

# POLS 201: Introduction to American Government and Politics

MW 2:00–3:15 p.m.

Davidson 110

**Professor:** Adam Enders

**Office:** 105 Ford Hall

**Office Hours:** Monday 12:30–2:00 p.m. (or by appointment)

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## Course Description

This course is an introduction to the U.S. national government and politics in America. We will first consider the founding of the national government and fundamental questions about American politics, such as civil rights and civil liberties. Next, we will examine the nature and functions of the three branches of government – the executive, legislative, and judicial branches – and how they interact to form the basis of the U.S. government. Finally, we will consider how politics really works – how campaigns are waged to win elections, how public opinion develops and constrains governmental actors, how the media conveys the messages of governmental elites and influences public opinion, and how individuals come together in the form of political parties and interest groups to influence policy outcomes.

In addition to learning the nuts-and-bolts, we will be considering the logic (i.e., basic principles) of politics. The basic principles that we will discuss are found in many of the other social sciences (economics, psychology, etc.) and, in fact, are often borrowed from those other fields. Thinking about these basic principles will help us better analyze politics and understand why certain policies are passed, why interest groups do what they do, why voters and politicians have party affiliations, etc. An understanding of the logic behind politics will also serve as an invaluable tool in analyzing current political events on your own. By the end of the semester, you will know who the main players are in American politics (e.g., voters, House members, President), the decisions that each player can make, and what factors influence what decisions they ultimately make.

## Course Materials

We will primarily be using the textbook listed below. This is the only text that students are required to have regular access to.

*American Government: Power and Purpose (14<sup>th</sup> Full Edition)*. Ansolabahere, Stephen and Benjamin Ginsberg and Theodore J. Lowi and Kenneth A. Shepsle. 2017. W. W. Norton & Company. ISBN: 0393283755.

Note that an ebook version of this text can be purchased for about \$45 from W. W. Norton's [website](#). Amazon also sells new and used copies for cheaper than you'll find at the bookstore.

# Course Requirements

**Attendance:** Attendance is an important component of students' grades, and is integral to the success of the course. Though the class is relatively large, students will have regular opportunities to interact with one another in order to better understand course material. Furthermore, class periods will be used to highlight particularly important material and provide students with a deeper understanding of certain topics. Attendance will be taken every class meeting.

**Quizzes (14):** Quizzes are designed to test students' comprehension of the material assigned for that class meeting. There is one quiz per book chapter. All quizzes are available on the Blackboard page under their respective chapter sub-tabs in the "Course Materials" tab. You must complete the quiz(zes) associated with the chapters assigned in a given week by 10:00 p.m. on Thursday night of that week. No late quizzes will be accepted. The lowest quiz grade will automatically be dropped at the end of the semester. In some weeks there will be 2 quizzes, in others there will be none.

**Midterm and Final Exam:** The exams will consist of both multiple choice and short answer/essay questions. The final exam is cumulative. That is, it will cover material from the entire semester, not just the second half of the course.

## Grades

### Distribution

Attendance	15%
Quizzes	30%
Midterm Exam	25%
Final Exam	30%

### Scale

94-100 = A	75-78 = C+
90-93 = A-	71-74 = C
86-89 = B+	68-70 = C-
82-85 = B	60-67 = D
79-81 = B-	60 and below = F

## Additional Information and Expectations

**Pay Attention to Politics:** Students are expected to closely follow media coverage of American politics. Indeed, successful contribution to class discussions and exercises and completion of course assignments requires that students know what is happening in every

day American politics.

**Respect in the Classroom:** Since this course takes place after a heated presidential campaign, individual partisan tensions may be particularly high. As such, students must be particularly mindful of their own political predispositions and respectful of the fact that others may not share their views so that class meetings can be as productive as possible. Students should also note that the professor will do his best present material objectively and respectfully. If students have any concerns regarding this general policy, or feel that they are not being respected in the classroom, they are strongly encouraged to contact the professor directly. For more information regarding classroom etiquette, see the **official university policies** regarding student rights and responsibilities.

## **Class Schedule**

All of the following reading assignments are to be completed *before* attending class on the associated date. The material not included in the main text (journal articles and book chapters) are available for download on the course Blackboard webpage.

