

Occidental College

2025 Fall General Course Evaluations

Course: POLS101_1: Amer Politics/Public Policy

Instructor: Isaac Hale *

1 - 1. How would you describe your level of engagement in this course? How did you engage in class? For example: Did you come to class prepared? Did you seek help from the instructor, peers, or other supports when needed?

Response Rate	21/25 (84%)
<p>• I participated in nearly every class when I felt confident in my answer. I also attended office hours whenever I did not understand a specific topic within the lesson.</p> <p>• Very good</p> <p>• I was really engaged with the class material and discussions, I talked when I felt like I had something to share.</p> <p>• Within class, I would describe myself as highly engaged, although marginally underprepared. The material and in-class questions sometimes felt marginally condescending, but that is only natural in a 101 course, as people come in with all different levels of background.</p> <p>• Yes, it was easy to be prepared for this class which is nice because you can still learn good content. I sought help from my peers when needing missed notes.</p> <p>• I participated thoroughly throughout the course, trying to participate everyday. I also did all the readings and studied well for our quizzes.</p> <p>• I would say that I was fairly engaged throughout the course; through the medium of answering questions in class and electing to quote important quotes for the class that were provided in the slides.</p> <p>• I always came to class prepared and ready to learn. I listened and took thorough notes during every class. I reached out for support to my professor earlier in the semester when needed.</p> <p>• I would come to class having done most readings, and was actively engaged during the class.</p> <p>• I always came to class prepared; however, toward the end of the semester, it became harder and harder to prepare. I felt the workload/readings increased as the semester went on, which was the opposite of a lot of my other courses. I definitely attended office hours, but I wish I had utilized them more. There wasn't really a lot of camaraderie among classmates, so I felt like I couldn't reach out for help. Actually, once I reached out to a classmate for help, and was left on read.</p> <p>• I didn't contribute too much in class but I also didn't need to seek too much help.</p> <p>• I did the assigned readings before class and took notes on the important details in order to come to class prepared, participated during lectures and discussions, took notes on in class lectures, reviewed published slides as needed and worked with my peers when needed.</p> <p>• My level of engagement in this course would be ranked as high because I made sure to come prepared to class by reviewing the readings and checking in with my professor whenever I was confused on a concept. To also feel more prepared there were times when I asked my peers for help in terms of how they studied for the quizzes and how they would conceptualize the readings as well. I also participated whenever I felt I had the answer and volunteered to read passages off the slides.</p> <p>• I consistently came to classes prepared and eager to engage in discussion. I always did the readings and participated during class. I would also ask questions when I was confused, and worked alongside peers to study and discuss.</p> <p>• I came to class every day and I did not miss a single day of class. I actively engaged in the in-class discussions happening during class time. I would always come prepared as I did all the readings and took notes during lectures and more. I did go to the professor when I had questions and he was always very open and easy to talk to digitally and in-person via accessible office hours.</p> <p>• I did all of the readings for the class, and participated in discussions to the best of my ability. However looking back, I did not seek as much help as I wish I did.</p> <p>• I was quite engaged. I read every reading before class, participated regularly, and asked questions after class.</p> <p>• level of engagement was not very high but my own fault</p> <p>• I would say I was mostly engaged in this course as I came to class nearly everyday and took notes on the lectures and paid attention in class. Where I could grow, I should have spoken more in class or done more of the readings.</p> <p>• I came prepared to class being able to take notes. I think I should've participated more and studied a little more for the quizzes but my actual in class attention was there.</p> <p>• I was quite engaged in this course, and I often came to class having read the required readings fully and participated in class to answer questions and ask clarifying questions.</p>	

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2 - 2. How did this course influence, change, or help shape your understanding of the subject matter?

