

POLI 101-01 Introduction to American Government (3 credits)
Fall 2022 FYE Learning Community
“From Christopher Columbus to Contemporary Charleston: History, Politics, and Memory”
TR 8:00 – 9:15am RSS 250

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Drop-in Office Hours: M 3:30-5:00p; W 9-10:30am;
and always by appointment

Peer Facilitator: Mariah Fitzgerald, FYSS Wed 2-2:50p

In telling the story of a nation’s founding, a political victory or crisis, a community’s rise or fall, what do we choose to remember and what do we choose to forget? Whose interests are served in the remembering or forgetting? This Learning Community links courses in Modern History and Political Science to explore the role of memory, memorialization, and forgetting in building narratives around world history and American political development. In POLI 101, we will study the founding and political development of American government, paying careful attention to the way our political culture is created, replicated, sustained, and revised and around key principles of individualism, liberty, equality, property, order and the rule of law. We will explore the role of memory as a force that unites and divides the American people throughout history and today. The College of Charleston and the City of Charleston will be our living laboratory for this exploration. You can expect to walk to monuments, historic sites, and markers typically within a mile of campus.

American democracy is remarkably resilient, but it requires careful tending. Our system of self-governance relies on a set of shared democratic norms and values, a commitment to the social contract, an awareness of the nation’s history, knowledge of how government works, and direct engagement at the ballot box and in our communities. Over the course of this semester, you will gain an essential understanding of American Government and gain the skills and dispositions to actively engage in politics individually and with others.

Together we are going to dive into politics and current events this semester. To join the conversation, you need to commit to reading a daily national newspaper. You have [library access](#) to several newspapers (e.g. *New York Times*, *Washington Post*) and I encourage you to sample a wide variety of opinion literature, podcasts, blogs, late-night comedy, etc. Every editorial board or producer has a viewpoint so vary your reading/watching/listening habits so that you hear different ideas and perspectives.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, this is a learning community which means we will be spending a lot of time together in and outside of class. You are enrolled in my class along with Dr. Lisa Covert’s HIST 116 class, and the weekly synthesis seminar taught by Mariah Fitzgerald. We are all here to support you as you navigate your first semester in college and transition to a more independent life. Be open to new experiences and ideas, reach out to those around you, and enjoy this exciting semester. I’m looking forward to getting to know each of you this fall!

Required Course Materials

American Government Text (2021 OER free text and PDF Chapters in OAKS)

How the Word is Passed: A Reckoning with the History of Slavery Across America, Clint Smith (Little Brown, 2021) *This is the 2022 College Reads selection and I have plenty of free copies available*

Additional reading, film, and podcast links found in OAKS

I highly recommend that you purchase and begin using a planner to keep track of your assignments and due dates for your classes, your club meetings, and events. Planners come in all sizes, shapes, and forms. Pick one that appeals to you. I wouldn’t recommend relying on your memory or your phone for this task.

Course Approach and Goals

Conceptual tools for a lifetime. A basic goal of the course is to provide you with the conceptual tools that will allow you to stay informed about American politics for a lifetime. While this entails learning some basic facts about American government and politics, a more important skill is developing the analytical tools and social science disposition that will allow you to understand, interpret, and use standard sources of information on American politics to reach reasoned positions consistent with your values and interests and your perspective on the needs of your community and the nation. In other words, this course should enable you to be actively engaged in politics.

Normative vs. Empirical analysis. A second goal is to understand the difference between "normative" and "empirical" analysis of politics. "Normative" analysis means applying a value judgment; "empirical" analysis means observing what is. For example, it may be possible for both liberals and conservatives to agree that voter turnout increases when registration laws are relaxed (empirical)—although they may disagree strongly on whether voter registration laws *should* be more lenient (normative). Although political scientists inevitably have differing normative perspectives, the discipline is grounded in a shared belief that empirical analysis of politics can advance our understanding through logical argument, the statement of testable hypotheses, and careful empirical investigation of those hypotheses. A shared set of normative beliefs is the foundation of America's democracy and allows for self-governance.

