

AMERICAN FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

POS 2041

PLEASE READ THIS DOCUMENT CAREFULLY

The University of Florida
Lectures M/W, 2nd Period, Carleton Auditorium
Discussion Sections Thursdays/Fridays
Spring 2017

Instructor: Dr. Suzanne M. Robbins

Class Meets: Mondays & Wednesdays, 8:30-9:20, Carleton 100

Instructor Office Hours: Mondays & Wednesdays 10:30-11:30, Anderson 205

Instructor Phone/E-mail: 352-273-2381; Suzanne.Robbins@ufl.edu

Website: Canvas

Teaching Assistants:

	Email	Sections	Office	Office Hours
Bulkley, Celeste	cdbulkley@ufl.edu	168G/1A97 (R7 & F5)	AND	R8
Licari, Peter	plicari13@ufl.edu	1A92/2A71 (F4 & F6)	AND	F5
Phillips, Stephen	scphillips@ufl.edu	1A96/1A99 (R5 & R6)	AND 201B	R7
Schlingensiepen, Marah	mschlingensiepen@ufl.edu	168E/101H (R4 & R8)	AND	T8
Smith, Alex	alexsmith@ufl.edu	1778/168D (F2 & F3)	AND 201B	F4

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. 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 OVERVIEW

This class introduces you to the study of American Politics and Government at the national level. As a general education survey course, the class provides a broad understanding of the subject matter from both theoretical and empirical perspectives (the how and why, not just what, of government).

The underlying theme of this course will be how the logic of elections and institutional rules structure outcomes in American politics. We'll discuss how process matters, politics is conflict and compromise, and how politics is everywhere. We'll begin the semester studying the foundations of American democracy, including the U.S. Constitution, federalism, and political culture. We will then begin an examination of the linkages between citizens and their government, including public opinion, participation, interest groups and political parties. We will examine how we choose our leaders and the institutions in which they serve, such as Congress, the Presidency, the bureaucracy and the Court. The electoral incentive will be prevalent throughout the semester, as we seek to understand why things are the way they are, not what they should be, or simply the basic facts. Our discussions will include some historical and current events. By the end of the course, students should 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.

GOALS FOR THE COURSE:

We will have many opportunities to develop critical thinking skills while learning how politics matters to everyday life and to the functioning of the American Government. We will use lecture, discussion, the text, contemporary and historical news, as well as pop culture to help you learn how to:

1. Distinguish between myths and reality of American politics,
2. Distinguish between assumptions and evidence in evaluating arguments,
3. Evaluate the credibility of public information,
4. Assess the validity of assumptions,
5. Apply what you learn substantively to others areas of civic life.

WEEKLY PATTERN:

1. Lectures will be on Mondays and Wednesdays in Carleton Auditorium. During lectures, I will present the basic structure of various aspects of the American political system. We will focus more on the why than the descriptive element though at times description and history will be covered.
2. A weekly assignment, due at 11:59 pm on Wednesdays on Canvas, which may be a short writing assignment or short answer assignment based on accessing materials available on the web.
3. Discussion sections on Thursdays and Fridays will be focused on discussions of weekly readings, assignments, and current applications.

READING

Everyone is expected to attend lectures and discussions, read the text, follow the news and participate in class. This course will be conducted through primarily through lectures, supplemented with section discussions and some electronic content. Reading the material is a must. First, the text will explain concepts and facts in much further detail than the lectures can; second, it is impossible to participate meaningfully in any class discussion without first reading the material.

Greenberg, Edward and Benjamin Page. 2015. *The Struggle for Democracy* (Twelfth Edition; ISBN 013413835X). This text argues that policy results from a combination of structural, political, and governmental effects. Greenberg and Page also argue that American democracy is evolutionary, and offer numerous comparisons to other political systems. Please note we are using the older edition – not the 2017.

REVEL. This semester, we will supplement the text with REVEL. Revel contains the most up-to-date analysis and discussion regarding the 2016 election and Presidential transition for our textbook. Each chapter contains an update (Current Events Bulletin) in REVEL. You will be responsible for this material. Your TAs may also assign parts of REVEL for your respective discussion sections.

Pearson Higher Education includes access to Revel (an electronic package to accompany the Greenberg and Page text) at no additional cost to students. Revel includes the entire textbook (in both text and audio), plus some videos and simulations, short quizzes, key word reviews, and chapter exams to help students prepare for exams. Please see Canvas for instructions on registering for Revel.

The New York Times. Everyone should read the newspaper (digital is fine) every day. Newspapers generally provide more in-depth and more thoroughly researched journalism than other resources. Periodically, I will assign articles to read 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.

