

American Government & Politics

POLS 100-4

Syllabus Spring 2017

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Course Info

6:00-8:40pm

DuSable Hall 252

Office Hours TTH 5-6pm and by email Friday 12:00pm to 1:00pm

Course Description

In this course students will be introduced to the functions, purposes, and foundations of American Government. American democracy is a participatory endeavor and thus requires an informed citizenry that can actively and positively contribute to the democratic process. Because this course is taking place during a presidential election cycle there will be special emphasis placed on the student's ability to apply what they learn to contemporary issues faced in this election. The primary goal of this course is to prepare students to think more deeply and thoughtfully about the role government plays in their lives, and the role they play in government.

Goals

By the end of this course student should be able to:

- Explain how and why our system of government came into existence
- Explain how and why American Democracy has evolved over the years
- Identify and explain the rationale for and functions of the major branches of governments
- Have a working knowledge of federalism and its underpinnings
- Know how elections work (primaries and generals)
- Have a basic knowledge of how media, parties, factions and demographics effect the political process
- Know what a political ideology is and how to identify and evaluate political actors, debates, and arguments

In addition, we will be examining the intellectual and philosophical tenants of American representative democracy. As part of your intellectual training it is imperative that you not only know what American democracy is but also what it can be. To that end, you will be required to actively participate in discussion of the reading materials especially as they pertain to current political issues.

Required Text

Ginsberg, Benjamin, et al, 2015. *We the People: An Introduction to American Politics 11th Essentials Edition* (WTP). New York: W.W. Norton & Company. (available at bookstore or electronically online)
ISBN: 978-0-393-93705-3

Strategy

This course will consist primarily of discussions **NOT** lectures, I will not stand before you and regurgitate what you have already read. Therefore, it is imperative that you do the readings and come to class prepared to discuss these readings. I will pose weekly questions pertaining to the readings and you will be required to answer those questions in written form as well as in class. These question will help lead our discussions. This approach should generate a myriad of opinions, insights and questions and thus provide for a rich discussion led and moderated by me of course.

Assignments and Grading

Weekly Quizzes-150pts

Midterm-200pts

Final-200pts

Attendance and Participation-50pts

Total Points= 600 Total % =100

Grading Criteria is NIU's plus/minus system

A = 93-100% = 558-600pts B = 83-86% = 498-521pts C = 70-76% = 420-461pts

A- = 90-92% = 540-557pts B- = 80-82% = 480-497pts D = 60-69% = 360-419pts

B+ = 87-89% =522-539pts C+ = 77-79% = 462-479pts F = 59% or Below = 359-0pts

Classroom Decorum

Politics can be a very passionate and personal subject for some. I expect there will be some lively discussions and debates in our class. I expect that we treat each other with respect at all times. **We can disagree without being disagreeable.** Politics is a public endeavor and thus opinions should be shared in a welcoming open environment and discussed with civility. Furthermore, for our discussions to be rich and fruitful I ask that we keep our sensitivity levels low. Keep in mind that an attack on your opinions is not an attack on you.

Papers

All papers must be typed double spaced 12pt font. Unless otherwise instructed all papers are due on the first class period of the week at the beginning of class.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is vital to your success in this course missing more than **4** classes with substandard performance may be cause for you to fail the course. Students who miss class or assignments for a verifiable emergency or serious illness (confirmed by Health Services) are responsible for making arrangements with their instructor promptly upon returning to class to complete work at my discretion and convenience. It is also the student's responsibility to get information on course content, missed or changes in assignments, due dates, or schedule changes missed during their absence. Under no circumstance will I give students private lectures, I suggest you get a study buddy in class that can share notes in the event of an absence.

Academic Misconduct

Students who are found cheating on assignments or tests will either receive a zero on the assignment/test or may receive an F in the course. Students who fail to resolve an academic misconduct situation with the faculty member will be referred to the Office of Community Standards & Student Conduct. All situations of academic misconduct will result in a report being filed with the Office of Community Standards & Student Conduct, regardless if the situation is resolved with the faculty member or not.