Free and open dialogue. This nation is founded on an ideal of freedom of speech that is often difficult to implement and practice. This course should provide you with the experience of having a free and open dialogue on constitutional, political, and policy issues. One of the premises of democratic government is that it is possible to have such a debate, even involving people with diametrically opposed views, without rancor or harmful emotional attacks. The College has a special responsibility to demonstrate the possibility and power of free and open democratic discourse, in which individuals are respected and encouraged to present their informed opinions. The ground rule for discussion in our class is respect for other people and their point of view, no matter how different it may be from your own. You should feel that your views are challenged this semester, but you should never feel personally threatened or belittled. To make our time together effective, everyone needs to commit to the principle of open and free dialogue and engage productively in the conversations. Make no mistake—this is hard to do and it takes practice ... and sometimes an apology and a handshake.

Textbook

This semester I am trying something new! Instead of asking you to buy or rent an American Government textbook, we are going to use a free educational resource through OpenStax (<https://openstax.org/details/books/american-government-3e>). You will be able to access the chapters (and all the links included in the chapters) through OAKS. This will save you some money and it will allow you to read the book in the way you most prefer (view it online or download a PDF). There are review questions to check yourself and additional resources. If you have any issues accessing the text, just let me know.

Student Drop-in Office Hours and Ways to Contact Me

Please come see me! I have posted office hours every week and I encourage you to use them. You can find these at the top of this syllabus (Monday 3:30-5:00p; Wednesday 9-10:30a). During these hours I will be in my office and you don't have to have a problem or a specific question to come see me. I look forward to the opportunity to get to know you better and office hours are a great time to do that. On the rare occasions that I will not be available during office hours, I will do my best to let you know that in advance. That said, you should feel free to simply stop by during my office hours—no appointment necessary. If my posted hours do not fit your schedule, I will be more than happy to make an appointment with you. Please take the initiative to contact me if you have questions, problems, or if special circumstances arise. I am very accessible by email for quick questions. My office phone is 843-953-6531 (leave a voicemail with your name and return number). You can also text my personal cell at 843-860-1524. I have also created a Remind account for our class. The link to enroll is in OAKS.

Name and Personal Pronouns

I want to use your chosen name and correct gender pronouns. My official class roll will not always provide this information, so please make a point to email me, speak with me after class, or stop by my office so that I can get it right.

Student Learning Outcomes POLI 101 satisfies several curriculum and graduation requirements, each with its own set of learning outcomes:

FYE Learning Outcomes Successful completion of this Learning Community (POLI 101, HIST 116, and FYSS 101) satisfies the FYE graduation requirement. In doing so, a student will be able to: 1) use appropriate tools and search strategies for identifying particular types of information specific to the discipline; 2) evaluate the relevance, quality and appropriateness of different sources of information; 3) recognize and classify the information contained within a bibliographic citation; 4) access and use information ethically and legally. This course will promote integrative learning by students such that a student will be able to: 1) use appropriate critical thinking skills and problem-solving techniques in appropriate disciplinary contexts; 2) make connections across disciplines and/or relevant experiences.

Political Science Learning Outcomes This course satisfies a core requirement in the Political Science major and therefore faculty have identified a set of outcomes you need to achieve in this course in order to be successful in others. As a result of sustained engagement in this course, students will 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 scientific disposition toward American politics. These outcomes will be assessed with questions on the midterm and final examination.

General Education Social Science Learning Outcomes This course also is certified as meeting the requirements in General Education as a Social Science. As a result of sustained engagement in this course, students will be able to apply social science concepts, models or theories to explain human behavior, social interactions or social institutions. These outcomes will be assessed with an essay question on the final examination.

REACH Act Requirement

This course also meets the requirements of South Carolina's REACH Act (Reinforcing College Education on America's Constitutional Heritage Act). The state law, adopted in 2021, mandates that undergraduate students complete a three-credit course that requires, at a minimum, reading in their entirety the U.S. Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, the Emancipation Proclamation, five Federalist Papers, and one document foundational to the "African American Struggle." To graduate from the College of Charleston you must satisfy the REACH Act. In this course, we will read (in their entirety): Declaration of Independence, U.S. Constitution, Federalist Papers #10, 47, 48, 51, and 70 (among others), the Emancipation Proclamation, and essays foundational to the African American struggle. These documents are listed on the syllabus and available in OAKS or you can visit the College of Charleston Libraries [REACH Act Resources](#) page.