Response Rate	21/25 (84%)
• It allowed me to develop an understanding of the U.S. legal system on a national and state level. The course provided historical context that contributed a deeper understanding of how the U.S. legal system and structure came to be what it is today. It also provided a non-biased and non-partisan approach to understanding politics within the US. • Very informative yet interesting class • This course gave me a good foundational understanding of Politics and the American political system. • The course assisted in providing a basic net of knowledge for American politics with some marginal steps into global politics. • After taking AP Gov in high school, it gave me a deeper understanding of the institutions rather than just facts. • I got a basic understanding of the inner workings of the American political system. It gave me a good foundation for my intended major, politics. • I would say that it didn't help me much on a personal level due to the fact that I knew a majority of the concepts before ever taking this class, but for any student who is introducing themselves to the political world and political theory I believe that this class is amazing in establishing a firm foundation to build knowledge upon. • This course greatly added to my understanding of the subject matter. This was a very extensive course that covered so much about American politics in just one semester. I feel much more informed after taking this class. • I never took an American politics or civics class, this was extremely informative and created a foundation for someone who'd never had this exposure before. • It really helped me understand the historical background of how/why our electoral system is built up. And it opened my eyes to the possibility of reform in American politics. • It added to what I already knew about American politics but didn't change my opinion too much on the matters I believe, because I had a good teacher for a similar class last year. So it added onto my prior knowledge but was also some review. • I had a very broad overview of political systems from high school, so this course expanded my knowledge and deepened it by expanding on concepts I was both familiar and unfamiliar with. • This course influenced my understanding of the American Politics because the content went more in depth with the concepts that were introduced about the different branches of government. I was also able to formulate my own ideas about what needs to be reformed about our current system which has helped shape my view whenever I'm reading about current events on the news. • This course really gave me new perspectives on the world of politics we are living in. By learning about the political institutions and procedures, we were able to evaluate current structures of our political system and highlight areas that could be fixed. By recognizing our flaws and our strengths of our system, I was able to better understand current debates in today's political climate. • With this class being an intro-level course, I had taken a similar class to it just this past year as an AP course. However, despite this class being shorter than that class, I felt as though if I got an amazing, in-depth learning experience in which certain subjects and ideas were very well explained and expanded upon from previous experiences. • This course gave me a much deeper and more complex understanding of the material. The readings discussed different perspectives of issues that I was mostly already aware of, causing me to think about those topics in different ways. • Before this class, I had a much more general idea of politics through history class and current news article. However, this class explored the political system itself more, but made it easy to understand by connecting it to evidence, both data and events. I feel more informed as a citizen and voter and more curious about politics as a student. • helped me understand more • This course gave me a very good and engaging overview of the essentials to U.S politics and I feel much more confident regarding my knowledge here. • This course made politics more interesting. It made me realize how big of a system there is behind politics and overall grew my understanding. • This course was an overview of content that I already knew, as I am a Politics major; for the most part, it was a review, but it was nice to have a refresher.	

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3 - 3. What skills or capacities did you expect to gain from this course? How and to what extent did the course help you to develop those skills or capacities?

