4) I will be out of town at a conference for an entire week in late January. During my absence, you are to work on a paper comparing and contrasting the political platform of the presidential candidates with your own. At the heart of the assignment is an interactive poll called “I Side With.” This paper is worth 5% of your grade. (5) Another 10% of your grade will be based on class participation and discussion. In addition to sharing your thoughts and opinions with your classmates, you are expected to discuss the course’s readings and other current events. In this way, your discussion grade is based on the quality of discussion in addition to its quantity. (6) The final 10% of your grade will be based on attending three outside events during the semester and writing a page and a half reaction paper. For the reaction papers, you should explain what was discussed at the event and offer your own thoughts and views on the issue(s). Reaction papers should be uploaded to OAKS.

So, in summary, your grade is determined by: Exam 1: 11.6%, Exam 2: 11.6%, Exam 3: 11.6%, I Side With Paper: 5%; Position Paper: 10%, Reflective Essay: 10%, Analytical Essay: 10%, In-Class Assignments: 10%, Participation: 10%, Outside Events: 10%.

I abide by the following grading scale: A = 93+, A- = 90-92.9, B+ = 87.5-89.9, B = 83-87.4, B- = 80-82.9, C+ = 77.5-79.9, C = 73-77.4, C- = 70-72.9, D+ = 67.5-69.9, D = 63-67.4, D- = 60-62.9

Student Responsibilities—Class attendance will be taken periodically and is a component of your grade. If you miss class regularly, you will lose points on the in-class assignments. But also, your presence in class is absolutely crucial to earning a good grade in this course. Indeed, you cannot simply review the required readings a day or two before the exam and expect to earn a good grade. In addition, during class you are expected to contribute to each day’s discussion. Failure to do either will result in a low participation grade.

Due Dates—Paper and exam dates are firm. If you are unable to turn an assignment in during class, I deduct 2% from your grade for every hour that it’s late (with the exception of the third paper, which will have a firm deadline). If an illness or other circumstance forces you to be absent, your first responsibility is to your own health or condition. However, you are still required to fill out an [absence memo](#) with Student Affairs (that is, if you missed an assignment or exam and would like the opportunity to make the work up). Moreover, you should contact me immediately (i.e. *before*

your absence). Special circumstances will only be given if there is a documented and compelling reason for your absence and you notify me promptly. Also, if you are going to be absent for a College function (sport, club, etc.), you must let me know in advance (in addition to getting an absence memo).

Academic Honesty— As with any course at the College of Charleston, you are required to do your own work and abide by the academic honesty guidelines. Cheating of any kind will not be tolerated. For any questions please consult the [Student Honor Code](#).

Students with Disabilities— The [Center for Disability Services](#) assists students with disabilities. They provide a number of services including academic advisement and exam assistance. Please feel free to discuss any concerns with me.

### Course Overview

→ denotes the required reading(s) which are to be read prior to the start of the day or week (though see any notes). I will assume you have read, and understood, the material to be discussed each day. Note that these readings will be the subject of any unannounced quizzes.

#### **Part I. Introduction to Political Science**

#### **Dates/Location**

##### **Introduction and Course Overview**

M  
1/11

##### **What is Political Science?**

→ Zaller (on Oaks)(for Friday)

→ For Class Discussion (read the following links for Wednesday)

<http://fla.st/1hYZTSI>

<http://bit.ly/1AAKDzr>

W, F

1/13-1/15

#### **Part II. Individuals**

##### **Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (No Class)**

M  
1/18

##### **Political Culture**

→ We the People, Chapter 1 (3-16 & 23-30)

→ For Class Discussion (read the following survey for Friday)

<http://pewrsr.ch/1fKZxqZ>

W, F

1/20-1/22

##### **No Class (Academic Conference)**

→ "I Side With" Paper Due 2/1

1/25-1/29

##### **Public Opinion and Political Ideology**

→ We the People, Chapter 6 (all)

→ For Class Discussion (complete the survey below for Wednesday)

<http://www.people-press.org/quiz/political-typology/group/89b6152>

→ Alford and Hibbing (on Oaks)(for Friday)

M, W, F

2/1-2/5

**Voting and Elections**

- We the People, Chapter 8 (305-315)(for Monday)
- We the People, Chapter 10 (all)(for Wednesday)
- Abramowitz (on Oaks)(for Friday)
- For Class Discussion (read the following links for Friday)  
<http://bit.ly/1Upn1rg>  
<http://bit.ly/1KhsZYt>

M, W, F  
2/8-2/12

**Exam 1**

M  
2/15

**Part III. The Constitution and Core Principles****The Founding and the Constitution**

- We the People, Chapter 2 (all)
- Foote (on Oaks)(for Friday)

W, F, M  
2/17-2/22

**Federalism**

- We the People, Chapter 3 (all)

W, F  
2/24-2/26

**Class Tour of Old Exchange Building**

**Position Paper Due on 3/14; see instructions on my website.**

**The Bill of Rights and Civil Liberties**

- We the People, Chapter 4 (all)
- For Class Discussion (read the following links for Friday)  
<http://bit.ly/1mjJgg7> (Sebelius v. Hobby Lobby)  
<http://bit.ly/1CEEbXZ> (Obergefell v. Hodges)  
<http://bit.ly/1n7LZt4> (Riley v. California)

M, W, F  
2/29-3/4

**Spring Break (No Class)**

M, W, F  
3/7-3/11

**Civil Rights**

- We the People, Chapter 5 (155-190)
- For Class Discussion (read the following links for Wednesday)  
<http://bit.ly/1qoaOCc>  
<http://bit.ly/1r1fEgq>

M, W  
3/14-3/16

**Position Paper Due Monday 3/14**

**Exam 2**

F  
3/18

**Freedom Summer**

- Freedom Summer (Prologue, Ch1, Ch2)(read for Monday)
- Freedom Summer (Ch 3, Ch 6, Ch 8)(read for Wednesday)

M, W  
3/21-3/23

<b>Political Involvement and Internships (guest lecture with POLI majors and alumni)</b>	F 3/25
<b>Reflective Essay Due 4/4; see instructions on my website.</b>	
<b><u>Part III. Institutions</u></b>	
<b>Political Parties</b> → We the People, Chapter 9 (all)	M, W 3/28-3/30
<b>The Congress</b> → We the People, Chapter 12 (all) → Sulkin (OAKS)(for Wednesday)	F, M, W 4/1-4/6
<b>Reflective Essay Due Monday 4/4</b>	
<b>The Presidency</b> → We the People, Chapter 13 (all) → Wildavasy (OAKS)(for Monday)	F, M, W 4/8-4/13
<b>The Courts</b> → We the People, Chapter 15 (all) → For Class Discussion (read the following links for Monday) <a href="http://nyti.ms/1BibkKl">http://nyti.ms/1BibkKl</a> <a href="http://bit.ly/1t0vhl2">http://bit.ly/1t0vhl2</a>	F, M 4/15-4/18
<b>Bureaucracy</b> → We the People, Chapter 14 (554-566 & 588-594)	W 4/20
<b>Paper 3 (take home essay on Wednesday April 27<sup>th</sup> from 4:00-9:00)</b> → It's Even Worse Than It Looks (Introduction, Ch 2, Ch 4, Ch 5, Ch 6)	W 4/27
<b>Exam 3 (Friday 4/29 at 8:00am-11:00am during final exam slot)</b>	F 4/29