American Government  
Political Science 101-03  
Spring 2019

Dr. Jordan M. Ragusa  
114 Wentworth Street, Room 106  
Office Hours: MW (12:00-3:00)  
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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 policies that 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 American political history. In this part of the course 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 and interest groups to the legislative, executive, and judicial branches). In this part of the course 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 30th).

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

Mann and Ornstein. *It’s Even Worse Than It Looks*, 2016 (ISBN 9780465096206)

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 noted on the syllabus.
Grades—(1) A plurality of your grade will be determined by three exams, each worth 15%. Exams will be 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 a mix of true/false, multiple choice, and essay questions. (2) You will also have three formal writing assignments this semester. First, a term paper at the end of the semester that will ask you to write a series of essays reflecting on the book “It’s Even Worse Than It Looks.” In two respects, this last paper will be like a comprehensive final exam: it will be at the end of the semester and incorporate material from throughout the semester. It counts as 15% of your grade. Second, a position paper on the Constitution’s meaning. For this paper there is no right answer; you must simply formulate an opinion and defend it. It is worth 15% of your grade as well. And third, you will be responsible for three outside event reaction papers that are worth 7.5% of your grade in total. For the reaction papers, you are required to explain what was discussed at the event and offer your own thoughts and views on the issues (largely as they relate to American politics). (3) You will also be required to complete a series of in-class exercises, writing prompts, and quizzes over the course of the semester. While there is no fixed number of these assignments, they will count as 7.5% of your grade. On some occasions these assignments will simply require you to attend class and write about the day’s issue. On other days, you will need to complete the assigned reading and respond to a few quiz questions. Because there is one “bonus” assignment that takes the place of your lowest in-class exercise grade, these assignments cannot be made up. (4) The final 5% of your grade will be based on class discussion. In addition to sharing your thoughts and opinion 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 quality in addition to quantity.

So, in summary, your grade is determined by: Exam 1: 15%, Exam 2: 15%, Exam 3: 15%, Term Paper: 15%, Position Paper, 15%, Reaction Papers: 7.5%, Quizzes and Assignments: 7.5%, Participation: 5%.

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 attendance. 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 is late. 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 honestly 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.
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<th>Course Overview</th>
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<td><strong>Part I. Introduction to Political Science</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Introduction and Course Overview</strong></td>
<td>W, 1/9</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>What is Political Science? What do Political Scientists Do?</strong></td>
<td>M, W 1/14 &amp; 1/16</td>
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<td><strong>No Class (MLK Jr.)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Part II. Individuals</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Political Culture</strong></td>
<td>W, M 1/23 &amp; 1/28</td>
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<tr>
<td>→ We the People, Chapter 1 (for Wednesday)</td>
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<td>→ Robert Putnam, “Social Change in America” (for Monday)</td>
<td>Available on OAKS</td>
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<td><strong>Public Opinion and Political Ideology</strong></td>
<td>W, M, W 1/30, 2/4 &amp; 2/6</td>
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<tr>
<td>→ We the People, Chapter 6 (for Wednesday 1/30)</td>
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<td>→ Political Typology Survey (complete the survey for Monday, print, and bring to class)</td>
<td><a href="https://pewrsr.ch/2GZjizz">https://pewrsr.ch/2GZjizz</a></td>
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<td>→ Alford and Hibbing, “The Ultimate Source of Political Opinions” (for Wednesday 2/6)</td>
<td>Available on OAKS</td>
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<td>→ Hetherington and Weiler, “Prius or Pickup?” (for Wednesday 2/6)</td>
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<td><strong>Mass Media</strong></td>
<td>M, W 2/11 &amp; 2/13</td>
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<td>→ We the People, Chapter 7 (pgs 258-274) (for Monday)</td>
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<td><strong>Voting and Elections</strong></td>
<td>M, W, M 2/18, 2/20 &amp; 2/25</td>
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<td>→ We the People, Chapter 8 (for Monday 2/18)</td>
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<td>→ We the People, Chapter 10 (pgs 371-382 &amp; 397-399)(for Wednesday)</td>
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<td>→ A Look Back At the 2016 Election (for Monday 2/25)</td>
<td><a href="https://wapo.st/2SFaVPR">https://wapo.st/2SFaVPR</a> <a href="https://wapo.st/2VC7JpS">https://wapo.st/2VC7JpS</a> <a href="https://wapo.st/2QuDFsF">https://wapo.st/2QuDFsF</a> <a href="https://nyti.ms/2uqZUYV">https://nyti.ms/2uqZUYV</a></td>
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<td><strong>Exam 1</strong></td>
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# Part I. Constitutionalism and Core Principles

## The Founding and the Constitution
- We the People, Chapter 2 (for Monday 3/4)
- Madison, “Federalist no. 10” (for Wednesday 3/6)
  
## Federalism
- We the People, Chapter 3 (for Monday)

## Spring Break
- M, W
  - 3/18 & 3/20

## Bill of Rights and Civil Liberties
- We the People, Chapter 4 (pgs 112-145) (for Monday)
- Recent Landmark Supreme Court Opinions
  - [http://bit.ly/1n7LZt4](http://bit.ly/1n7LZt4) (Riley v. California)

### Position Paper Due 3/27

### Exam 2
- M
  - 4/1

# Part IV. Institutions

## Political Parties
- We the People, Chapter 9 (pgs 336-349)
- Noel, “Why Can’t the GOP Stop Trump?”
  - [https://nyti.ms/2FeKkpP](https://nyti.ms/2FeKkpP)

## The Congress
- We the People, Chapter 12 (for Monday)
- Barber and McCarty, “Causes and Consequences of Polarization” (for Wednesday)
  
## The Presidency
- We the People, Chapter 13 (for Monday)
- Johnson, McCray, and Ragusa, “#NeverTrump”
  
## The Courts
- We the People, Chapter 15 (for Monday)
- Toner, “Flag Burning Amendment Fails in the Senate” (for Tuesday)
  - [http://nyti.ms/1BibkKI](http://nyti.ms/1BibkKI)

### Exam 3 (during final exam slot)
- T
  - 4/30 (4:00pm)

### It’s Even Worse Than It Looks Papers (Thursday May 2; 4:00-8:00)
- 5/2