Graduate Course Syllabus

POL 520: American Governmental Institutions
Center: Online

Course Prerequisites
POL 500

Course Description
This course focuses on the analysis of key actors in U.S. politics including the presidency, Congress, the judiciary, interest groups, and political parties. Emphasis is also placed on the interaction among the various institutional actors and the influence that internal and external processes, the electorate, and governmental and nongovernmental organizations have on the political system. The course takes a case-study approach to the study of American institutions by examining critical historical developments that have influenced and are reflected by modern governance in the United States.

Course Outcomes
- Assess the effectiveness of American political institutions within the context of American values and ethical standards
- Evaluate how the structure of the American political system both hinders and enhances the performance of American political institutions
- Analyze the complex interactions among external forces and internal institutional forces in American political institutions for how they shape the American policy process
- Assess emerging data trends affecting American political institutions for their use in making informed decisions
- Propose reforms to American political institution processes, utilizing evidence-based studies in the field

Required Materials
Using your learning resources is critical to your success in this course. Please purchase directly through the SNHU Online Bookstore rather than any other vendor. Purchasing directly from the bookstore ensures that you will obtain the correct materials and that the IT Service Desk, your advisor, and the instructor can provide you with support if you have problems.

Congress Reconsidered
Lawrence Dodd and Bruce Oppenheimer (Eds.)
CQ Press
Eleventh Edition
2017

ISBN: 978-1-5063-2878-2

The Presidency and the Political System
Michael Nelson (Ed.)
CQ Press
Eleventh Edition
2018
ISBN: 978-1-5443-1729-8

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
As indicated in our core values, SNHU is committed to "embrace diversity where we encourage and respect diverse identities, ideas, and perspectives by honoring difference, amplifying belonging, engaging civilly, and breaking down barriers to bring our mission to life."

This may or will be reflected in SNHU's curriculum as we embrace and practice diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) to provide the most transformative experience for our students, faculty, and staff. Because topics pertaining to DEI can be sensitive, please remember that embodying and practicing diversity, equity, and inclusion is one of our core values that you will encounter throughout the academic experience. In higher education, we are expected to think and engage critically. Use a growth mindset to embrace the diverse readings, course assignments, and experiences of your peers and faculty.

For more information about DEI at SNHU, please visit our website at the [Office of Diversity and Inclusion](#).

Instructor Availability and Response Time
Your class interaction with the instructor and your classmates will take place on a regular, ongoing basis. Your instructor will be actively engaged within the course throughout the week. You will normally communicate with your instructor in the weekly discussions or the General Questions discussion topic so that your questions and the instructor's answers benefit the entire class. You should feel free, however, to communicate with your instructor via SNHU email at any time, particularly when you want to discuss something of a personal or sensitive nature. Your instructor will generally provide a response within 24 hours. Instructors will post grades and feedback (as applicable) within seven days of an assignment's due date, or within seven days of a late submission.

Grade Distribution

Assignment Category	Number of Graded Items	Point Value per Item	Total Points
Discussions	10	22	220
Journals	5	31	155
Final Project			
Milestone One	1	75	75
Milestone Two	1	75	75
Milestone Three	1	75	75
Final Submission	1	300	300
Peer Reviews	2	50	100
			Total Course Points: 1,000

This course may also contain practice activities. The purpose of these non-graded activities is to assist you in mastering the learning outcomes in the graded activity items listed above.

University Grading System: Graduate

Grade	Numerical Equivalent	Points
A	93–100	4.00
A-	90–92	3.67
B+	87–89	3.33
B	83–86	3.00
B-	80–82	2.67
C+	77–79	2.33
C	73–76	2.00
F	0–72	0.00
I	Incomplete	
IF	Incomplete/Failure *	
W	Withdrawn	

* Please refer to the policy page for information on the incomplete grade process.

Grading Guides

Specific activity directions, grading guides, posting requirements, and additional deadlines can be found in the Assignment Guidelines and Rubrics section of the course.

Weekly Assignment Schedule

All reading and assignment information can be found within each module of the course. Assignments and discussion posts during the first week of each term are due by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time. Assignments and discussion posts for the remainder of the term are due by 11:59 p.m. of the student's local time zone.

In addition to the textbook readings that are listed, there may be additional required resources within each module.

