

POLSCI 104

INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN GOVERNMENT & POLITICS

Online, 6-week format; Spring 2022

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Class Format: Online

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Introduction to American Politics is a survey course designed to acquaint you with the fundamental ideas, institutions, and actors that make up our governmental system. Over the course of the semester, we will examine the incentives and constraints that influenced the founders as they created our political institutions and evaluate how those institutions have functioned over time. We will explore modern American governmental institutions and structures, paying careful attention to why they work the way they do and how they produce the outcomes they produce. We will also critically examine the political process that has grown up around these institutions and structures and analyze the role the individual citizen can play in influencing and affecting government & politics. Since this is an introductory course, it is assumed that the material presented in this course will be new to most students. Students are encouraged to ask questions to clarify concepts that are unclear.

GER: This course fulfills the Social Science General Education Requirement (GER) through its focus on the study of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and/or socio-cultural factors associated with individual behavior, collective action, or societal development, and through 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 political systems are built.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Required Textbook: Ginsberg, Benjamin, Theodore J. Lowi, Margaret Weir, and Caroline J. Tolbert. 2021. *We the People: An Introduction to American Politics*, Thirteenth CORE edition, W.W. Norton.

This book is available via the [UWM ecampus site](#). A new hard copy of this book is quite expensive, so please make sure you buy the least expensive version (e.g., rental or Ebook) that you can find.

Lecture Notes: You should also read the *lecture slides* assigned for each topic. Note: these might also take the form of lecture *notes* from time to time. These notes and/or slides are what I would be using if we were meeting for face-to-face lectures, and provide a framework for the sorts of things we would be discussing in class. Of course, the notes overlap with the book material, but there is also a fair amount of material not covered in the textbook, and it will be fair game for quizzes and exams.

Supplemental Readings: Further, since the world is constantly changing, I may periodically assign supplemental readings as well. These might include primary documents or relevant news articles. If any supplemental readings are required, they will be indicated on the course schedule and made available on Canvas or via links in the syllabus.

GRADING & COURSE COMPONENTS

Evaluation in this course is based on the following components:

- Class Participation 5%
- Content Quizzes (10) 20%
- Exams (3) 45%
- Reaction Posts (3) 30%

Participation (5%)

You will be required to complete three tasks throughout the semester in order to receive participation points. Each task is the same: You must comment on the discussion posts of at least 1 other student (see additional details below). Commentary must be constructive, respectful, and should offer an additional point, pose a question, or present a counter-argument. (i.e., Simply stating that you agree with someone is insufficient). Commentaries are to be at least 3 sentences in length. Your specific response is graded on a three-point scale: commentaries that meet the requisite length and content will be awarded full credit, an attempt to participate will get half credit, and failure to contribute will get 0 credit.

Content Quizzes (10 x 2% = 20%)

There will be 10 content quizzes in this class worth an overall 25%. All quizzes will be accessed on Canvas. Content quizzes are designed to ensure that you are reading the material and that your level of comprehension is as at a point where you do well on the exams. The due dates for quizzes are listed in the syllabus. The quizzes are open-note, open-book format. The time limit for quiz completion is 50 mins. Finally, there are no make up quizzes as you have plenty of notice to complete them. The quizzes are set up to be graded immediately upon completion.

Reaction Posts (3 x 10% = 30%)

There are 3 short writing assignments for this course. For each assignment, students will respond to a posted prompt in the discussion board section of Canvas. These reaction post assignments have two parts: 1. original posts and 2. commentary. Students will have a period of 2 weeks

during which to complete the reaction post assignment. For all reaction topics, a student must first post an original response in order to see other student responses. A rubric for grading the reaction posts is provided for you on the Canvas site.

1. Original posts: For each reaction assignment, there will be a posted discussion topic. Students are expected to respond to this question with an original, well-reasoned, grammatically correct response. Note that your post must correctly cite relevant sources (i.e. the assigned readings). You will need in-text citations only. The correct format for citing is "...blah blah (Last name of author - space - date of publication - comma- page number)." The page number need only be included if you are using a quote. Of course, you are welcome to include outside material as well, but you will need to include full citations for reference. Original reaction posts are to be a minimum of 15 complete sentences (about 3 paragraphs). Posts must be written in essay/paragraph format; unless otherwise specified, bullet points, numbered responses, and/or incomplete sentences are not acceptable.

2. Commentary: Each student is expected to comment on the discussion posts of at least 1 other student. Commentary must be constructive, respectful, and should offer an additional point, pose a question, or present a counter-argument. (i.e., Simply stating that you agree with someone is insufficient). Commentaries are to be at least 3 sentences in length. This will count as your participation grade in the course.

Exams (3 X 15% = 45%)

There will be three exams during the semester, listed in the course schedule. Each exam is worth 15% of your overall grade. The exam will consist of 30 multiple choice questions worth 2 points each. While these exams will be open book, they are timed, so you will need to use your time wisely. The exam time is limited to 90 minutes. All required material covered in the class will be 'fair game' for the exams, not just the material from the textbook. If you cannot take the exam within the allotted time span, you must notify the Instructor of your extenuating circumstances at least 2 weeks before the testing period begins. In such a case, you must be able to provide the requisite University-approved documentation. No make-up exams will be offered. Students may only take an exam once. **YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR MAKING SURE YOU HAVE A SECURE INTERNET CONNECTION.** Technical problems during the exam do not entitle any student to a make-up exam. You have one opportunity to submit your test; whatever is submitted (if it is submitted early or not at all) is what will be graded.

Extra Credit: Absolutely no extra credit assignments will be offered this semester. However, the instructor reserves the right to curve exams and other grades depending on overall class performance.

