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 this class, there are three sections. In the first section, we will review American politics from the level of individual citizens. We will identify key elements of American political culture, talk about the formation of political attitudes, and discuss voting and elections. Second, we will focus on the Founding era and the Constitution. We will discuss the Framers’ motivations, normative debates about the proper role and structure of the federal government, and review Americans’ civil liberties and rights. In the third section, we will focus on the institutions of government. In particular, we will examine political parties, Congress, the presidency, and the courts. So, the section-by-section outline is as follows:

- Individuals ......................... 8/24 to 9/26
- Founding era and Constitution ...... 9/27 to 10/31
- Institutions .......................... 11/1 to 12/5

Course Format

POLI 101 is an asynchronous online course (otherwise known as “online exclusively”). In this class 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 is asynchronous and thus 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 schedule, note that each unit will open at 6am on Monday and all assignments/quizzes are due by 11:59pm that Sunday. Lastly, 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” course. 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!

Political Science Department 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 December 6).

Required Readings

Each week’s readings can be found in the course schedule. 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. Note that 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
- Essays from the Federalist Papers (5 texts)
- Essays foundational to the African American struggle (3 texts)

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 9780393538847:

- Ginsburg, Lowi, Weir, Tolbert, and Campbell. “We the People” (2021, 13th Core Edition)

Graded Items

Over the semester you will complete the following graded assignments—(1) three exams, roughly one per month, (2) a position paper around the midterm, (3) an analysis paper at the end of the semester, (4) roughly a dozen quizzes, and (5) roughly a dozen short assignments. Collectively, the exams constitute 50% of your course grade while the papers, quizzes, and assignments constitute the other 50% of your grade. Quizzes and exams will be timed in OAKS and open note/book. No lockdown browser or proctoring software will be used. All quizzes will be 10 questions and you’ll have 10 minutes to complete them. Exams will be roughly 40 questions and 1 hour in length. Finally, the assignments and papers will have specific instructions which will be provided at the appropriate time.

Grade Distribution

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<td>Exam #3</td>
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<td>Position Paper</td>
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Grade Policy

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Student Responsibilities

Online course are not easy and you must stay on top of assignments and due-dates. Expect the same rigor as a face-to-face class. I have the following expectations: log into OAKS every few days; review each unit and anticipate about 5-7 hours of work per week; review and, on occasion, respond to your classmates’ discussion posts; complete assignments on time; be technologically proficient; and follow good netiquette (see below). Because this an asynchronous online course, attendance will not be taken. If an illness, death in the family, or other unforeseen 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. However, it is imperative that you communicate with me in a timely manner. Reasonable accommodations will only be given with prompt communication.

Netiquette

Netiquette combines the word “net,” slang for the internet, and “etiquette,” and it refers to how you ought to conduct yourself in this course. Netiquette is especially important in a class like this where students are required to 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, if you must, disagree respectfully.

Honor Code and Academic Integrity

Lying, cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism are violations of the college’s Honor Code that will be investigated. Each incident will be examined to determine the degree of deception. Incidents where the instructor determines the student’s actions reflect misunderstanding and/or confusion will be handled by the instructor. The instructor designs an intervention or assigns a grade reduction to help prevent the student from repeating the error. The response is recorded on a form, is signed both by the instructor and the student, and is forwarded to the Dean of Students and placed in the student’s file. 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 week’s module(s) will open at 6:00am Monday morning. All readings, quizzes and assignments should be completed by 11:59pm Sunday evening (except as noted in a few spots in the semester). Please check the modules as directed and complete the items in the order they appear in OAKS.
Section I: Individuals

Course Introduction  Week 1 (8/24 - 8/29)
Reading(s)
→ None
Assignment(s)
→ Watch the course introduction video(s)
→ Complete the syllabus quiz
→ Complete the democracy in America essay
→ Complete the American political culture discussion post

American Political Culture  Week 2 (8/30 - 9/5)
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  Week 3 (9/6 - 9/12)
Reading(s)
→ We the People “Chapter 6”
→ Alford & Hibbing “The Ultimate Source of Opinions”
→ Hetherington & Weiler “Prius or Pickup?”
Assignment(s)
→ Complete the Pew political typology survey
→ Complete the political typology discussion post
→ Watch the lecture video(s)
→ Complete the public opinion quiz

