

Introduction to American Government and Politics
Political Science 104:401 – Fall 2021

Professor Kathleen Dolan
Office: Bolton 672
Office Hours: By appointment on Teams
E-mail address: kdolan@uwm.edu
Canvas Site: <https://uwmil.instructure.com/courses/417650>

Teaching Assistant: Jon Gutman – jgutman@uwm.edu

Introduction to American Government and Politics is a survey course designed to acquaint you with the fundamental ideas, institutions, and actors that make up our governmental system. During the semester, we will examine the legal and structural basis of our government, evaluate the institutions that carry out its day-to-day functions, and analyze the role the individual citizen can play in influencing and affecting government. Also, since government and politics are things that go on around us all the time, we will follow the actions of the President, the Congress, the Courts, and the public.

This course fulfills the Social Science General Education Requirement (GER) through its focus on:

- a) the study of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and/or socio-cultural factors associated with individual behavior, collective action, or societal development.
- b) the study of human collectivities, organizations, institutions, and cultures, their infrastructures, and interrelationships.

This course meets these requirements through our examination of the varied personal, social, and cultural forces that shape individual and collective political behavior. We will also examine the institutions and organizations on which our political and governmental system is built and discuss the development of those systems. This 3-credit course meets for 3 hours of lecture/discussion per week during the semester. Students are expected to put in 6-8 hours per week studying and working on assignments to achieve the learning goals of this course.

Current Situation: As we begin another academic year during a pandemic, we should acknowledge that, while we all want to be back to as “normal” as semester as possible, we have to be open to the possibility that changes in how we proceed might be necessary. Some of us haven’t had a face-to-face class since March 2020, so it may take some getting used to again. We can all stay positive, be flexible, and get vaccinated as we move forward.

Required Materials:

1) *We the People: An Introduction to American Politics. Thirteenth CORE Edition* by Benjamin Ginsberg, Theodore Lowi, Margaret Weir, Caroline Tolbert, Andrea Campbell. W.W. Norton and Company, 2020.

Physical book – UWM E-Campus Bookstore or other vendor, including publisher. You can buy the

physical book from any source you like, but please make sure you get the right version and edition of the book. **WE ARE USING THE CORE 13TH EDITION.**

E-book: <https://digital.wwnorton.com/wethepeople13core> and click “Purchase Options”

2) Daily Newspaper/News Site/News Program – Paying attention to the political world will be important this semester – and always!

Students are required to complete all readings PRIOR to each class meeting and be prepared to discuss them. Since the issues and occurrences of current political events will have relevance for this course, students are expected to keep themselves informed about what is happening in government and politics on a daily basis.

Lecture: The lecture for this course meets from 9:30 to 10:20 Tues/Thurs in Engelmann 105. Students should attend all class meetings. ***However, given the pandemic, you are encouraged to stay home if you feel sick.*** You are responsible for, and will be tested on, all materials and information regarding this course. This includes information from lectures, readings, and class discussions. Feel free to ask questions or make comments during class about class material or current political events.

Discussion Section: You should also be registered for one of the discussion sections that are part of this course. In section, you will be presented with new material, discuss your section assignments, and have an opportunity to ask questions and discuss the issues raised in lecture and discussion. Attendance at discussion section is as important as attendance at lecture unless you are unwell. The discussion assignments are designed to foster discussion of the topics taken up each week. These assignments will be due in the appropriate Canvas folder before you have discussion section and you will only get credit for assignments handed in during the week they are discussed.

Course Website: This class will have a site on the Canvas system. The site will have the syllabus, assignments, exams, grades, and important dates available for you. I may also post announcements or media articles related to the class, so check the site regularly.

Exams and Assignments: Your work for this course will include two components: exams and discussion section assignments.

