

**American Government  
Political Science 101-01  
Spring 2017**

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Dr. Jordan M. Ragusa  
114 Wentworth Street, Room 106  
Office Hours: Monday, 10:00-1:00 & Wednesday 3:00-4:30 (or by appointment)  
Email: [ragusajm@cofc.edu](mailto:ragusajm@cofc.edu)  
Class Website: [www.jordanragusa.com](http://www.jordanragusa.com)

Course Meetings  
MWF (9:00-9:50)  
Robert Scott Small (RSS) 235

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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 structures 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 26<sup>th</sup>).

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 two writing assignments (in addition to in-class exercises and homework assignments).

Required Texts (2)—Ginsberg, Lowi, Weir, and Tolbert. *We the People*, 2013, (10<sup>th</sup> full edition).  
Mann and Ornstein. *It's Even Worse Than It Looks*, 2013.

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.

Grades—(1) The bulk of your grade will be determined by three exams, each worth 20% of your grade. 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 two formal writing assignments this semester. One will be a term paper at the end of the semester that will ask you to write a series of essays 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 conducted at the end of the semester and incorporate material from throughout the semester. A second writing assignment will be written responses to a series of outside events. For the reaction paper, 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). Your term paper is worth 15% of your grade and the reaction papers (collectively) are worth 10% of your grade. (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 10% 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: 20%, Exam 2: 20%, Exam 3: 20%, Term Paper: 15%, Reaction Papers: 10%, Quizzes and In-Class Assignments: 10%, 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’s 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 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 quizzes.

<b><u>Part I. Introduction to Political Science</u></b>	<b>Dates/Location</b>
<b>No Class (SPSA Conference)</b>	W, F 1/11-1/13
<b>No Class (MLK Jr. Day)</b>	M 1/16
<b>Introduction and Course Overview</b>	W 1/18
<b>What is Political Science?</b> →For Class Discussion (read the following articles for Friday) <a href="http://fla.st/1hYZTSI">http://fla.st/1hYZTSI</a> <a href="http://bit.ly/1AAKDzr">http://bit.ly/1AAKDzr</a>	F, M 1/20-1/23
<b><u>Part II. Individuals</u></b>	
<b>Political Culture</b> → We the People, Chapter 1 (pgs 3-16 & 24-32) →For Class Discussion (read the following survey and results for Friday) <a href="http://pewrsr.ch/1fKZxqZ">http://pewrsr.ch/1fKZxqZ</a>	W, F 1/25-1/27
<b>Public Opinion and Political Ideology</b> → We the People, Chapter 6 (all) →For Class Discussion (complete the following survey for Monday) <a href="http://www.people-press.org/quiz/political-typology/group/89b6152">http://www.people-press.org/quiz/political-typology/group/89b6152</a> → Alford and Hibbing (on Oaks)(for Friday)	M, W, F 1/30-2/3
<b>Voting and Elections</b> → We the People, Chapter 8 (299-320) → We the People, Chapter 10 (all) →For Class Discussion (read the following links for Friday) <a href="http://bit.ly/1Upn1rg">http://bit.ly/1Upn1rg</a> <a href="http://bit.ly/1KhsZYt">http://bit.ly/1KhsZYt</a>	M, W, F 2/6-2/10
<b>Exam 1</b>	M 2/13

### **Part III. Constitutionalism and Core Principles**

#### **The Founding and the Constitution**

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

W, F, M  
2/15-2/20

#### **Federalism**

- We the People, Chapter 3 (all)

W, F  
2/22-2/24

#### **The Bill of Rights and Civil Liberties**

- We the People, Chapter 4 (all)
- For Class Discussion (read the following articles 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  
2/27-3/3

#### **Spring Break**

M, W, F  
3/6-3/10

#### **Civil Rights**

- We the People, Chapter 5 (all)
- For Class Discussion (read the following articles for Friday)
  - <http://bit.ly/1qoaOCc>
  - <http://bit.ly/1rlfEgg>

M, W  
3/13-3/15

#### **Exam 2**

F  
3/17

#### **Political Involvement and Internships (guest lecture with POLI majors and alumni)**

M  
3/20

### **Part IV. Institutions**

#### **Political Parties**

- We the People, Chapter 9 (all)

W, F  
3/22-3/24

#### **The Congress**

- We the People, Chapter 12 (all)
- Barber and McCarty (on OAKS)(for Monday 4/3)

M, W, F, M  
3/27-4/3

#### **No Class (MPSA Conference)**

- Ragusa, Johnson, and McCray, “#NeverTrump” (OAKS) (for next class)

W, F  
4/5-4/7

#### **The Presidency**

- We the People, Chapter 13 (all)
- Wildavasy (OAKS)(for Friday)

M, W, F  
4/10-4/14

**The Courts**

→ We the People, Chapter 15 (all)

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

<http://nyti.ms/1BibkKl>

<http://bit.ly/1tOvhl2>

M, W, F

4/17-4/21

**Final Thoughts & Exam Review**

M

4/24

**Exam 3**

W

4/26

**It's Even Worse Than It Looks Papers (Monday May 1<sup>st</sup>; 4:00-8:00)**

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