Please note that you may read a different newspaper, such as *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Financial Times*, or *The Washington Post*. UF does not have free subscriptions to these services, however. If you choose one of these alternatives, you will still be responsible for the assigned *New York Times* articles. Please note that social media, including Twitter and Facebook, are filled with "fake news". Do not let yourself be a victim of fake and misleading newsites and blogs.

CANVAS. We will use the Canvas classroom learning environment to facilitate organization, communication and discussion in this course. Canvas is also the primary location for submitting assignments. It is your responsibility to check Canvas regularly for assignments, announcements and communications.

ICLICKERS. We will be using the iClicker response system in the class lectures (M/W). Each student is responsible for purchasing an iClicker, keeping the batteries fresh and bringing it to class. Students can purchase clickers starting at \$45.00 + shipping [directly from i>clicker](#). They should also be available at the University bookstore. Students may resell and reuse clickers at their discretion through any available means, you can find them for sale on eBay and occasionally on Craigslist.

To associate your clicker with your name in the gradebook you will need to register your remote in Canvas. You will do this using the i>clicker option in the left navigation menu in Canvas. When selected you will be presented with three links, choose i>clicker Registration and enter the alphanumeric code from the back of their i>clicker remote. Once you have registered their remotes I can sync with the gradebook.

The iClicker remote will enhance participation in class and allow me to take attendance on MW.

COURSE REQUIREMENT AND GRADES

OVERVIEW:

Requirement	Percentage of Course Grade
First Exam	20
Second Exam	20
Final Exam	25
Weekly Assignments on Canvas	15
Discussion Group Attendance	5
Discussion Group Participation	10
Lecture Attendance and Participation	5
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". Note that I do not round individual scores in my Excel spreadsheet, and only round the final grade to the nearest tenth. While I do post grades on Canvas, my personal Excel spreadsheet is the official record of your progress until final course grades are posted to ISIS at the end of the semester.

EXAMS:

I have scheduled three exams to test your mastery of the material covered throughout the course. The exams will contain questions of fact, concepts, interpretation and application and may potentially include multiple-choice, short answers and essay questions. Multiple choice questions may have more than one answer that appears correct; you will have to distinguish between the responses to choose the best answer in light of what we covered in class. For example, I may ask why the current Congress did something, with the response set coming from theories of collective action. I will occasionally offer sample examination questions as the course proceeds (usually as iClicker questions).

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. Multiple choice questions will be machine graded. Short-answer and essays, if offered, will be TA-graded.

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 April 28, you should consider dropping the course or registering for the online version of the course.**

WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS:

Everyone will be responsible for a weekly assignment, due at 11:59 pm on Wednesdays on Canvas, which may be a short writing assignment or short answer assignment based on accessing materials available on the web. These will be graded by your section TA. No late assignments will be accepted.

LECTURE ATTENDANCE/PARTICIPATION:

Attendance in the lectures is required. Each student is allowed one unexcused absence from the MW lectures. I will take attendance at the beginning of class using the iClicker remote. Be on time to be counted. In addition, most classes will have interactive questions using the iClicker to judge participation in the class as a whole. Students will be awarded one point for each class session attended, one point for each "opinion/poll" iClicker question answered, and 1 point for correct answers to exam type iClicker questions. Your grade will be based on the percentage of points earned over the total points available for the semester. Each student will be allowed one unexcused absence from the lecture portion of attendance.

$$\text{Lecture Attendance/Participation Grade} = (\text{number of points earned}) / (\text{number of points available} - \text{number of excused absences}) * 100, \text{ up to a maximum score of } 100.$$

DISCUSSION SECTIONS:

TAs will assign 15% percent of the course grade based on performance in discussion sections. Five (5) percent will be based on attendance at 12 discussion sections. Each student is allowed one unexcused absence from discussion for the attendance portion of the grade, which will be calculated as

$$\text{Discussion Section Attendance grade} = (\text{number of sessions attended} / (12 - \text{number of excused absences})) * 100, \text{ up to a maximum score of } 100$$

10% will be based on the quality of your participation in discussion group, including listening, preparation, quality of contributions, impact on the class, and frequency of participation.