Attendance and Preparation for Class

Regular class attendance and careful preparation for each class are essential to your learning and success. I do not always take formal attendance, but a strong class attendance record is highly correlated with strong academic performance. I also understand that life happens and sometimes you may have to miss class. You won't be penalized for occasional absences, but please get in touch and let me know you are OK if you miss more than one class in a week. During our first class, I will give you a chance to exchange contact information with a classmate so that you have someone to share notes and materials with in the event you are absent. If you find yourself having trouble with any aspect of the class, please come and talk with me. College is challenging and everyone needs support and help to do their best.

Course Assignments, Activities, and Exams

There may be other assignments that you complete during class time. Written assignments are due on the date noted below. Using OAKS, please submit them before midnight on the due date. If you find that you cannot submit your work on time, please reach out and let me know what's going on.

FYE Synthesis Seminar Attendance and Performance The weekly Synthesis Seminar is a critical part of your FYE experience. Your active engagement in the FYSS 101 course taught Mariah Fitzgerald will make up 10% of your course grade in POLI 101. Mariah will record your attendance, participation and successful completion of the Synthesis Seminar assignments/modules and share that with me at the end of the term.

Curated POLI 101 Podcast List Some of you may already be regular podcast listeners and have your favorites. This semester, we will work together to create and curate a list of podcasts covering political, cultural, and social topics relevant to our course. I will create and share a Google Doc for this purpose. I'll give you a more detailed assignment sheet in the second week of class.

Examinations There will be one in-class midterm exam and a final exam. The exam format for both exams will be a combination of objective, short-answer, and essay questions. The final exam will feature a set of more comprehensive, analytical essays that I give you in advance. A study guide will be available one week prior to each exam. The Final Exam is scheduled by the College and will be given on Thursday, December 8 from 8:00 – 10:00am in our regular classroom.

Participation Essays (2 @ 10 % each) I strongly encourage regular participation in class discussion, but that is only one form of engagement and participation. These short essays (2-3 pages or so) are a way for you to tell me what else you are doing to engage with the course themes and material. You might include a description of conversations you have outside of class with roommates, friends, or a classmate. You might tell me about events you've attended on campus or places in Charleston that you've explored on your own. What issues have really captivated you? What are you reading or listening to related to the course themes and current politics? These essays can be written in a conversational, rather than formal style.

“Discovering Our Past” Walking Tour Group Activity & Presentation The theme of our Learning Community is History, Politics, and Memory. The College and the City of Charleston are engaged in a reckoning with the history of slavery like the one described by Clint Smith. A collective of students, staff, and faculty have created rich text and visual resources that we will draw on for this assignment. In small groups, you will select one of the “Slavery and its Legacies” walking tours to complete, capturing your own reactions to the information you read, the people you meet, and the sights you see. You will then prepare a creative 10-minute presentation to share your experience and insights with the class. I will provide a detailed assignment sheet and you will complete this project in stages over several weeks. Due dates for each part will be on the assignment sheet.

Assignments and Important Dates and Course Grade Components

Synthesis Seminar Attendance and Performance as recorded by your PF (10%)

POLI 101 Podcast Assignment: Ongoing (10%)

Examination #1 (in class): September 27th (15%)

Two Participation Essays: Oct 6 and Nov 15 (2 @ 10% for 20%)

Discovering Our Past Group Activity & Presentation: Various Due Dates (Total 25%)

Final Examination: Thursday, December 8 @ 8:00am in RSS 248 (20%)

Grades Grades for individual assignments and the final grade in the course will be based on the following scale: 93-100 A; 90-92 A-; 88-89 B+; 83-87 B; 80-82 B-; 78-79 C+; 73-77 C; 70-72 C-; 68-69 D+; 63-67 D; 60-62 D-; below 60 F. If you have any questions about how your work is evaluated or the basis for a grade, please come and see me. I will post grades in the OAKS Gradebook for each assignment. I will submit a midterm grade.