Late Work: Late work is not accepted. All of the assignment due dates, criteria for completion, and full explanation are provided well ahead of time. In addition, all of the assignments can be turned in electronically on Canvas without physically being in class. Therefore, there is no excuse for late work. As stated above, makeup exams will not be allowed except for extreme circumstances.

Final grades in this course are computed on the following basis:¹

- 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: <60%

NOTE: In cases in which a student is on the borderline between grades (e.g., 91.5), I will always round up to the higher grade, provided that you have engaged in regular and active participation in class. If you have any questions about grading policy in general, or any questions about any particular grade you received, please reach out to me via email. I will be more than happy to discuss your grade with you and find ways in which your work can be improved and your grade raised.

Drop Deadline: The last day to drop this course is **March 27**. You should have plenty of information about your grade by that point, so I encourage you to make a well-informed decision that benefits you in the long run.

ONLINE INSTRUCTION

Since the class is conducted online, there is a great deal of leeway built into the completion of required coursework. However, it is up to you to pay attention to due dates and requirements. Most importantly, you must have stable internet access for this class. I will not at any point in the semester hear complaints regarding late assignments due to not having internet access. The level of technological knowledge for participating in this class is minimal. If you need technical support, you can contact the UW-Milwaukee help desk with inquiries regarding Canvas problems.

In order to access any content on Canvas, you must complete a quiz dealing with the content of this syllabus. The quiz can be attempted an unlimited number of times, cannot hurt your grade, and must be completed with a 100%. The point of the quiz is to ensure that you understand the guidelines and requirements for the class so that there is no possibility for complaints later. In addition, your completion of the syllabus quiz is a contract that both of us agree to the guidelines set forth in this class.

¹ Students submit to the Academic Integrity rules of the University Student Code of Conduct.

A note about conduct: Since the class is conducted online and not face-to-face, some degree of anonymity occurs. On rare occasions, this anonymity is accompanied by a lack of formality or professional conduct. Please take note to not be disrespectful to other students. I also expect that emails to me will be accompanied by a professional header, consist of a professional tone, and include formal writing (as though it were a business email). If the emails are not drafted in this manner, I will simply not respond to them. If they are written in a professional manner, you can expect a response in two business days or less.

SPECIAL ACCOMODATIONS

It is the University’s policy to provide, on a flexible and individual basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have documented disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact Disability Services for a letter of verification to provide to their instructors. If you are working through Disability Services and require specific course delivery options, please contact me as soon as possible so we can work to make these adjustments. Similarly, if you have an upcoming event or emergency circumstances that will impact your performance in the course, let me know as soon as possible. Once a due date has passed, options become limited, and unless it is a true catastrophic emergency, you will not be able to make up missed work!

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Students are responsible for the honest completion and representation of their work, for the appropriate citation of sources, and for respect of others’ academic endeavors. Students who violate these standards must be confronted and must accept the consequences of their actions. The disciplinary procedures can be found on the Student Academic Misconduct/Academic Discipline Procedure website.

CLASS SCHEDULE

The course will be broken into three parts. For each part, there are a set of readings, quizzes, and assignments that you must complete, along with one exam. This schedule is just a suggestion; You are welcome to work ahead. However, I have set three key deadlines in order to keep you on track. Part I, which encompasses material from chapters 1-5, will be due March 13. Part II, which includes material from chapters 12, 13, & 15, will be due March 27. Part III, which includes material from chapters 6-11, is due on April 9th (at the end of our shortened 6 week course).

Course begins Monday, February 28th.				
DUE ASAP:				
• Complete Syllabus Quiz (required in order to access course content!)				
Part I: Origins & Foundations of American Government				
	DATE	TOPICS	READINGS	ASSIGNMENTS
WEEK 1	2/28-3/4	• American Political Culture	• Ginsberg Ch. 1	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Founding & Constitution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ginsberg Ch. 2 • Declaration (via Canvas) • Constitution (via Canvas) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content Quiz 1 (The Founding & Constitution)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federalism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ginsberg Ch. 3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content Quiz 2 (Federalism)
WEEK 2	3/7-3/11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civil Rights • Civil Liberties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ginsberg Ch. 4 • Ginsberg Ch. 5 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content Quiz 3 (Civil Rights & Civil Liberties)
<p>DUE BY MARCH 13th:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quizzes 1, 2, 3 • Exam 1 (Chapters 1-5) • Reaction Essay 1 				
WEEK 3	3/14-3/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Congress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ginsberg Ch. 12 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content Quiz 4 (Congress)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Presidency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ginsberg Ch. 13 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content Quiz 5 (Presidency)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Judiciary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ginsberg Ch. 15 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content Quiz 6 (Courts)
WEEK 4	3/21-3/25	SPRING BREAK		
<p>DUE BY MARCH 27th:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quizzes 4, 5, 6 • Exam 2 (Chapters 12, 13, 15) • Reaction Essay 2 				
WEEK 5	3/28-4/1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Opinion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ginsberg Ch. 6 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content Quiz 7 (Public Opinion & Participation)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ginsberg Ch. 8 	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political Parties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ginsberg Ch. 9 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content Quiz 8 (Parties & Elections)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campaigns and Elections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ginsberg Ch. 10 	
WEEK 6	4/4-4/8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ginsberg Ch. 7 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content Quiz 9 (Media)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interest Groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ginsberg Ch. 11 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content Quiz 10 (Interest Groups)
<p>DUE BY APRIL 9th:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quizzes 7, 8, 9, 10 • Exam 3 (Chapters 6-11) • Reaction Essay 3 				