Academic misconduct is defined by the Office of Community Standards and Student Conduct (http://www.niu.edu/communitystandards/student_code_ofconduct/NIUCC2013FINAL.pdf)

"The receipt or transmission of unauthorized aid on assignments or examinations, plagiarism, unauthorized use of examination materials, cheating or other forms of dishonesty in academic matters. The term 'cheating' includes but is not limited to the following:

1. Use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, examinations, or on academic assignments;
2. Use of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, or carrying out other assignments;
3. Acquisition, without permission, of tests or other academic material belonging to a member of the University faculty or staff;
4. Engagement in any behavior specifically prohibited by a faculty member in the course syllabus or class discussion;

The term 'plagiarism' includes but is not limited to the use, by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgement. Plagiarism also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials"

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

A student who believes that reasonable accommodations with respect to course work or other academic requirements may be appropriate in consideration of a disability must (1) provide the required verification of the disability to the Disabilities Resource Center (DRC), (2) meet with the DRC to

determine appropriate accommodations and (3) inform the faculty in charge of the academic activity of the need for accommodation. Students are encouraged to inform the faculty of their requests for accommodations as early as possible in the semester, but must make the requests in a timely enough manner for accommodations to be appropriately considered and reviewed by the university. If contacted by the faculty member, the staff of the DRC will provide advice about accommodations that may be indicated in the particular case. Students who make requests for reasonable accommodations are expected to follow the policies and procedures for the DRC in this process, including but not limited to the Student Handbook.

A wide range of services can be obtained by students with disabilities, including housing, transportation, adaptation of printed materials, and advocacy with faculty and staff. Students with disabilities who need such services or want more information should contact the Disabilities Resource Center at 815-753-1303.

Department of Political Science Web Site

Undergraduates are encouraged to consult the Department of Political Science web site on a regular basis. This up-to-date, central source of information will assist students in contacting faculty and staff, reviewing course requirements and syllabi, exploring graduate study, researching career options, tracking department events, and accessing important details related to undergraduate programs and activities. To reach the site, go to <http://polisci.niu.edu>. Also, if you would like to receive the departments e-announcements that feature information on internships, scholarships, lectures, POLS club activities, and other important information via email, please let me know and I will make sure you are added to the list.

Course Schedule

THE FOUNDATIONS

Week	Topic	Readings	Due
1	Introduction to course Intro to The Founding	Declaration of Independence, Federalist 10 paper	Quiz
Week 2	Topic The Founding and the Constitution Making Sense of Government and Politics	Readings Chapter 2 , U.S. Const Chapter 1	Exercises Quiz
Week 3	Topic Federalism and the Separation of Powers	Readings Chapter 3	Exercises Quiz
Week 4	Topic Civil Liberties and Civil Rights	Readings Chapter 4 Bill of Rights	Exercises Quiz

THE INSTITUTIONS

Week 5	Topic The Presidency/Executive Branch	Readings Chapter 10	Exercises Quiz
Week 6	Topic First Presidential Debate The Congress/Legislative Branch	Readings Watch Debate Chapter 9	Exercises Quiz
Week 7	Topic The Courts/Judicial Branch	Readings Chapter 12	Exercises Quiz

Week	Topic	Readings	Exercises
8	Review for Midterm Second Presidential Debate	Review Watch Debate	**Midterm**
<i>THE PEOPLE</i>			Exercise
Week 9	Topic Final Presidential Debate	Readings Watch Debate	Quiz
			Exercise
Week 10	Topic Political Parties, Participation and Elections	Readings Chapter 7	Quiz
			Exercise
Week 11	Topic The Media	Readings Chapter 6	Quiz
			Exercise
Week 12	Topic No class Tuesday (Election Day!)	Readings Watch Election/Results	Quiz
Week 13	Topic Public Opinion	Readings Chapter 5	Exercise Quiz
Week 14	Topic Interest Groups	Readings Chapter 8	Exercise quiz
Week 15	Topic Review for Final	Readings Review	Exercises Review
Week 16	FINAL EXAM/TBA		

Notes