	Strong	Needs Development	Unsatisfactory
Listening	Actively and respectfully listens to peers and TA	Sometimes displays lack of interest in comments of others	Projects lack of interest or disrespect for others (including browsing other materials during class)
Preparation	Arrives fully prepared with all assignments completed, and notes on reading, observations, questions	Sometimes arrives unprepared or with only superficial preparation	Little evidence of having completed or thought about assigned material
Quality of contributions	Comments are relevant and reflect understanding of assignments, previous remarks of other students, and insights about assigned material	Comments sometimes irrelevant, betray lack of preparation, or indicate lack of attention to previous remarks of other students	Comments reflect little understanding of either the assignment or previous remarks in class
Impact on class	Comments frequently help move class discussion forward	Comments sometimes advance the conversation, but sometimes do little to move it forward	Comments do not advance the conversation or are actively harmful to it
Frequency of participation	Actively participates at appropriate times	Sometimes participates but at other times is "tuned out"	Seldom participates and is generally not engaged or absent

TAs may use in class assignments to help determine the level of preparation, or to introduce a discussion topic.

Grading scale for participation component:

- A - Strong in most categories
- B - Participation is strong in some categories but needs development in others
- C - Need for development in most categories
- D - Typically unsatisfactory in several categories
- E - Unsatisfactory in nearly all.

POLICIES & MISCELLANY

CONTACTING US/OFFICE HOURS

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.

Please do not phone me or your TA to discuss a grade over the phone or by email. You are welcome to call to schedule an appointment with your TA, but please refrain from asking about your grade directly over the phone or email. This helps the TAs and me protect your statutory rights to privacy, as we are generally unable to verify your identity in these formats. I will use your UF email account or Canvas to communicate with you (not gmail, yahoo or the like).

You will be turning in several course components via Canvas. Please do not email me assignments.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance is required. Students failing to attend class during the first week may be dropped from the course; excessive absences could result in a failing grade. Requirements for class attendance are consistent with the attendance policy stated in the Undergraduate Catalog Regulations found here: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx#absences>. This supplements the attendance policy above for discussion sections.

DISABILITY SERVICES

The University of Florida is committed to providing academic accommodations for students with disabilities. Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, a student should present his/her accommodation letter to me supporting a request for accommodations. The University encourages students with disabilities to follow these procedures as early as possible within the semester.

EVALUATIONS

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>.

TECHNOLOGY

Laptops, notepads, and cell phones are not permitted in this class unless accompanied with documentation from disability services. Research shows that students retain information better when taking notes by hand and are less likely to be distracted.

PLAGIARISM

All work in this class is to be your own. Students who fail to abide by this policy, or who plagiarize, will receive a failing grade on the assignment.

MAKE-UP WORK:

All assignments are due when assigned. Makeup exams will be offered only in documented emergencies. You must notify me in writing in advance or within 24 hours of the exam. In addition, all make up exams must be completed within one week of the original exam.

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.

Lecture Dates	Topics	Reading
January 4	Introduction Who Governs?	Chapter 1
January 9 -18	So, how do we form a more perfect union? Establishing A Constitutional Democracy (the Constitution)	Chapter 2
<i>January 12-13</i>	<i>No discussion sections: Southern Political Science Association Meetings</i>	
<i>January 16</i>	<i>No lecture: MLK Jr. Day</i>	
January 23-25	Compromise: How to Divide Power Between the States and Feds (Federalism)	Chapter 3
January 30	The Structural Foundations of Government	Chapter 4
<i>February 1</i>	<i>First Exam</i>	
<i>February 2-3</i>	<i>Discussion of First Exam</i>	
February 6, 8	How can we be heard in a representative democracy – what is ‘public opinion’ and does it matter? What role does the media play in public opinion?	Chapter 5,6
February 13, 15	What about lobbying? How do groups form, what do they do? Do they have influence?	Chapter 7, 8
February 20, 22	Why parties? Do they matter?	Chapter 9
February 27, March 1, 13	Who votes? Why/why not? How do we decide? What about campaigns – do they matter?	Chapter 10
<i>March 6-10</i>	<i>UF Spring Break - no lecture or discussion sections</i>	
<i>March 15</i>	<i>Second Exam</i>	
<i>March 16-17</i>	<i>Discussion of Second Exam</i>	
March 20, 22	How does Congress get anything done? How can they work for the collective good, when everything is stacked against it? Is it the broken branch?	Chapter 11
March 27, 29	Why give one person so much power – how much power does the President have, anyway?	Chapter 12
April 3, 5	Why bureaucracy? And how do we control it?	Chapter 13
<i>April 6-7</i>	<i>No Discussion Sections: Midwest Political Science Association Meetings</i>	
April 10, 12	The unelected branch... is the Supreme Court anti-majoritarian? How is it organized? How do they decide the law?	Chapter 14
April 17, 19	CIVIL RIGHTS OR CIVIL LIBERTIES TBA	15 or 16
<i>April 28</i>	<i>Final Exam 10 -12, Carleton Auditorium</i>	