

POLSCI 210 - American Politics
Online Fall 2019

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Instructor

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Course Overview

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.

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. My assumption is that you will be spending 12-15 hours per week on this class (the same amount of time as a 3-credit face to face course.)

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-Stout 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.

I expect that class reading will be done prior to the lecture slides being posted, and that students will ask questions in the discussion forums if they do not understand something. The

lecture slides are posted on Monday mornings at 8am. If at any point during the semester it is clear that students are not reading prior to attempting the quizzes, I will mandate that each student hand in on Canvas one page of typed, single-spaced notes on the readings. The page of notes will accompany the quizzes in terms of determining the overall quiz grade.

A note about conduct: Since the class is conducted online and not face-to-face, there is a certain level of anonymity. 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.

Course Objectives

This class is designed to provide a basic understanding of the main actors, institutions, and practices that exist in American Politics. The exams and quizzes are designed in order to measure each of the objectives of the course. By completing the course, students will be better able to:

1. Identify the important institutions in American politics, as well as how they operate.
2. Recognize and provide examples of the actors and institutions critical to political outcomes in the contemporary American political environment.
3. Identify influential periods of history and events that have impacted and shaped contemporary American politics.
4. Critically analyze and answer questions related to course readings that have shaped the American political system.

Additionally, 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; and b) the study of human collectivities, organizations, institutions, and cultures, their infrastructures, and interrelationships.

Course Requirements

I expect that you will prepare for each lecture by reading the assigned material from the textbook. The required textbook for this course is:

Ginsberg, Benjamin, Theodore J. Lowi, Margaret Weir, and Caroline J. Tolbert. 2018. *We the People: An Introduction to American Politics* 12th Essentials Edition. W.W. Norton & Company.

I will 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.

Participation (15%)

You will be required to complete **four** tasks throughout the semester in order to receive participation points. First, you must introduce yourself on Canvas in the Discussion section of Canvas titled “Introductions.” I would like everyone to introduce themselves in a paragraph or two by the end of the first week of the semester. Your specific response is not graded, and you will simply receive points for completing the task.

The other three tasks require posting a review question for each of the three exams in the Discussion section of Canvas. Further, you must respond to at least one student’s question for each review session. The discussion forum is located in the Discussion section of Canvas titled “Review Session.” I will not reward you any participation points unless you do both of these tasks. You must complete the tasks by Sunday at 11:59pm the day **BEFORE** the exam opens, but I encourage each of you to post questions as they arise and well in advance of the exam.

Content Quizzes (10 x 2.5% = 25%)

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. Each week, a content quiz will open for 7 days. The quiz will close at midnight on Sunday the week before we start a topic. It is your responsibility to take the quiz within that time. A failure to take the quiz in the allotted time will result in a score of zero. You may take the same quiz up to three times, and I will count the highest quiz grade out of the three attempts. 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 an entire week to complete each quiz. The quizzes are set up to be graded immediately upon completion.

PLEASE NOTE that the readings listed for any particular topic should be read **BEFORE** taking the quiz on that topic. If it becomes evident that students are not completing the assigned readings prior to attempting the quizzes, it will become mandatory to submit one page of typed notes on the readings at the beginning of each topical week. The page of notes will accompany the quizzes in terms of determining the overall quiz grade.

Reaction Posts (3 x 5% = 15%)

There are 3 short writing assignments for this course. For each substantive unit, 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 minimum of 1 week 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 substantive course module (the introduction module excluded), 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.

Exams (3 X 15% = 45%)

There will be three examinations during the course of the semester, listed in the course schedule. Each exam is worth 15% of your overall grade. The exam will consist of 50 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. For exams 1 and 2, you will have a 7 day span in which to take your exam. For the 3rd exam, you will have a 5 day span to complete the exam due to the end of the semester falling on a Friday and not Sunday. 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.

Grading Scale

Grade	Percentage
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	= below 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.

Special Accommodations

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

NOTE: Readings and quizzes for a particular day should be done before attending class on that particular day. The schedule is subject to change based on the flow of class discussion.

Week	Date	Topic	Reading(s)
1	9/4-9/5	<i>Module 1: Course Introduction</i> Course Introduction Syllabus Quiz and Introduction post due 9/8 at 11:59pm	Syllabus
2	9/9-9/13	<i>Module 2: The Origins and Foundations of American Government</i> Citizens & Government; American Political Culture	Ginsberg Ch. 1
3	9/16-9/20	The Founding & Constitution Content Quiz 1 (The Founding & Constitution) due 9/15 at 11:59pm	Ginsberg Ch. 2 Declaration Agrarian Justice U.S. Constitution Federalist Papers 10 & 51 (available here)
4	9/23-9/27	Federalism Content Quiz 2 (Federalism) due 9/22 at 11:59pm	Ginsberg Ch. 3
5	9/30-10/3	Civil Rights and Civil Liberties Content Quiz 3 (Civil Rights/Liberties) due 9/29 at 11:59pm Reaction Essay 1 due 9/29 at 11:59pm	Ginsberg Ch. 4
6	10/7-10/10	EXAM 1 Exam opens 10/7 at 9am and closes 10/13 at 11:59pm. REMINDER: Please post your exam questions and at least ONE response to the Exam Review discussion board by SUNDAY Oct. 6 at 11:59pm	

Week	Date	Topic	Reading(s)
7	10/14-10/17	<i>Module 3: The Three Branches of Government</i> The Legislative Branch Content Quiz 4 (Congress) due 10/13 at 11:59pm	Ginsberg, Ch.9 “Why Wisconsin Became a Pivotal Front in Nationwide Redistricting Fight” (available here).
8	10/21-10/24	The Executive Content Quiz 5 (Presidency) due 10/20 at 11:59pm	Ginsberg Ch. 10
9	10/28-10/31	The Judiciary Content Quiz 6 (Judiciary) due 10/27 at 11:59pm Reaction Essay due 10/27 at 11:59pm	Ginsberg Ch. 11
10	11/4-11/7	EXAM 2 - Covers only material from Module 3. Exam opens 11/4 at 9am and closes 11/10 at 11:59pm. REMINDER: Please post your exam questions and at least ONE response to the Exam Review discussion board by SUNDAY Nov. 3 at 11:59pm	
11	11/11-11/14	<i>Module 4: Forming and Expressing Beliefs</i> Public Opinion Content Quiz 7 (Public Opinion) due 11/10 at 11:59pm	Ginsberg, Ch.5
12	11/18-11/21	Elections, Parties, and Participation Content Quiz 8 (Elections) due 11/17 at 11:59pm	Ginsberg Ch. 7
13	11/25-11/28	THANKSGIVING BREAK REMINDER: you are responsible for reading 2 chapters, completing 2 quizzes and submitting reaction 3 by SUNDAY 12/1, so use this time wisely!	
14	12/2-12/5	The American Political System and Non-Governmental Actors Content Quiz 9 (Media) due 12/1 at 11:59pm Content Quiz 10 (Interest Groups) due 12/1 at 11:59pm Reaction Essay 3 due 12/1 at 11:59pm	Ginsberg Ch. 6 Ginsberg Ch. 8
15	12/9-12/13	EXAM 3 - Covers only material from Module 4 Exam opens 12/9 at 9am and closes FRIDAY 12/13 at 11:59pm. REMINDER: Please post your exam questions and at least ONE response to the Exam Review discussion board by SUNDAY Dec. 8 at 11:59pm	