Response Rate	21/25 (84%)
<p>• Refer to question #4.</p> <p>• I gained lots of knowledge about American political systems</p> <p>• I thought I was going to effectively learn about the basics of American Politics and I did exactly that.</p> <p>• mostly a knowledge base with the addition of some helpful political literacy.</p> <p>• I learned how to do a pivotal politics model, but I feel like I have taken other classes that covered a lot of the same material, but those classes really helped for success in this class.</p> <p>• I expected to understand how the American political system works. Professor Hale did a phenomenal job of helping my peers and I understand the subject matter.</p> <p>• I expected to fill general gaps in areas that I had experienced a great deal of learning in, the course did that perfectly.</p> <p>• I hoped to learn about the U.S. political system, especially how elections work. I also wanted to learn about current events that are influencing U.S. politics. This course helped me learn so much about both of these things.</p> <p>• Information and concepts pertaining to American politics</p> <p>• I feel like I strengthened my critical thinking skills, but particularly within the realm of politics. We were challenged to critique the literal systems in which we live and exist, and discuss possible reforms that seem radical but truly would likely be better options.</p> <p>• I expected to gain critical thinking about politics in addition to basic facts. I think critical thinking was to a somewhat limited extent, and the theories helped with that, but it makes a lot of sense that we have to cover basic government functions before going deeper, so we know what we're doing. I do feel more confident about government procedures and how they relate to the Madisonian design, which I didn't know before.</p> <p>• I gained and enhanced my critical thinking skills, communication skills, and note taking skills throughout this course. Through practicing these skills in class and while preparing for class, I was able to set myself up for success.</p> <p>• I gained the skills of critical thinking and also being analytical because for most of the big concepts that were covered in this class, I was able to get a better understanding whenever there was a graph to analyze. The course also challenged me to think beyond just the concepts and to connect it to previous ones to form my own arguments.</p> <p>• I gained close reading skills that helped me really understand the articles we were given and apply them to real world examples. I also got better at engaging in class discussions and formulating my thoughts on a particular subject matter quickly so that I could participate. I also gained the skill of interpreting graphs better, and professor Hale used a variety of political graphs throughout his slides.</p> <p>• I feel like this course got me a great understanding of the reading schedule for a college political science course. It was the perfect amount of engaging readings and lectures that I felt like I really got a great introduction to the politics department here at Oxy. Overall, the course definitely expanded my reading stamina for various different types of political readings.</p> <p>• I expected for this course to be similar to my AP government course I took in high school, but more in-depth and comprehensive. While there were definitely some similarities early on in the course, I gained insight on subjects I was not informed on previously, and learned to discuss those issues with different perspectives in mind.</p> <p>• I expected to learn how to evaluate and form opinions about the US political system and to understand basic political theory in the US. I think this class did that very well for being a 101 class because different political beliefs were presented and evidence for and against them was shown.</p> <p>• better understanding of American Politics and what to vote for</p> <p>• I hoped to learn about the basics of US politics and also be able to retain information from lectures and readings. This course helped me develop those skills to a strong extent as I feel I was always engaging with the lecture material and improved my note taking skills.</p> <p>• I expected to gain more knowledge about politics and US government. This course helped me learn all of the things that I expected.</p> <p>• I expected to refresh my understanding of the basics of American politics, and the course definitely met this expectation in reviewing the basics.</p>	

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4 - 4. What aspects/features of the instruction were particularly effective or ineffective? What aspects/features of the course facilitated or impeded your learning? For example: How well did the professor structure class periods (e.g., discussion facilitation, group work, in-class exercises, lectures, handouts, etc), reading questions, assignments, exams, community-based work, field work, laboratory work, studio work, etc.?

Response Rate 21/25 (84%)