### **Week 1: Introduction, Founding, and Constitution**

Read Chapters 1 & 2

### **Week 2: Federalism and SOP**

Read Chapter 3

### **Week 3: Civil Rights and Liberties**

**No class on Monday, September 3**

Read Chapter 4

### **Week 4: Civil Rights and Liberties**

Read Chapter 5

### **Week 5: Congress**

Read Chapter 6

### **Week 6: Presidency**

Read Chapter 7 & 8

### **Week 7: Bureaucracy**

**Midterm Exam: Wednesday, October 3**

**Week 8: Supreme Court**

No class on Monday, October 8

Read Chapter 9

**Week 9: Public Opinion**

Read Chapter 10

**Week 10: Political Parties**

Read Chapter 12

**Week 11: Campaigns and Elections I**

Read Chapter 11

**Week 12: Campaigns and Elections II**

*The American Voter*, Chapter 1 & 2 (Blackboard)

**Week 13: The Media**

Read Chapter 14

**Week 14: Groups and Interests**

No class on Wednesday, November 21

Read Chapter 13

**Week 15: Interest Groups and Final Thoughts**

Catch up

**Week 16: Final Exam Review**

Final exam review

**FINAL EXAM**

Wednesday, December 5 from 2:30–5:00 p.m. (online)

## Social & Behavioral Sciences Learning Outcomes

This course meets the general education Cardinal Core Program (CCP) requirements for Social & Behavioral Sciences (SB) that are concerned with understanding human behavior, human interactions, human environment, and the related social structures and forms. Students who satisfy this requirement will demonstrate that they are able to do all of the following:

- Apply knowledge and theories and analyze evidence via qualitative and/or quantitative research methods that are utilized in the field,
- Identify how different fields of inquiry conceptualize diversity and the dynamics of social inequalities,
- Represent and critically respond to multiple points of view on cultural issues as expressed in in different historical, social, and cultural contexts,
- Use critical thinking and reasoning skills such as making inferences, evaluating assumptions, and assessing limitations of knowledge claims, and
- Communicate effectively in speech and writing, while respecting others contributions, through proper citation appropriate to the discipline.

### Methods of Assessment

The following methods will be employed to assess student abilities with respect to each of the aforementioned social and behavioral sciences learning outcomes:

1. Quizzes associated with each chapter will be used to assess student comprehension of course material and critical thinking skills
2. Short answer questions on exams will be used to assess critical thinking and reasoning skills, written communication skills, and students' abilities to consider multiple views of a given topic
3. Class discussions will be used to develop and assess speech communication skills, including students' abilities to respond to multiple points of view
4. In-class small group activities will be used to develop student abilities to interact with a diverse set of individuals from multiple social and cultural contexts, and to personally expose students to different points of view

## Course Policies

**Title IX/Clery Act Notification:** Sexual misconduct (including sexual harassment, sexual assault, and any other nonconsensual behavior of a sexual nature) and sex discrimination violate University policies. Students experiencing such behavior may obtain **confidential** support from the PEACC Program (852-2663), Counseling Center (852-6585), and Campus Health Services (852-6479). To report sexual misconduct or sex discrimination, contact the Dean of Students (852-5787) or University of Louisville Police (852-6111).

Disclosure to **University faculty or instructors** of sexual misconduct, domestic violence, dating violence, or sex discrimination occurring on campus, in a University-sponsored program, or involving a campus visitor or University student or employee (whether current or former) is **not confidential** under Title IX. Faculty and instructors must forward such reports, including names and circumstances, to the University's Title IX officer.

For more information, see the **Sexual Misconduct Resource Guide**.

**Academic Integrity:** Academic dishonesty is prohibited at the University of Louisville. It is a serious offense because it diminishes the quality of scholarship, makes accurate evaluation of student progress impossible, and defrauds those in society who must ultimately depend upon the knowledge and integrity of the institution and its students and faculty. For more information, see the **Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities**.

**Disabilities Accommodation:** The University of Louisville is committed to providing access to programs and services for qualified students with disabilities. If you are a student with a disability and require accommodation to participate and complete requirements for this class, notify me immediately and contact the Disability Resource Center (Stevenson Hall, 502-852-6938) for verification of eligibility and determination of specific accommodations. For more information, visit the **Disability Resource Center**.

**Religious Observation Policy:** Federal law and university policy prohibit discrimination on the basis of religious belief. It is the policy of the University of Louisville to accommodate students, faculty, and staff who observe religious work-restricted holy days. Students who need to alter a quiz/exam deadline due to religious observations must, however, bring the matter to the attention of the instructor during the first week of the semester.

**Final Caveat:** While this course has been devised carefully, the instructor does reserve the right to amend the assignments or schedule as presented above.