Exams – There will be three exams. They will all be multiple choice and WILL NOT be cumulative. You will take each exam online in Canvas. You will have the full 24-hour period on the day an exam is scheduled, so you can take it whenever you choose. Each exam will open at midnight on the scheduled day and close at 11:59PM that same day. You can take the exam whenever you like, but you have to start and finish it in one attempt. You can’t start the exam, then exit and return later. There will be a set amount of time to finish the exam once you begin, so make sure you set aside the full time in case you need it. Each exam will be worth 25 percent of your course grade.

Discussion Assignments: Throughout the semester, you will do nine discussion assignments that will be based on that week's topic. There is more information on those assignments at the end of the syllabus. These assignments taken together will account for 25 percent of your course grade.

Grades will be calculated on a 100-point scale that breaks down as follows. **There is no extra credit and no curve or adjustment applied to grades.**

A = 92-100	A- = 90-91
B+ = 88-89	B = 82-87
B- = 80-81	C+ = 78-79
C = 72-77	C- = 70-71
D+ = 68-69	D = 62-67
D- = 60-61	F = 59-below

If you have any problems or miss a regularly scheduled exam, get in touch with me as soon as you can so that we can arrange a make-up.

Any student who cheats on an exam, plagiarizes an assignment, or commits any other act of academic dishonesty will receive an F for the course and will be referred to the appropriate University authorities. I cannot stress this strongly enough. Plagiarism is defined by the *American Heritage Dictionary* as “stealing or using the ideas or writings of another as one’s own” (p. 524). You may view the University’s policy on academic misconduct at http://www3.uwm.edu/Dept/Acad_Aff/policy/academicmisconduct.cfm

Exam Dates: The following are the dates for the three exams in this class. If you have a **legitimate** conflict with any of these dates, let me know as soon as possible.

- 1st exam – Tuesday, October 5
- 2nd exam – Thursday, November 4
- 3rd exam – Tuesday, December 14

Course Outline:

September 2 – Course Introduction

September 7 and 9 – American Political Culture

To do:

- 1) Readings: Ginsberg, Chapter 1 and the Declaration of Independence, Ginsberg Appendix
 - 2) Discussion Sections Meet this week – Introduction to section activities and procedures
- *****MONDAY SECTION PEOPLE, SEE NOTE AT END OF SYLLABUS*******

September 14 and 16 - The Founding and the Constitution

To do:

- 1) Readings: Ginsberg, Chapter 2 and the Constitution, Ginsberg Appendix
- 2) Discussion Section Assignment – What do I want to understand about American government?” Due in section during the week of September 13

September 21 and 23 - Federalism

To do:

- 1) Readings: Ginsberg, Chapter 3 **AND** two Federalism articles on Canvas
- 2) Discussion Section Assignment – “Citizenship Quiz” Due in section during the week of September 20

September 28 and 30 - The Bill of Rights and Civil Liberties

To do:

- 1) Readings: Ginsberg, Chapter 4
- 2) Discussion Section Assignment – “Fifty v. One” – Due in section during the week of September 27

Exam 1 – Tuesday, October 5 – Available from 12:00 AM to 11:59 PM

October 7 and 12 - Public Opinion

To do:

- 1) Readings: Ginsberg, Chapter 6 **AND** “People and their Friends” on Canvas
- 2) Discussion Section Assignment – “My Political Ideology and Socialization” - Due in section during the week of October 11

October 14 and 19 - Political Participation and Voting

To do:

- 1) Readings: Ginsberg, Chapter 8 **AND** “Debunking the Myth of Voter Fraud” Canvas
- 2) Discussion Section Assignment – “Getting Young People to Participate” - Due in section during the week of October 18

October 21 and 26 - Political Parties

To do:

- 1) Readings: Ginsberg, Chapter 9
- 2) Discussion Section Topic – “Parties: Leaders and Followers” - Due in section during the week of October 25

October 28 and November 2 – Campaigns and Elections

To do:

- 1) Readings: Ginsberg, Chapter 10 **AND** “Facts about Voting by Mail” on Canvas