****Please see the end of the syllabus for other important policies and resources****

Course Schedule

Introductions, Themes, and our Learning Community

August 23: Introductions and Orientation
August 25: “The Power of a Story”

I. Foundations of American Government: Values, Ideals, and Culture

American Political Culture – Enlightenment & the Social Contract

August 30: Chapter 1, Text and Mayflower Compact
“Principal Causes Which Tend to Maintain the Democratic Republic in the United States”

Radical Ideas & Ideals—The Declaration of Independence

September 1: Declaration of Independence (entire)
September 6: “What Remains of Thomas Jefferson?” *Wall Street Journal*, July 2, 2022.
How the Word is Passed, “There’s a difference between history and nostalgia” pp 8-51

II. Building a Government and Limiting its Power

Articles of Confederation Lead to the U.S. Constitution

September 8: Chapter 2, Text (see also link to Articles of Confederation)
September 13: U.S. Constitution (entire)

Debates & Ratification

September 15: *The Federalist Papers*, # 47, 48, 51 (Separation of Powers)
Chapter 3, Text (Federalism)
September 20: “[The American Revolutionary](#)”
Watch/Listen: Hamilton (the movie, on Disney+; or the soundtrack in order)

September 22: No Class—Professor Ford away—use this time to catch up and prepare for Exam 1

September 23 (Friday) – Extra Office Hours, Time TBD

September 27 th Examination #1 in class
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Amendments (Bill of Rights)

September 29: Chapter 4, Text (Civil Liberties)

Saturday, October 1, 2022: Dinner at Professor Ford’s House (details & directions to come)
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III. Pressure to Expand Political Rights

Civil Rights, including Suffrage

October 4: Chapter 5, Text (Civil Rights) and U.S. Constitution Amendments 13, 14, 15, 19, 24, 26

October 6: “Emancipation Proclamation,” “Letter from a Birmingham Jail”
“Declaration of Sentiments,” Seneca Falls Convention, 1848

Participation Essay #1 Due October 6

Backlash—Rise of Jim Crow laws & Lynching

October 11: “[African Americans and the Anti-Lynching Movement](#)”
Watch in class: [Lynching Postcards: ‘A Token of the Day’](#) (2021, 15 min)

Our Contemporary Reckoning

October 13: *How the Word is Passed: A Reckoning with the History of Slavery Across America*
(two chapters: Blandford Cemetery and New York City)
Watch: [The Neutral Ground](#) POV/PBS

October 18 and 20: Discovering Our Past Group Presentations in class
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Monday October 24 “An Evening with Clint Smith” @ 7:00pm in Sottile Theatre

October 25 Clint Smith joins our learning community at 9:25a in Dr. Covert’s classroom
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IV. Pathways to Civic Engagement

Civic Participation

October 25: Chapter 6, Text (Public Opinion, Political Socialization)
Explore Pollapalooza <https://fivethirtyeight.com/tag/pollapalooza/>

Political Parties & Interest Groups

October 27 and November 1: Chapters 9 and 10, text

Campaigns & Elections (Fall Break November 7-8)

November 3 and 10: Chapter 9, Text

V. Institutions and Policymaking

Congress

November 15 – 17: Chapter 11, Text; U.S. Constitution, Article I and Amendments 17 and 27

Participation Essay #2 Due November 15

Presidency and the Executive Branch

November 22: Chapter 12, Text; U.S. Constitution, Article II and Amendments 22 and 25
Federalist Papers, #70

Thanksgiving Break – November 23-27 – No classes

Judiciary

November 29: Chapter 13, Text; U.S. Constitution, Article III

VI. Reflections & Future Commitments

December 1: “What Sort of Despotism Democratic Nations Have to Fear”

Final Exam: Thursday, December 8, 8:00-10:00am

Important College Deadlines, Policies and Resources

Accommodations and Special Circumstances

If you have any kind of special circumstances that I should be aware of, please let me know right away. If you have disability accommodations of any kind, please make the appropriate notifications and arrangements with the [Center for Disability Services](#) (located on the first floor of the Lightsey Center, Suite 104) within the first week of class. If you are an athlete or member of any club or organization that will travel, let me know. Similarly, if you have any sort of life circumstances that have the potential to distract you from class, please let me know. I will keep the information you share with me strictly confidential, but in order to create the best environment for your academic success, I need to know what's going on.