- The lectures were well-organized so I could understand how everything came together and the examples in lecture were engaging and relevant, and I could see how they applied to real life examples. Every lesson was broken down by week and it all was contributing to what would be taught the following week.
- The lectures were very engaging. Professor Hale is a very good lecturer
- Nothing prevented me from learning well, this class was really insightful
- Readings dragged as they all do, so that is difficult to fix. Lectures were engaging but sometimes simple to an extent that they lost that engagement.
- Readings were somewhat ineffective because we talked about it in class, but the lectures were very helpful.
- I think the lectures throughout the semester were quite effective. It deeply helped me understand how the American political system worked. Professor Hale did a good job of allowing us to participate, and I think the class engagement truly did help. Nothing necessarily was ineffective nor impeded my learning.
- Effective: The quiz structure was amazing in terms of preparation for the final with the graded aspect forcing you to truly retain the information if done properly. The accessibility of the course materials was also extremely helpful if/when a student has to miss class.
- I really liked how classes were taught through lectures. I enjoy taking notes and find it the best way to learn. I also like how all the information was presented in an unbiased manner. It helped me develop my own opinion on different aspects of U.S. politics.
- Effective: professor hale's interest, presentation style, and knowledge Ineffective: no way of knowing if students put in effort to do the readings. Could have showed up without having done and winged it.
- I think that the readings and quizzes were really effective in helping us learn the content; however, in terms of really internalizing it, I'm not sure if lectures really helped. For me, I really prefer discussion and in-class exercises, but I imagine that would be difficult to do with a 101 Pols class. I think in some ways it can definitely be integrated. It's one thing for a student to be able to say how something operates, but being able to articulate a critical analysis of it is another.
- I liked the lectures a lot, especially the fun videos that are good real-world examples of the more stuffy stuff we learn (watching a video of a filibuster instead of solely defining it and moving on), so I appreciated that. I would've enjoyed a little bit more of small group discussion or handouts to work on together. That way, it's a little bit less intimidating to share an answer and we can talk out solutions. I liked how we did that for a difficult topic like the voting scale thing (blanking on the term)
- The professor's lectures were entertaining and informative. I was able to learn a lot while being in a respectful, open, yet humorous environment, which made coming to class and participating very enjoyable. Few readings were long which made them harder to complete with a full course-load of other reading heavy classes, but work was still very manageable.
- The aspects of the instruction that were particularly effective were the lecture slides since it was a useful tool to look back whenever I was reviewing before a quiz. I also think that the quizzes were effective for what they usually asked in the written responses, however there were some questions that I believed were too vague and not as specific.
- I really appreciated the lectures professor hale gave. They always connected well to the readings we did the night prior, and included meaningful graphs and real world examples that helped us connect tougher topics to more understandable graphics. I also really appreciated the readings we did, especially the more contemporary ones that included connections to modern politics or issues.
- The lectures were very effective in helping me and the peers in my class understand some things that may not have been as clear in the readings. Our Professor did an amazing job engaging the class in a wide range of subjects in American Politics that were completely new to many of us. I loved the quiz structure of the class as well because it provided a benchmark for our learning in the class for each week and forced us to remember everything that was taught.
- The lectures at times, were a little too fast paced, and discussions were frequent enough. I think there could have been more opportunities for participation in general within this course. I did find the slides to be extremely helpful, and made the material easy to understand. The choices for readings were varied and engaging/interesting.
- The class was almost all lecture based, which I enjoyed because it gave a lot of information and kept me engaged with note taking. However, there were also numerous opportunities for students to participate in addressing parts of the presentation and to ask questions, which made the material feel more approachable.
- The slides were very effective having Monday quizzes impeded my learning
- I felt that the weekly quizzes were a good way to make sure you were coming to class and engaging with the course material as the weeks that I had better attendance and did the readings I found much more success on the weekly quizzes.
- The lectures were effective and I thought the information was good. At times though I felt that lectures were fast and hard to keep up with sometimes. Also, the weekly quizzes were sometimes hard and maybe could've been a better way to have assignments/ grades.
- I found the lecture style of the course to be beneficial and structured in a way that helped me review the concepts.

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5 - 5. What aspects of the course or instruction helped or hindered the creation of an inclusive learning environment that is responsive to, and promotes the success of, a diverse group of students?

