



American Federal Government

Spring 2015, POS 2041

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Course Description and Requirements

What is political power, and how concentrated is it in the United States? Where does the United States rank on the UN Human Development Index? How resistant to change is the United States Constitution, relative to other national constitutions? What influences some people to be political gladiators and others to be political spectators? Why are we still stuck with the Electoral College, which made George Bush our 43rd President, even though Al Gore got more votes from real people in the 2000 election? If more people favor gun control than oppose it, why is the NRA so powerful? How influential can Chief Justice Roberts be in shaping the Supreme Court?

We will address these and other questions through a survey the structural foundations, political linkage institutions, and governmental institutions in the United States. Our discussions will include some historical references, comparisons and contrasts to other countries' political systems, and comment on current developments. By the end of the course, students should have a basic understanding of the U.S. political system that will enable them to understand the choices that are (and are not) offered to them as citizens and to be able to critically evaluate claims about the U.S. political system using empirical evidence.

This course satisfies a Social and Behavioral Science (S) General Education requirement, and is required of all [Political Science](#) and [College of Journalism](#) majors. It is also a prerequisite to many other courses in American politics in the [Department of Political Science](#).

Lectures will be Tuesdays and Thursdays (2nd period; 8:30 am to 9:20 am) in Carleton Auditorium. The Teaching Assistants will lead discussion sections at assigned times on Thursdays and Fridays. Grades will be assigned based on three exams, weekly quizzes and assignments, and participation in discussion sections.

Readings

Greenberg, Edward and Benjamin Page. 2015. *The Struggle for Democracy* (Twelfth Edition; Pearson, ISBN ____). This text argues that policy results from a combination of structural, political, and governmental effects. Greenberg and Page also suggest that American democracy is evolutionary, and offer numerous comparisons to other political systems.

MyPolisciLab is a required companion website for this text. Some weekly assignments will be from the study plan, or require you to access some readings, videos, or other features in *MyPolisciLab*. It provides links to websites associated with each topic, videos, student activities, and current analysis by the authors of the text and other political scientists. *MyPolisciLab* also provides an electronic version of the text, which you can read on your computer or tablet, if that is convenient.

- If you purchase a new copy of the text, it should include an access code for *MyPolisciLab*.
- If you purchase a used copy of the text (or are sharing a text with someone else), you will also need to purchase a separate access code for *MyPolisciLab*.
- You will need to register for *MyPolisciLab on Canvas*.

Periodically, I will assign articles from the New York Times that are relevant to the topics that we are discussing. Those articles may be discussed in lecture or in discussion section, and should be considered required reading for an upcoming test or discussion section. Announcements and links will be provided on Canvas. UF students have a free digital subscription (courtesy of the Provost's Office and Student Government). To retrieve it, go to my.ufl.edu. After signing in, click on "Main Menu," then click on "Quick Links" and finally click on "NY Times." From there, simply follow the directions. Please use your ufl.edu email address when signing up.

Other readings will be accessible online through links on this webpage, on Canvas, or through links on *MyPolisciLab*.

Office Hours

	classes / sections	email	office	hours
Professor Martinez	Lectures (TR 2)	martinez@ufl.edu	208 Anderson	TR 2:00 - 3:30 pm
Stephen Phillips	1A91 (R4), 1A96 (R5)	scphillips@ufl.edu	010 Anderson	R 3 (9:35 - 10: 25 am)
Ross Cotton	1A92 (F4), 1A97 (F5)	rdcotton@ufl.edu	010 Anderson	F 3 (9:35 - 10: 25 am)
Adam Bilinski	1A99 (R6), 101H (R8)	abilin@ufl.edu	010 Anderson	R 7 (1:55 - 2:45 pm)
Alex Smith	1778 (F2), 8938 (F3)	alexsmith@ufl.edu	010 Anderson	T 4 (10:40 - 11:30 am)

I will not hold office hours on any day on which class is cancelled. You may also request an appointment to see me if you've already discussed your concern with your TA. My office is in 208 Anderson Hall, which is a beautifully refurbished building on University Avenue just northeast of Smathers Library and across University Avenue from Chipotle.

Teaching Assistants are responsible for leading discussion sections, some grading, holding office hours to assist students outside of class time, and assigning discussion group participation grades.

Course Requirements and Grades

First Exam (Thursday, February 5)	20%
Second Exam (Thursday, March 19)	20%
Final Exam (Friday, May 1; 7:30 - 9:30 am, McCarty Auditorium)	25%
Weekly assignments on Canvas	10%
Weekly quizzes on Canvas	10%
Discussion group participation and assignments	15%
Total	100%

Grading Scale:

Lower boundaries for grades are:

		B+	85.0%	C+	75.0%	D+	65.0%
A	91.0%	B	81.0%	C	71.0%	D	61.0%
A-	88.0%	B-	78.0%	C-	68.0%	D-	58.0%

Note that 84.97% is less than 85.0%, and is therefore a "B".