Honor Code and Academic Integrity

This subject is very important. When you enrolled in the College of Charleston, you agreed to abide by the Honor Code. I expect you to abide by that code and indeed it is the only way for you to maintain the integrity and value of your degree. I expect that the work you do for this class is entirely your own. I expect you to cite material properly and to ask questions if you are unsure of when and how to cite sources. Since you will be engaging in independent research, you will need to develop protocols to keep track of your sources when you draw directly or indirectly from the ideas and words of others. The [Political Science Citation Guide](#) is a good reference. If I suspect work has been plagiarized, I will forward the case to the Honor Board. Students found to have plagiarized will fail this class and may face other penalties. A copy of the College of Charleston Honor Code and all related processes are found in the *Student Handbook* at: <http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/honor-system/studenthandbook/index.php/>

OAKS

OAKS, including the Gradebook, will be used for this course to provide the syllabus, selected course materials, grades on assignments, as well as posted announcements or changes to the course plan. Please get in the habit of checking OAKS frequently during the week.

Plan for Academic Continuity

In the event of an interruption to campus operations/closure, the College of Charleston is prepared to shift in-person classes to online instruction to maintain academic progress. If the College temporarily closes, this does not necessarily mean that classes are discontinuing. In most disciplines, instruction will proceed in an online environment. Students should be prepared for direct communication from their instructor for each of their classes via CofC's email system and via OAKS. Most faculty members will engage students through OAKS, our university's Learning Management System. Students are expected to log in to OAKS daily during an interruption of campus operations. We recognize that during an evacuation, access to digital resources may be limited. Faculty will adjust assignments and due dates to accommodate students' needs in response to evolving conditions.

Center for Student Learning & Other Academic Support Resources

I encourage you to utilize the Center for Student Learning's (CSL) academic support services for assistance in study strategies and course content. They offer tutoring, supplemental instruction, study skills appointments, and workshops. Students of all abilities have become more successful using these programs throughout their academic career and the services are available to you at no additional cost. For more information regarding these services please visit the CSL website at <http://csl.cofc.edu> or call (843) 953-5635.

Attendance Verification

Only students officially registered (graded or auditing) for this course may attend class. During the week following the drop/add deadline, the professor will verify student enrollments in this course. Any student appearing on the class roll but determined not to have attended the class even once will be removed.

Food/Housing Resources

Many CofC students report experiencing food and housing insecurity. If you are facing challenges in securing food (not being able to afford groceries or get sufficient food to eat every day) and housing (such as lacking a safe and stable place to live), please contact the [Dean of Students](#) for support and you can find additional information about [food and housing assistance](#). You can visit the Cougar Pantry in the Stern Center (2nd floor), a student-run food pantry that provides dry-goods and hygiene products at no charge to any student.

Mental & Physical Wellbeing:

At the college, we take every students' mental and physical wellbeing seriously. If you find yourself experiencing physical illnesses, please reach out to Student Health Services (843.953.5520). And if you find yourself experiencing any mental health challenges (for example, anxiety, depression, stressful life events, sleep deprivation, and/or loneliness/homesickness) please contact the [Counseling Center](#) or Students 4 Support (text "4support" to 839863).

Important College Deadlines

Monday, August 29 Last day for Drop/Add for full semester courses

Thursday, October 13 Midterm Grades

Friday, October 28 Last day for students to withdraw ("W") from full semester classes

November 7-8 Fall Break (no classes, College remains open on Monday)

Wednesday, November 23-27 Thanksgiving Holiday (no classes)

Monday, December 5 Last day of classes

Tuesday, December 6 Reading Day

Wednesday, December 14 Final Grades Due