Exam 2 – Thursday, November 4 - Available from 12:00 AM to 11:59 PM

November 9 and 11 – Congress – The Representative Branch

To do:

- 1) Readings: Ginsberg, Chapter 11
- 2) Discussion Section Topic – Reflection assignment discussion, nothing written – Due in section the week of November 8

November 16 and 18 – Congress – The Legislative Branch

To do:

- 1) Readings: Ginsberg, Chapter 12
- 2) Discussion Section Topic – “Should the House be bigger?” - Due in section during the week of November 15

November 23 and 25 – NO CLASS/NO SECTION – THANKSGIVING WEEK

November 30 and December 2 – The Presidency

To do:

- 1) Readings: Ginsberg, Chapter 13
- 2) Discussion Section Topic – “Are presidents too powerful” - Due in section during the week of November 29

December 7 and 9 – The Judiciary

To do:

- 1) Readings: Ginsberg, Chapter 15
- 2) Discussion Section Topic – “Reflection on what I now understand” - Due in section during the week of December 6

Exam 3 – Tuesday, December 14 - Available from 12:00 AM to 11:59 PM

Discussion Section Assignments

Over the course of the semester, you will complete several short assignments that will serve as the basis for discussion in section meeting for a particular week. These assignments relate to some aspect of the various topics and need not be more than 1-2 typed pages in length. There are several goals for these assignments – 1) to get you writing, 2) to get you to think about the various topics we will take up each week in a bit more detail, and 3) to serve as a basis for discussion. The materials you need to write these assignments are contained within the assigned readings, the lecture notes, and your brain. There is no need to do research beyond these sources.

The discussion assignment questions for each week will be posted on the Canvas site under the Assignments section. Keep in mind that the dates below are for the week the assignment is

DUE, so you will have to be working on these assignments before the due date and have them ready when you have section that week. **You will submit your assignment in the appropriate folder in the Canvas site before your discussion section meets.** You should also bring a copy to section or make sure you have access to it in class so that you can rely on it in discussion. If you have a problem during a particular week, you are welcome to attend one of the other assigned sections. Just make sure you let Jon know.

A word about plagiarism – Plagiarism is the use or close imitation of the words, thoughts, or ideas of another person and representing them as your own. Plagiarism can take many forms, but the most common are buying pre-written essays, cutting and pasting from an internet source, or copying text from a book. I feel very strongly that these assignments should reflect your thoughts and your work. As I say, there is no need for you to find additional sources for these assignments, so make sure the work is your own. If we suspect that an assignment is plagiarized, I will follow the campus academic misconduct policies. The penalty I recommend in these circumstances is an F for the course, so you can pay a pretty high price for plagiarizing a two-page assignment.

Assignment Schedule

Week of September 6* – Introduction to discussion section

Week of September 13 — “What I want to understand about American Government/Politics”

Week of September 20 – “Citizenship Quiz”

Week of September 27 – “Fifty v. One”

Week of October 4 – Exam 1 - **No section this week**

Week of October 11 – “My political socialization”

Week of October 18 – “Youth Participation”

Week of October 25 – “Parties: Leaders and Followers”

Week of November 1 – Exam 2 – **No section this week**

Week of November 8 – Discuss reflection assignment – Discussion only, nothing written

Week of November 15 – “Increase the size of the House?”

Week of November 22 – Thanksgiving Week – **No class or section**

Week of November 29 – “Are presidents too powerful”

Week of December 6 - “Reflection on what I now understand”

Week of December 13 – Exam 3 – **No section this week**

***Labor Day is Monday, September 6, which means the two Monday sections won't meet that day. Monday people have two options – 1) attend one of the Tuesday or Wednesday sections as your schedule allows, or 2) watch the “Discussion Intro” video that will be on the Canvas site. The information for all five sections – days, times, rooms – is on the Canvas page.**