Exams

There will be three examinations. The first exam and the final exam will be multiple-choice machine-graded. I will offer sample examination questions as the course proceeds.

The second exam may be of the same format, or alternatively may consist of a series of true-false justify statements and a short essay to be graded by the T.A.s. The format of the second exam will be chosen by the class from these alternatives.

All exams will cover lecture, readings, completed assignments, and articles discussed in class. The second exam and the final exam will emphasize material covered in the second and third parts of the course, respectively, but will build on material previously covered.

On exam days, students will be asked to remove hats, caps, and sunglasses. Initiating or receiving outside communication using a phone or other device during an exam constitutes receipt of outside information, and will result in an immediate failure on that examination. **Please note that sending or receiving messages (including messages via electronic text or phone) during an exam is considered cheating. Do not forget to turn off your cellphone before a test. If you do forget and the cellphone rings, don't answer it. Surrender the phone to an exam proctor, and you can pick it up after the exam is over.**

It is important that you show up on exam day. Absences from exams will only be excused if the student can provide written and verifiable documentation of illness, bereavement of an immediate family member, or a conflicting University or legal obligation.

The date and time for the final exam were assigned to this class by the UF Registrar in order to assure that all students have time to prepare for all of their exams and avoid (most) exam conflicts. Plan to be on campus at this time, and do not ask to take the exam early or late, unless you have an exam conflict that is recognized by the UF Registrar. Please advise parents, spouses, and others who may be making travel plans for you of your final exam schedule. If you have unavoidable plans to be out of Gainesville on May 1, you should consider dropping the course or registering for the online version of the course.

Miscellaneous stuff

If you need to discuss anything about this class, you should bring the matter up with your TA first. In most cases, your TA will be able to help you with your concern. If your TA cannot provide the answers or help that you need, s/he may ask you to come talk to me.

Students requesting classroom accommodation for testing or completing assignments must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student, who must then provide this documentation to your TA when requesting accommodation. Please do so by January 15.

Please do not phone me or your TA to discuss a grade over the phone. You are welcome to call to schedule an appointment with your TA, but please refrain from asking about your grade directly over the phone. This helps the TAs and me protect your statutory rights to privacy, as we are generally unable to verify your identity over the phone.

Calendar

The following is provided as a guideline to the course. I reserve the right to make adjustments to the calendar if needed, delay particular assignments, or to change them to optional. I will add links to short articles in the electronic media from time to time.

Our normal rhythm will be

- Lecture will be on Tuesdays and Thursdays in McCarty Auditorium, and may include in-class participation assignments.
- A weekly assignment will be due at 11:59 pm on Wednesdays. The weekly assignment will be submitted on Canvas, and may
 - be based on a My Polisci Lab Exercise (Explore the Data, Simulation, or In the Read World video), or
 - require you to explore another website.
- A weekly quiz, due at 11:59 pm on Wednesdays, will cover the major concepts in the text or other readings.
- Discussion sections will be held Thursdays and Fridays.

Seq	Dates	Topics
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1	January 6-10	Introduction to Political Power: Who Governs?
2	January 13-20	Constitution: America's Founding Compromise
	<i>January 15</i>	<i>No class: Southern Political Science Association Meetings</i>
3	January 22-27	Federalism: Vertical fragmentation
4	January 29 - February 3	Structural Foundations: How Well Developed is the United States?
	February 5	First Exam
	February 5 - 6	First Exam Debrief
5	February 10-13	Public Opinion and Media: Are We Polarized? If so, is it the Media's Fault?
6	February 17-20	Interest Groups: What Accent the Heavenly Chorus?
7	February 24-27	Social Movements: Grassroots or Astroturf?
	March 3 - 6	<i>Give me a (spring) break!</i>
8	March 10-17	Political Parties and Elections: Why Did Al Gore Win an Oscar instead of the Presidency?
	March 19	Second Exam
	March 19 - 20	Second Exam Debrief
9	March 24-27	Congress: Do We (Sort of) Love our Congressman, but Hate Congress?
10	March 31 - April 3	Presidency: Are there really Two Presidencies?
11	April 7 - 10	Bureaucracy: Is our Bureaucracy Tyrannical?
12	April 14 - 17	Judiciary: Do Unelected Judges Preserve Democracy?
13	April 21	Civil Rights: The Struggle Continues
	May 1; 7:30 am - 9:30 am	Final Exam

Other University of Florida Sites

- [Department of Political Science](#)
- [College of Liberal Arts and Sciences](#)
- [Honors](#)
- [Career Resource Center](#)
- [University of Florida Home Page](#)

Thanks for visiting the homepage for this class! If you are enrolled in the class, and would like to introduce yourself electronically, please update your bio on Canvas (pics are welcome)!
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