Module	Topics and Assignments
1	Congress: Members, Elections, and Constituencies *Congress Reconsidered*, Chapters 1–6 1-1 Discussion: The Changing Congress 1-2 Journal: Congressional Gridlock 1-3 Final Project Review
2	Congress, Parties, and Committees *Congress Reconsidered*, Chapters 7, 8, 11, 13 2-1 Discussion: Parties, Committees, and Congressional Careerism 2-2 Final Project Milestone One: Introduction and Policy Selection
3	Shared Governance *Congress Reconsidered*, Chapters 10, 12, 14–18 3-1 Discussion: Considering the "Shared Governance" Perspective 3-2 Journal: Media Influence on Shared Governance 3-3 Final Project: Continue Work
4	An Introduction to the Presidency *The Presidency and the Political System*, Chapters 1–6 4-1 Discussion: The Evolution of the Presidency 4-2 Journal: The Presidential Character 4-3 Final Project Milestone Two: Enacted Policy Analysis
5	The Presidency and External Forces *The Presidency and the Political System*, Chapters 7–12 5-1 Discussion: Forces That Shape the Modern Presidency 5-2 Journal: Electoral College – Still Relevant? 5-3 Peer Review: Enacted Policy Analysis
6	The Presidency, Institutional Actors, and the Exercise of Presidential Power *The Presidency and the Political System*, Chapters 13–19 6-1 Discussion: Presidential Power and the Unitary Executive 6-2 Final Project Milestone Three: Failed Policy Analysis
7	The Supreme Court in American Politics 7-1 Discussion: The Least Dangerous Branch? 7-2 Peer Review: Failed Policy Analysis
8	The Federal Bureaucracy 8-1 Discussion: The Role of the Bureaucracy in a Democratic Society
9	Legislative Gridlock and Divided Government 9-1 Discussion: Divided We Govern 9-2 Journal: Unified Versus Divided Government
10	Reflecting on American Governmental Institutions 10-1 Discussion: Reflecting on American Governmental Institutions 10-2 Final Project: Comparative Policy Analysis and Reform Proposal

Attendance Policy

Online students are required to submit a graded assignment/discussion during the first week of class. If a student does not submit a graded assignment/discussion during the first week of class, the student is automatically dropped from the course for non-participation. Review the full attendance policy.

Late Assignments Policy

Meeting assigned due dates is critical for demonstrating progress and ensuring appropriate time for instructor feedback on assignments. Students are expected to submit their assignments on or before the due date. Review the full late assignment policy.

SNHU Student Handbook

Review the student handbook.

ADA/504 Compliance Statement

In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008, Southern New Hampshire University does not discriminate on the basis of disability, including intellectual disability, in admission, treatment, or access to its programs or activities, nor does it discriminate in employment in its programs or activities.

The university prohibits unlawful discrimination on the basis of disability and takes action to prevent such discrimination by providing reasonable accommodations to eligible individuals with disabilities. A disability is a condition or impairment that impacts a "major life activity" or "major bodily function."

- **Major life activities** include, but are not limited to, caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, lifting, bending, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating, and working.

- **Major bodily functions** include, but are not limited to, functions of the immune system, normal cell growth, and digestive, bowel, bladder, neurological, brain, respiratory, circulatory, endocrine, and reproductive functions. Disabilities include physical, medical (including pregnancy), mental health, and learning needs.

At the beginning of each term, or as soon as you become aware of a disability or accessibility concern, we encourage you to contact the Online Accessibility Center (OAC) to discuss accommodations for which you may be qualified. Reasonable accommodations are established through an interactive process between the student and the OAC.

Note that accommodations are not retroactive and that disability accommodations are not provided until acceptable documentation of a disability and its impact is received and an accommodation letter has been processed. If you are unsure whether your condition qualifies as a disability or accessibility concern, please contact the OAC for determination.

Contact Information:

Online Accessibility Center

Phone: 866-305-9430

Email: oac@snhu.edu

For questions concerning support services, documentation guidelines, or general disability issues, please visit the Online Accessibility Center website.

If you feel you have been denied appropriate disability-related accommodations, including appropriate auxiliary aids and services, you may file a grievance as described in the ADA/504 Grievance Policy found on the Disability and Accessibility Services website.

Academic Honesty Policy

Southern New Hampshire University requires all students to adhere to high standards of integrity in their academic work. Activities such as plagiarism and cheating are not condoned by the university. Review the full academic honesty policy.

Copyright Policy

Southern New Hampshire University abides by the provisions of United States Copyright Act (Title 17 of the United States Code). Any person who infringes the copyright law is liable. Review the full copyright policy.

SNHU Withdrawal Policy

Review the full withdrawal policy.

Southern New Hampshire University Policies

More information about SNHU policies can be found on the policy page.

Student Work Samples

For the purpose of continuous improvement of our educational training, Southern New Hampshire University may, on occasion, utilize anonymous student work samples for internal professional development and staff training. If you would like to withdraw permission for use of your work, please complete the Student Work Sample Survey.