News Media, Participation and Voting  Week 4 (9/13 - 9/19)
Reading(s)
→ We the People “Chapter 7”
→ Allcott & Gentzkow “Social Media and Fake News in 2016”
→ 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 media, participation and voting quiz

Elections  Week 5 (9/20 - 9/26)
Reading(s)
→ We the People “Chapter 10”
→ Hamilton “Federalist no. 68”
→ Blake “Overlooked Racial Dynamics of the Electoral College”
→ Constitution “Amendments 12, 19, 20, 23 & 26”
Assignment(s)
→ Watch the lecture video(s)
→ Complete the elections quiz

Exam 1  Monday (9/27)
Section II: The Founding and U.S. Constitution

The Founding

Reading(s)
→ We the People “Chapter 2” (pgs. 34-46 & 53-57)
→ Hamilton “Federalist 1”
→ Hamilton “Federalist 9”
→ Madison “Federalist 10”
→ Madison “Federalist 51”

Assignment(s)
→ Complete the Constitution poll and essay
→ Watch the lecture video(s)
→ Complete the Founding era quiz

Week 6 (9/27 - 10/3)

The Constitution

Reading(s)
→ We the People “Chapter 2” (pgs. 46-53)
→ Constitution “Articles V-VII”

Assignment(s)
→ Watch the lecture video(s)
→ Complete the Constitution quiz
→ Begin work on the position paper (due 10/24)

Week 7 (10/4 - 10/10)

Federalism

Reading(s)
→ We the People “Chapter 3”
→ Constitution “Article IV”
→ Constitution “Amendments 11 & 16”

Assignment(s)
→ 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

Week 8 (10/11 - 10/17)

Civil Liberties

Reading(s)
→ We the People “Chapter 4”
→ Constitution “Amendments 1-10” (the Bill of Rights)

Assignment(s)
→ Complete the flag burning post
→ Watch the lecture video(s)
→ Complete the civil liberties quiz
→ Complete the position paper

Week 9 (10/18 - 10/24)

Position Paper Due

Sunday (10/24)

Civil Rights

Reading(s)
→ We the People “Chapter 5”
→ Lincoln “Emancipation Proclamation”
→ Constitution “Amendments 13-15”
→ Keele, Cubbison, and White “Suppressing Black Votes” (pgs. 694-697 & 698-700)
→ Constitution “Amendment 24”

Week 10 (10/25 - 10/31)
Assignment(s)
→ Watch the lecture video(s)
→ Complete the voter identification post
→ Complete the civil rights quiz

**Exam 2**
Monday (11/1)

**Section III: Institutions**

**Political Parties**

Reading(s)
→ We the People “Chapter 9”
→ Noel “Why Can’t the GOP Stop Trump?”

Assignment(s)
→ Watch the lecture video(s)
→ Complete the parties quiz

**The Presidency**

Reading(s)
→ We the People “Chapter 13”
→ Constitution “Article II”
→ Constitution “Amendments 22 & 25”
→ Amira, Johnson, McCray, and Ragusa “On the #NeverTrump Movement”

Assignment(s)
→ Complete the theories of presidential power essay
→ Watch the lecture video(s)
→ Complete the presidency quiz

**The Congress**

Reading(s)
→ We the People “Chapter 12”
→ Constitution “Article I”
→ Constitution “Amendments 17 & 27”
→ Barber and McCarty “Causes and Consequences of Polarization”

Assignment(s)
→ Complete the organizational theory post
→ Watch the lecture video(s)
→ Complete the Congress quiz

**Thanksgiving Break**
Week 14 (11/24 - 11/28)

**The Courts**

Reading(s)
→ We the People “Chapter 15”
→ Constitution “Article III”

Assignment(s)
→ Watch the lecture video(s)
→ Complete the federal courts quiz

**Exam 3**
Monday (12/6)

**Analysis Paper Due**
Friday (12/10)