Response Rate	21/25 (84%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">The professor included sections within the lecture for class participation, which promoted an inclusive environment for students to contribute to class discussion.N/aThis class was good for everyone.A very friendly attitude and a positive look on maliability and learning from the professor led to an inclusive and adaptive learning environment.He never excluded anyone and always seemed very inclusive.Professor Hale was a great listener and was able to allow for everybody to participate. He did such a good job of engaging with the class.I feel that the instruction promoted an inclusive learning environment and lacked all hindrances.This course was an inclusive learning environment. Everybody was encouraged to engage and participate.Professor Hale never conveyed his own views. Very effective. Allowed for all perspectives, just laid out the facts. I thought this was extremely admirable.Honestly, the learning environment felt inclusive from the time we walked in the door. Professor Hale was always very open to questions during class, and if he couldn't make it to you, then he would talk to you after to clarify anything.Helped: acknowledging the good parts of a student's answer even if it was somewhat incorrect, or "I see where you're coming from." Patiently answering questions was good. The style of class where you raise your hand to share is could because no one is picked on. I would've liked a little more group work but I don't know if that has to do with the diversity of the students.During group discussions, the professor ensured that a large group of voices were heard, rather than the 1-3 voices that would raise their hands first.The course created an inclusive environment whenever participation was encouraged which was all the time. This made sure that a diverse group of students were partaking in the class discussions which promotes success.Professor Hale created an extremely inclusive environment, where I never felt scared to raise my hand and say something wrong. I would think this was the overall consensus of the class as well, as we frequently engaged in class-wide participation/ discussion. Also, professor Hale had flexible and helpful office hours which helped students struggling with a particular topic feel more at ease. I also really appreciated the structure of the quiz system (worst 2 get dropped).The class was structured in a way that was extremely helpful to students who did the readings and wanted to know more. Our professor did an amazing job ironing out some confusions that we had in the readings. The class structure itself was very clean and had consistent readings and quizzes to really have an organized schedule.The lack of opportunities to discuss issues, as well as hesitancy to speak up if I was unsure about answers. Most questions were answered by a certain few students, so more chances could have been given to other students to respond, or even just participate in some way that was not answering a question.The professor tried to include many student voices when speaking to the class, which made it feel class feel more inclusive and like a community.he is very friendly and good teacher environment is goodProfessor Hale is a very kind professor and for example, would always ask if people had any questions after a couple of slides, which I felt was a good way to encourage people who may have been to shy to ask otherwise to speak up and ask questions if they were confused.Occasional group in class assignments and being able to answer questions that the professor asked to the class.I found the course to be inclusive and allow for all students regardless of political belief to share their opinions and thoughts about the class.	

6 - 6. What other suggestions (if any) do you have for the next time the course is taught?

Response Rate	15/25 (60%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Keep it like it was this past semester and it'll be a very fruitful classNothingnoneI wished we could have more group activities like on the election heuristics lesson. I do understand that this course would not necessarily have the means to do this type learning, but I wish there were a few more activities.None.Cold calling more, or a serious constant incentive to participate to force the class to actively engage always.N/ASmaller group activities more oftenI suggest that there be a study guide of some sort for the final and also for some of the more difficult quizzes because this would help students feel more at ease whenever there is a quiz. Also there should be more time given for the quizzes because I felt that at times I was still developing my argument when the time was up.nothing really comes to mind... maybe include more of the memesThis course was taught very well and helped harbor engaged students, engaged readers, and engaged questions. Everything about each class and reading made me more excited to go to class the next day.More discussions should be included in the course the next time it is taught. Some students may be intimidated to answer questions with an expected answer, so giving them the opportunity to express their thoughts about the material would encourage more overall participation and engagement.Some students seemed confused initially about the political models, so a reading or exercise before class could make them feel more prepared during the in class exercise.n/aI thought the class was run exceptionally well.	

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7 - 7. What else (if anything) would you like to share about the course or the instruction?

Response Rate	14/25 (56%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• N/a• Was a really good class, I learned a lot, I highly suggest students to take Prof. Hale's courses.• none• This course was extremely insightful and beautifully taught.• Professor Hale's instruction style, enthusiasm, and flexibility were amazing and helpful throughout the course. Probably the number one reason students learned in the course - not the readings, not the slideshows, not the quizzes. I think this says a lot.• N/A• I really enjoyed the class, Prof. Hale made the topics digestible and I feel comfortable talking to him about issues I have/going to him in the future• This course was very interesting to me as it exposed me to different notions of the political system and has given me insight on what I would like to study more in depth for my future.• I really enjoyed this course and felt like it prepared me well to talk about politics with others. This class also made me interested in taking future politics classes down the line.• Our instructor was an amazing professor and person. He was very communicable about any questions/confusions with any concepts and was very passionate about his teachings. I was excited to go to class every day and loved to participate in our instructor-class discussions.• This course was very enjoyable, and I appreciated the different perspectives I gained from both a historical view of politics, and the modern day.• I enjoyed how this class incorporated both historical and current day events in explaining the development of our political system and political theories.• N/A• I think the course was structured really well in a way that made it very easy to understand complicated components of American politics.	